THE INDIVIDUALISED PEDAGOGY OF CHRIST

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Introduction

Contemporary studies in different areas of knowledge put the respect of the individual and the Self at the centre of their very methodological approach. The Self has become a privileged communication tool with today’s humanity. Since the Self has become the object of all discourse as well as the communication tool, we acknowledge that the Self is also one of the signs of our times, a challenge which has to be taken up. The rich Judeo-Christian tradition has the necessary tools and content to dialogue with today’s culture. Nonetheless, theology needs to learn to communicate using the contemporary privileged tool of communication: the modern and postmodern framework of the Self.

Any theological debate centres on the relationship that exists between God and Man. Similar to the progressive attention given to the human being in the social sciences, we have seen the development of the anthropological, transcendental, existential and empirical methods in theological circles. These developments have shifted the starting point of theological discourse from God to Man and his reality. This shift should stand as an eye-opener and a clear sign of the times. We are called to be faithful to Man in order to be truly faithful to God. God communicates with Man in time and space; revelation occurs in a particular context at a given period in time. Thus, a possible way of being faithful to God and to Man is to read the believing community’s past and present experience of God.

2. Cf. ibid; Cf. Ignazio Sanna, Chiamati per nome, Antropologica Teologica, (San Paolo; Torino 1994) 8–13, 21–24.
The experience of the believing community has already shown that God respects human beings and reveals Himself according to a progressive pedagogy which respects the understanding and needs of the human community. This understanding of divine pedagogy has already led us to employ the Anthropological method in our Catechesis and Religious Education. However, we are now called to move a step further by trying to understand whether in the experience of the believing community one can infer God’s respect for the individual and the individualised pedagogy that God chooses to practice.

A privileged point of departure for our discussion is the understanding of the words and actions of Jesus of Nazareth, who through the eyes of faith is understood as the Christ and as the Immanuel, God-is-with-us. The New Testament, which is written after a community of believers has gone through an intense transcendental experience. They have come to recognise that something “which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands, [is] the Word of life”

The understanding of Jesus’ pedagogical ministry will serve as a basis for inquiring (a) whether God chooses to practice an individualised pedagogy and if this is the case, (b) what are implications for Catechesis and Religious Education.

Jesus the Teacher

The tradition of Jesus as a teacher may be traced not only to the four Gospels but also in Jewish tradition. All gospels attribute to Jesus a teaching role by directly referring to him as teacher (attributing to him the Greek title of teacher, διδάσκαλος, or the Jewish title of rabbi). However it is mainly Mark who

5. 1 Jn 1,1
emphasises this role by referring to Jesus as the teacher and focusing all his activity on the didactic process of actions and/or words.\textsuperscript{7}

Even though Lukan tradition claims that Jesus started his pedagogical ministry with a clamorous failure,\textsuperscript{8} all gospels present Jesus as an unconventional teacher, who teaches with authority and definitely in a different way from that practised in Judea or the Greco-Roman world. Despite some basic similar characteristics with other itinerant teachers of the Mediterranean region, and specifically in the Jewish context,\textsuperscript{9} his audience identifies Jesus as a teacher with a new teaching.\textsuperscript{10} His audiences acknowledge that Jesus is unlike the other teachers of Israel since he teaches with authority. While the scribes base their teachings on the Scripture,\textsuperscript{11} Jesus bases his teachings on the arguments he has solely made.\textsuperscript{12} Both the immediate audience and readers intuit that his words are loaded with action, and that both flow from the same Spirit endowment.\textsuperscript{13} His message is not only found in parables or teachings but also in miracles.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, the novelty of this


\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Cf.} Lk 4:16–30. For a detailed reflection on this pericope, see Carlo Maria Martini, \textit{L'Evangelizzatore in san Luca}, (Ancora; Milano 2000) 23–31.

\textsuperscript{9} His popular teaching in synagogues, at the temple and in the open, has made both sympathisers and adversaries identify Jesus as a rabbi. However, apart from the content of his teachings, and the disciples who gather around him, his itinerant lifestyle and his miracles make him also comparable to itinerant preachers of salvation common in the Mediterranean region in the first century A.D. \textit{Cf.} Pilggaard (1997) p. 108; \textit{Cf.} Reisner (1991) pp. 190–193; \textit{Cf.} Robbins (1983) p. 125.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Cf.} Mk 1,27.

\textsuperscript{11} The distinction between the teaching role of the scribes and that of Jesus is made clear in the Gospel of Mark. \textit{Cf.} Dillon (1995) pp. 102–113.

\textsuperscript{12} In the Synoptic Gospels there is a strong tradition indicating an emphatic "I" on the part of Jesus (example: "In truth I tell you", and "But I say this to you") \textit{Cf.} Reisner (1991) pp. 208, 209.

\textsuperscript{13} Jesus' voice carries with it the power of divine action: it calls disciples, it has power over nature (calms sea and storms, and destroys a fig tree), creates friends and enemies, curses, and raises from the dead. This connection between speech and action is recognised by his audience (for example, as represented by Nicodemus. It is, then, precisely this characteristic of interaction between Jesus' speech and action that make him a successful disciple-gatherer. All those who are attracted by him recognise that there is no parallel in the history of Israel. \textit{Cf.} Lk 4,14–15; \textit{Cf.} Jn 3,2; \textit{Cf.} Dillon (1995) p. 97; Marshall (1989) p. 46; Robbins (1984) p. 82.

message is that it is life giving and touches all spheres of human life. Jesus is identified as a messianic teacher, whose authority comes from above and who can be recognised as acting like Yahweh with all those whom he encounters.

Jesus claims that he came “so that they [the disciples] may have life and have it to the full.” The restoration to the True Life of human beings (both as individuals and as a community) becomes the centre of his entire ministry. The advent of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaims is good news since it announces the transformative action of God; an action that is always life giving and that should return the long awaited dignity and life to the human person and the whole of creation. Thus, in all gospels there are numerous instances where Life is proclaimed through words and actions. A case in point is the account found in the Synoptic gospels, narrating the cure of the woman with a haemorrhage and the raising of the daughter of Jairus. The narratives of Mark and Luke are particularly sensitive to the theme of life. The account of the encounter with the woman suffering from haemorrhage heightens the drama of the dying child. All protagonists in the narrative are called to have faith in Jesus as the one who will restore them to life. In Mark, this call to faith is combined with the theme of the journey (a theme which will be delved into later on). All scenes start with a verb indicating motion, the actors move from the public domain, to the family and neighbourhood setting of the house, to the privacy of the child’s bedroom. The interlocutors are invited to move on in their journey of faith with Jesus as their guide. Jesus is interested in the whole person. He is not interested in saving only the physical body from its suffering but he looks after all other dimensions of the human person, including the spiritual and the social dimensions.

Disregarding his own social status, Jairus goes to Jesus in the belief that the latter is the teacher whose word carries the power of action and therefore can restore life. Jairus is called by Jesus to have faith in him and not in his healing powers. The faith of Jairus is tested when Jesus stops to see who has touched him. One could imagine how the father of the dying child felt when Jesus was losing precious time simply to find out who amongst the crowd pressing around

16. Jn 10,10
17. Cf. Mt 9,18–26; Mk 5,21–43; Lk 8,40–56.
him had touched his clothes. Jairus, just as the woman who is later cured will experience, is personally called to believe that Jesus is the Lord who brings the restoring life of God at all levels and so he is personally called to have total faith in Jesus. Similarly, the woman whose suffering touches all dimensions of her life is called to publicly declare her faith in Jesus in order to be restored to the full life. The raising from death of the child is the perfect conclusion to emphasise that Jesus is the Lord of Life in all its fullness.

The gospels also parallel Jesus to Yahweh in diverse ways. Just as Yahweh walks with humans and comes to their needs, so does Jesus. Jesus is also paralleled to Yahweh in his didactic methods. Robbins comments on the similarity that exists between the pedagogy of God in the Abraham narrative and the pedagogy of Christ found in the gospel of Mark. Another similitude is to be

21. Since she is a woman, she is considered to be socially inferior. Moreover her illness of continuous bleeding signifies a perpetual state of impurity. One should understand that in the context of the narrative, it was unthinkable that a woman, who was in a state of impurity, should touch a rabbi. Thus her suffering touches not only the apparent physical dimension but also the social and religious ones.

22. Even though she is cured from her physical illness in the moment she touches Jesus’ cloak, she needs Jesus’ approval in order to be fully restored. One should note that it is only after her public declaration that she is embraced in the family of God, with Jesus calling her “daughter” (Mk 4,34; Lk 8:48). Cf. Joel B. Green, “Restoring the Human Person: New Testament voices for a wholistic and social anthropology”, in Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, Theo C. Meyer and Michael A. Arbib (eds.), Neuroscience and the Person, Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action, (Vatican Observatory Publications; Vatican and Center for Theology and Natural Science; California 1999) 12-15.


24. Genesis account

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<td>In chapter 17 Yahweh instructs Abraham</td>
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<td>18,16-19,29 Intense discussion between Abraham and God on Yahweh’s system of thought and action.</td>
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<td>19,20-22,24 Major test for Abraham. After he passes the test, Yahweh reiterates the promise of the covenant.</td>
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found in the call both Yahweh and Jesus make to the individual. Unlike other teachers of his time, Jesus himself chooses his disciples. Jesus has total freedom in his choice of individuals. In Jesus, Yahweh is visible to every individual, especially to those needy of Life in all its dimensions. Yahweh is no longer an untouchable God who communicates solely in a direct manner with the prophets. In Jesus, God becomes Immanuel, God is with us, who is seen, touched, listened to, spoken to, but above all who enters into a personal relationship with all those whom he encounters.

Jesus' differentiated pedagogy is initially noticeable in his interaction with his audience. The gospel of Mark clearly notes that there is a relationship between the audience and Jesus' message. Mark divides the audience into two major groups - those who are ready to listen to the message and the antagonists to it, mainly the scribes and the Pharisees. Next, Mark stratifies the receptive audience in 6 groups: (a) the crowd; (b) the disciples (those who physically follow him in his itinerant mission, which group probably included relatives, and those, like Martha and Mary, who are sedentary disciples); (c) the twelve; (d) Peter, James, John and Andrew; (e) Peter, James and John; and (f) Peter. Jesus interacts in a different way with each group, explaining more the message to those who are closer to him.

The crowd is the first recipient of the message. The call is made to them and it is from within it that the disciples are chosen to personally believe and adhere to the message. In Mk 8:34, Jesus clearly announces the condition he makes for one to come out from the anonymous crowd and become his follower. It becomes clear that all positive response to Jesus presupposes a personal positive answer to the initial call of Jesus, that of repentance and faith. However, the crowd cannot receive the full teaching since there is no personal repentance from its

27. Cf Lk 9,57–62.
28. Cf Mt 1,23.
31. Cf Mk 1,15.
members. Mark depicts the crowd as coming to Jesus and not following him.\(^{32}\) Full teaching is reserved for the believing community who through self-denial and full faith in Jesus have become his followers.\(^{33}\) Even though full teaching is reserved for the disciples, Mark acknowledges that Jesus reserves special teachings for his close collaborators. In Mark’s narrative, the Twelve are isolated and summoned to teach and to bring the saving power of the kingdom of God. Isolation from the crowd always occurs in order for Jesus to give special instruction and/or to explain more deeply the message he had announced previously to the crowd, as in Mk 3,10–34. At this point Mark also specifies that Jesus taught by “using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it,”\(^{34}\) thus showing respect for their learning capabilities.

The narrative of the transfiguration\(^{35}\) is a further demonstration of the teaching method used by Jesus. Three of the twelve are chosen to go up with Jesus on the mountain. It is in this special context, isolated from the rest of the group, that Jesus reveals a special teaching and a confirmation of their expectations.\(^{36}\) Following this direct revelation, the disciples are summoned to “listen to him.”\(^{37}\) The reaction of the true disciple should be that of personal confession, obedience and allegiance to the Lord.\(^{38}\)

**Discipleship**

A deeper understanding of the personalised pedagogy used by Jesus is evident in the gospels’ treatment of the theme of discipleship. Even though in the later part of the Old Testament there is evidence of the importance given to the individual and one’s personal faith experience, the New Testament develops this attention to the

32. The only exception to this rule is in Mk 3,7. *Cf.* Ernest *Best, Following Jesus, Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, JSOT; Sheffield 1991) 37

33. *Cf. ibid.* p. 29.

34. Mk 4,33.

35. *Cf.* Mt 17,1–8; Mk 9,2–8; Lk 9,28–36. For a detailed reflection on Luke’s account of the transfiguration, see Carlo Maria *Martini, Conversazioni pastorali*, (Ancora, Milano 2000) 74–95.


37. Mt 17,5; Mk 9,7; Lk 9,35.

38. In Mark, Peter identifies Jesus as rabbi (Mk 9:5), thus emphasising the didactic role Jesus had in the event of the transfiguration. However, Matthew corrects Mark’s rabbi by making Peter calling Jesus Lord (Mt 17:4), thus, giving the liturgical context of the feast of the tabernacles, emphasising on Jesus being the Christ. *Cf.* Benedict T. *Viviano, “The Gospel according to Matthew”,* in Raymond E. *Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer* and Roland E. *Murphy* (ed.) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (Geoffrey Chapman; London 1990) art. 107 (p. 660).
individual and one’s relation with God further. It is noticeable that God, through the person of Jesus Christ interacts with a greater number of individuals all coming from different backgrounds. In the Old Testament the individual was called first and foremost to fulfil a mission for the benefit of the believing community. It was only in this process of service to the community and in the relationship that the called one establishes with his/her God that s/he was educated into a new being. On the other hand, in the New Testament, individuals are principally called for their own personal salvation and to build a personal relationship with the God of Life. In their personal faith they are shaped into new persons who form a new community of mankind. Thus, it is in the personal transformation of the individual that the community of believers benefits. The relationship between community and individual is not eradicated but is transformed with greater importance being given to the personal faith of the members of the community. This new understanding of membership, individual roles and community is outlined in the ecclesial theology of St. Paul who understands the importance of every single as having different ministries, assigned to them by the Spirit of God, within the community.  

In the understanding of the New Testament, there can be no discipleship without community. Since the true follower of Christ is servant to all, it is

39. 1 Cor 12,1–30
40. The author of the Letter of James understands discipleship as rooted in the community. In this respect, James is representative of the Christian doctrine that insists on the balance between the community and the individual. James speaks of the economic condition of the members of the community and of the blessings and dangers of the tongue. When speaking of the economic conditions of the individual members it is evident that James has in mind the relationship of the individual members (the rich and poor members of the community) with their brothers. Thus, in the Letter of James, the “wallet” touches the “I” of every member of the community, but it also puts the rich individual in relation to the poor brother/s.

More emphatically, the tongue is a condition that is the responsibility of the individual members but which, at the same time, is shared by all members of the community. When referring to speech, James intimates to its effects and use in religious piety. James speaks of the tongue as a possible source of danger unless controlled by the individual (3,9,12; 4, 11,12; 5,9), as a means of blessing when used in teaching (5,19–20), in blessing God (3,9) and when asking for wisdom and also as a means to pray (1,5–6).

The letter of James addresses the individualism of the modern age. It stresses that there cannot be an “I” without a “we”. After having enlisted the dangers of the tongue, James passes to consider what are the causes of this evil. James concludes that the source of evil rests within the self and its passions since it does not take heed of the others.


41. Cf. Mk 9,33–37; Jn 13,1–17
evident that his/her faith is understood in the context of a community (both of believers and non believers). Above all, the relationship of love with the other followers of Christ (the community of believers) should distinguish the called one as the true disciple of Christ.42

In order to better understand the nature of discipleship and the importance of every individual we shall take into consideration two important aspects: the call that initiates discipleship and the relationship that is thereafter established.

**The Call**

In the New Testament, just as in the Old, in the experience of the call, the identity of the called one is brought to a new understanding. It is, for instance, notable that in the gospel of Matthew all characters are indistinguishable except in the call narratives where individuals standout and are recognisable.43 The disciples are depicted, especially in the Synoptic gospels, as being called out of the crowd.44 The meeting with Jesus not only highlights one's individuality but it also brings consciousness of one's sinfulness and therefore the need to change life.45 Furthermore, the Gospel of John emphasises the fact that at the moment of accepting the call of Jesus, the disciples experience separation from the disciples of John the Baptist, from the Jews and from the rest of the world.46 This separation is reminiscent of the separation prophets experienced in the Old Testament. The called one's individuality is not only highlighted upon meeting

42. *Cf.* Jn 13,34–35.
44. For instance in the call of Levi (*Cf.* Mk 2,13–14; Lk 5,29–32) and that of Zacchaeus (*Cf.* Lk 19,1–9), the called ones are singled out and are given preferential attention in order to bring individual salvation to the called one.
45. The call to Peter (*cf.* Lk 5,1–11), the cure of the paralytic (*cf.* Lk 5,17–26), and the forgiving of the sinner (*cf.* Lk 7,36–50) are all instances of consciousness of sinfulness in front of the righteousness of Jesus and his being the model of the true human being. *Cf.* MARTINI (2000) p. 61.
Jesus, but s/he is expected to be reborn from above, to become related with the realm of the Spirit and to separate him/herself from this world.

The called one experiences a more radical experience than just becoming a disciple of an itinerant rabbi. One is summoned to change one’s life drastically and enter into the process of becoming a new person. Mark makes it clear that the disciples are to bear the cross just as their master, in order to experience self-denial and be given a new heart. This change is only possible because of the personal relationship one establishes with Jesus, Lord of Truth and Life.

So the disciples are called for a total commitment to give up everything including family and life. One should not think that this is a negative change. In the call narratives there is evidence of a positive anthropology. God wants to give a new life to every single individual. As Robbins puts it, “the purpose for calling people into discipleship is analogous to the purpose of healing a person who is sick. A person calls an individual who needs an alternative mode of thought and action just as a person heals an individual who needs an alternative state of mental and physiological being.”

The positive element of the call is emphasised by its not being imposed on any individual. There is no paternalistic element in the call; it is not the call of an overprotective loving Father who knows what is best for his children. Every individual is let free to accept or refuse the call that is being made to him/her. It is a free act of obedience. Accepting the call and becoming a disciple means

47. Cf. Roberto Vignolo, *Personaggi del Quarto Vangelo, Figure della fede in San Giovanni*, (Glosa; Milano 1994) 44.
50. Cf. Jn 14,6
to take the conscious and personal decision of becoming the object of God’s miraculous activity. All calls made by Jesus demand an answer.\(^55\)

The call of the first four disciples as described in Mark\(^56\) provide an insight to what is really meant by the call and what is the meaning of acceptance. The set of two calls, Mk 1: 16–18 and Mk 1: 19–20 move according to a pattern:

a) The potential disciples are busy in their daily work;
b) Jesus challenges them to follow him and serve him; and
c) They obediently leave their work and without hesitation follow him.\(^57\)

From this narrative we learn that it is only Jesus who has the authority to call and choose his disciples – it is not the disciple that chooses to be called. Those who accept enter into a radical commitment: they have to leave everything. Finally, it is also evident that the call to discipleship is an invitation to get into motion, to follow Jesus.\(^58\) Following Jesus everyday in his journey indicates personal allegiance.\(^59\) Therefore there must be a continuous, ongoing commitment.

**Faith Journey**

Just as in the Old Testament theology, the New Testament literature understands that acceptance of the call is not a one-time business but is a continuous condition of being.\(^60\) The New Testament puts more emphasis on this concept by presenting this imagery of the journey. The call and the relationship that the disciple has with his Christ,\(^61\) is compared with a faith journey. The disciple of the Christ is not to be compared to the follower of the Ark during the Exodus period. The disciple

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55. The gospel of John shows that all those who in a way or another had contact with Jesus had to respond to the persistent call of Jesus. John presents us with seven different types of answers: 1. rejection (like Judas), 2. acceptance without any public commitment (like Nicodemus), 3. acceptance because of his signs (like the crowd), 4. faith in his words (like the Samaritan, and the blind man), 5. commitment, even if with ups and downs (like Peter and Thomas), 6. exemplary discipleship, believing and bearing true witness, (like the Beloved Disciple) 7. initial affirmative answer followed by a change of heart by moving away from Jesus. Cf Vignolo (1994). p. 44.

56. Cf Mk 1,16–20


58. Cf ibid. p. 171.


has a more personal relationship with Jesus whom s/he is following and commits him/herself to Jesus. This aspect is particularly emphasised in the Gospel of Mark. It is noteworthy that Mark presents his theology on discipleship in between the two miracle healing of the blind men, in a journey from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem. Mark emphasises the use of the verbs that reflect motion and highlights the verb “to follow”. New Testament theology, in particular the theology of Mark, stresses the fact that discipleship is a personal dynamic process that occurs in the context of a believing community.

The importance of the individual is spelled out in the formulation of the concept of discipleship. For Mark, the process of repentance and belief is strictly a personal endeavour, even if it occurs within a community. This attention to the individual is once more stressed through the pedagogy of the journey. Whilst in the Old Testament we find Yahweh walking with Israelites in order to make them his people, in the New Testament we see the figure of Jesus personally or by his presence accompanying the believer throughout the journey.

The most evident reference to this image is found in the gospel of Luke in the narrative of the two disciples travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. However, the Gospel of John presents a more subtle allusion to this image. Vignolo illustrates how John ably shows Jesus’ personalised pedagogy and interaction with every disciple. The relationship with Jesus and the paths taken by Nicodemus, the Samaritan, Thomas, Peter and the Beloved Disciple in order to come to understand Jesus as “the Way, the Truth and Life” are evidently different. The relationship and understanding of the Beloved Disciple, the Samaritan woman, and Nicodemus are in continuous crescendo, while that of Peter and Thomas have their ups and downs with a climax at the end of the Gospel.

62. Symbol of the gift of light (faith) to the disciples.
63. A region in the north of Palestine touching the boarders of pagan Syria, therefore symbolising the gentile world, untrue faith and distance from God.
64. Religious centre of the Jews, called by God to become the religious centre of the universe. Jerusalem is understood as “the crown of splendour in Yahweh’s hand” (Is 62: 3). Therefore, in this context, Jerusalem becomes the symbol of God’s accomplishment of salvation, both personal and of humankind.
Even though the characters can be subdivided in these two large and distinct categories, they nonetheless show sharp differences among themselves. For instance, while the Samaritan and the Beloved Disciple are physically accompanied by the presence of Jesus in their faith journey, Nicodemus makes his spiritual journey by first dialoguing with Jesus, and thereafter with Jesus’ presence being felt in the background. Similarly, even the journey of the Samaritan is different from that of the Beloved Disciple, in that even though the first excursus is shorter, nonetheless the Samaritan woman not only believes but becomes an apostle and evangeliser to her immediate community.

Since in the gospels discipleship is viewed as a journey, discipleship is also understood in terms of a relationship with Christ. The relational aspect of discipleship is made particularly personal in the gospel of John. John presents the image of the good shepherd who takes personal care of every individual sheep by calling them by name and leaving the rest and searching for the one that had left the flock.

Jesus is identified with the Father. The true disciple is s/he who believes that Jesus and the Father are one and that the signs of Jesus mirror the signs of God. In the farewell speech, the use of “I am” statements are a reference to identify Jesus with Yahweh. Jn 15: 1–7 emphasises that it is only in the relationship that the disciple holds with Christ and God that s/he can find true life.

The theme of a relationship with Christ is further delved into in the figure of the Beloved Disciple, “the one who had leant back close to his [Jesus] chest at the supper.” Hillmer notes that John uses the same terminology for expressing the Beloved Disciple’s being in the bosom of Jesus just like when he refers to Jesus relationship with his Father. Through the figure of the Beloved Disciple, every

69. Cf. Jn 3,21
72. Luke is the other evangelist who reuses and re-conceptualises the Old Testament terminology of shepherd and flock [Cf. ESLER (1989) p. 26]. Even though Luke also demonstrates a personal relationship between the shepherd and his flock, it is John who alludes to a relationship between the shepherd and every individual sheep that is so personalised.
disciple is called not only to enter into an intimate relationship with Jesus but to follow him, be a witness of his crucifixion, believe in the empty tomb and give testimony “that life was made visible.”

**Conclusion**

It is evident that in the Gospels there is attention to the faith experience of the individual. Through the mystery of incarnation God lives amongst us and every person is called to relate with him. It is only in this relationship of faith and trust that the called one can become a new person. Mark makes us note that even though discipleship and individual faith in Jesus are distinct they are in fact bound together. He insists that both discipleship and the faith journey are actually a lifelong project. Faith is at the heart of discipleship. It is the personal decision and commitment that every individual has to make upon receiving God’s call to repentance and to believe.

The call is the activity and prerogative of the God of Life who summons every individual to a relationship that restores life in all its dimensions (physical, mental, social and spiritual). All words and actions (miracles) are intended to summon the individual to a new life and actually bring new life, in all its fullness, especially to those who need it: sinners, the sick, the socially emarginated and even the dead.

In Jesus, God’s personalised pedagogy is expressed in its fullness. Jesus is presented to us as the teacher whose teaching addresses individual needs according to one’s stage in the journey towards total belief in him. Thus his message is suited to his audience (crowds, disciples, twelve, small group or individuals). However, the gospels also make us aware that all Jesus’ actions and words are pregnant with didactic meaning. Jesus does not address solely the masses but he addresses every individual he encounters and he adapts his pedagogy accordingly. The stories about Nicodemus, the Samaritan, the blind man, Levi, the tax collector, the rich young man, Jairus and the woman suffering from a haemorrhage offer perfect examples of Jesus’ attention to the individual and his ability to adapt to different personal needs.

76. 1 Jn 1,2; Cf. HILLMER (1996) pp. 88–89
78. Cf. ibid. p. 135.
79. Cf. Mk 1,15.
However, we should also consider that God's personalised pedagogy occurs in the context of the community. The theology of equilibrium between individual and community is once again reiterated even if from a different perspective. From a pedagogical point of view we can infer that God respects the individual in his/her fullness by a positive human model in the person of Christ and a Life that truly reflects his being created in the image and likeness of God. In the New Testament, God, through the person of Jesus Christ, personalises his call and adapts to the needs and characteristic of every individual by first of all addressing the individual, and thus demanding personal commitment, then walking alongside the individual in his/her faith journey and thereafter by restoring and giving him/her Life.

The highlighting of God's respect of the individual and the personalised pedagogy which Jesus adopted should form the basis for a concrete dialogue with cognitive psychology and instructional design in an attempt to propose Adaptive Religious Education as an effective teaching method. Further research should take into consideration the recent theories on cognitive/learning styles, which suggest that every individual organises and represents knowledge in singular ways, and

80. Whilst in the Old Testament more attention was given to the salvation of the community, in the New Testament more attention is given to the salvation of the individual. Nonetheless, in both periods there is the belief that there is no community without the individual and vice versa. This theology and this change of emphasis during the two different testamental periods rests in the framework of God's respect, not only of the individual, but also of human development. In the New Testament, society had developed a more personalised concept of what is meant by community. The meaning of community in the New Testament is markedly different from that of the Old Testament, particularly from that of the ancient period when Jews held the concept of corporate personality. We note that through the different period (Ancient Israel, the Monarchy period, the exilic period, the post-exilic period and the New Testament period) there is progression in the mentality of the believing community in its recognition of the individual as an important agent within the community. God respects this progression by adapting his revelation accordingly and by making his call more personal.

the theories in Instructional Design, which contemplate the possibility of Adapting teaching to the needs of the learners without the need of individualising learning,\footnote{Cf. Ok-choon Park, “Adaptive Instructional Systems”, in: David H. Jonassen (ed.), Handbook of research for Educational communications and technology. A project of the Association for educational communications and technology, “Simon and Shuster/MacMillan; New York 1996) 634–664.} in order to have a Catechesis which truly respects the recipient of the message and the message itself.

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