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CONSIDERATION OF THE CHURCH'S IDENTITY AND MISSION,
PREDICATED ON THE CHURCH *BE*-ING 'LIGAMEN' (BOND)

by

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A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology·Seminary of
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CONSIDERATION OF THE CHURCH'S IDENTITY AND MISSION, PREDICATED ON THE CHURCH *BE-ING* 'LIGAMEN' (BOND)

Abstract: In 1965, the Roman Catholic Church, in *Gaudium et spes*, declared to the world: *this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds (GS 1)*. Shifting her identity from being one in opposition to the modern world, she announced the possibility of becoming the very bond (*ligamen*) binding *diverse human communities and nations* of the world, whilst existing as *a function, a light, an energy (GS 42)*. Framed against the classical understanding of *ecclesia* as a perfect society, and the fact that this was no longer realistic in a mid-twentieth century context, a new vision for presenting the Roman Church became necessary. This context was shaped by the seminal events of the Second World War and the ontological break engendered by the legacy of Martin Heidegger. This paper explores the use of *ligamen*-as-bond as a response to this challenge, and how *ligamen*-as-identity complements contemporary notions of evangelization under Pope Francis.

In a higher world it is otherwise,
but here below to live is to change,
and to be perfect is to change often.
—John Henry Newman.¹

... be attentive, be intelligent, be responsible,
be loving, and, if necessary, change.
—Bernard Lonergan, S.J.²

Theologians John Henry Newman and Bernard Lonergan frame a significant period of the history of the Church.³ Within the timeline spanning these two men's lives, two councils would be convened to address the Church's relationship with the modern world. At Vatican I (1869-1870), the Church would choose to hold tightly to its Tridentine sense of identity, and position herself accordingly in opposition to the unfolding modernity. By the conclusion of Vatican II (1962-1965), the Church, in the documents she produced, would come to announce a

¹ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909), 40, quoted in Neil J. Ormerod, "The Times They Are a 'Changin': A Response to O'Malley and Schloesser," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006), 834.

² Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972), 321.

³ This paper was written with a Catholic audience in mind. That said, it is this author's belief that the considerations raised transcend the particularities of a singular denomination, institution, or even religion. The word *Church* has been chosen because of its porousness and its resistance to absolute appropriation.

new appreciation of the world, and her place in that world. Present at both councils, as evidenced by the two epigrams above, were learned men who did not view ‘change’ as a threat to continuity and tradition, but, rather, as something to not be discounted, as something essential to the very continuation of the Church’s tradition and sense of mission.

Contained in the first epigram is a distinction of difference, an identity marked by that which does not exist by virtue of *essentia*, but rather by an ontological constitution founded upon “deficiency in what it has or is.”⁴ As a consequence of attentiveness to the deficiency, the potentiality *to move* is presented. To move is to change: to answer the deficiency, and to advance fully the answer into the unfolding constitution of identity. John Newman names this as *entelechy*.⁵ For a Victorian theologian such as Newman this ‘unfolding’ was to be seen as an incremental process over a *longue durée*.⁶ However, by the time of Vatican II, a person or social entity was more likely to see the unfolding of identity “as subject to change in the most diverse ways,” occasionally and especially punctuated by limit-states, “when the blows of contingency make their sharpest and most direct psychic impact.”⁷

For Bernard Lonergan, all history is movement.⁸ All movement-in-history has three possible consequences: “progress, decline, and redemption.”⁹ Each of these is in consequence of *how* the person/social entity responds to the reality which surrounds and defines the particularities of a *Sitz im Leben* (“setting in life”). Thus, as an example, Lonergan can reason “[t]ravel and research have dissipated” the once held assertion of Imperium, “that one and only

⁴ Walter Kern, “Absolute and Contingent, The Contingent,” in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, volume 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1968), 3.

⁵ John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Reform, Historical Consciousness, and Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 32, no. 4 (1971): 594.

⁶ The *longue durée* (“long duration”) was a concept made famous by the French *Annales* School, which came to history as being determined by overarching pressures that extended far beyond the duration of an event or even a string of events.

⁷ Kern, “Absolute and Contingent,” 4.

⁸ Lonergan, *Method*, 192.

⁹ Neil J. Ormerod, “‘The Times They Are A Changin’?,” 838.

one set of meaning and values was valid for all mankind.”¹⁰ For *progress* to manifest, there must be “long and sustained fidelity to the transcendental precepts,”¹¹ outlined in the second epigram. *Decline* is “fruit of unauthenticity,”¹² and “unauthenticity is realized by a single act of inattention, obtuseness, unreasonableness, irresponsibility.”¹³ Such precarity demands one to always be *in-process*, *re-orienting* oneself, over and over again, both toward the traditions of culture and in response to the contingencies of contemporary situations. *Decline*, a constant threat, can be reversed through *redemption*, which is set in motion, in “principle,” by “self-sacrificing love.”¹⁴ Movement, therefore, is to be seen as always relational and responsive.

In 1965, the Catholic Church chose to employ a unique word at a singular moment. In article 42 of *Gaudium et spes*, the Second Vatican Council, announcing the essence of the Church in the modern world, states: *Ecclesia ex hac sua universalitate ligamen arctissimum inter diversas hominum communitates et nationes existere potest*¹⁵ (“the Church by her very universality can be a very close bond between diverse human communities and nations;” emphasis added). ‘Bond’ framed in this fashion is not an external, contingent construct, but, instead, takes on the force of an existential identity-claim.

This paper will focus on this shift in ecclesial identity, by understanding: (1) the Church’s ‘classical’ understanding of herself as a perfect society; (2) the challenge to this understanding evidenced in the world leading up to the Second Vatican Council, along with the subsequent use

¹⁰ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., “Dialectic of Authority,” in *A Third Collection* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴ Lonergan, “Dialectic of Authority,” 10.

¹⁵ Vatican Council, Constitutio *Gaudium et spes*, Vatican Archive, The Holy See, 1965, Latin, accessed online, April 1, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_lt.html, art. 42. Nb.— This paper will use the official online translation of the constitution published by the Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. Hereafter, citations will appear parenthetically, if not explicitly noted in the text.

of *ligamen* as a response to this challenge; and (3) how this sense of identity complements contemporary notions of evangelization under Francis.

CHURCH AS PERFECT SOCIETY ABOVE THE WORLD

In Genesis 7, God sends his flood out across a world plagued with an irreparable decay. Only Noah and the other living things locked up inside the ark survive the wrath of the day. In 1938, one year before the events of both Pius XII's ascent to the throne of St Peter and Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* ("lightning war") into Poland, theologian Henri de Lubac would publish his exhortative *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme*. Keeping in concord with the conventions of his day, de Lubac envisioned the Church as a protective *adyton*,¹⁶ a floating fortress, not unlike the ark of old, that could float safely above the maelstrom of modernity. De Lubac writes: "*Arche unique du Salut, elle doit abriter en sa vaste nef toutes les diversités humaines*" ("As she is the only ark of salvation, within her immense nave she must give shelter to all varieties of humanity)."¹⁷ De Lubac draws his metaphor of ark from the Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, an apology, written, c. 400, against the Manicheans.¹⁸ De Lubac claims his ark's

¹⁶ A secured (restricted) area within inner sanctum of ancient temples.

¹⁷ Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, Unam Sanctam, vol. 3, (Paris: Cerf, 1938), 227. E. T.: *Catholicism: A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1950). Comparing the French original to the English translation, one quickly discerns a difference in tone and implication from the works selected by the translator, i.e., "*unique*" is a term more open and ambiguous (and ecumenical) than the singularity asserted in the word "only." The comparison of subtitles also evidences the political undertone to the British translation. This might be on account of the *Sitz im Leben* at the time of the translation. In the intervening years since the original date of publication, there was a horrific global war; the apex and the fall of the Third Reich; the dismantling of the Raj in India and the threat to the totality of the British Empire; the emerging threat of nuclear annihilation; the occupation of Eastern Europe by a Soviet military; and new appeals of Existentialism and other countercultures.

¹⁸ The citation only appears in the French original. By the time of the English translation, any reference to *Contra Faustum* is dropped.

uniqueness on the simple fact that “*catholicisme est La Religion*” (“Catholicism is religion itself”).¹⁹

The certitude of De Lubac can be traced back to the Hellenic-Roman-Christian notion of an enduring, absolute order that reflects faithfully the hierarchy of God and the heavenly hosts. Positioning angels against demons, saints against sinners, orthodoxy against heresy, the City of God against the City of Man, the Church’s self-understanding grew into an exclusivist identity. In the sixteenth century, this notion of an enduring order was codified by Robert Bellarmine into a rubric of justification for membership: (1) public profession of a singular faith; (2) communal reception of identical sacraments; and (3) universal submission to ecclesial governance, led, in particular, by Christ’s one true vicar on earth, the pope in Rome. Notes Avery Dulles: “The first criterion rules out pagans, Moslems, Jews, heretics, and apostates; the second rules out catechumens and excommunicated persons; the third rules out schismatics. Thus only Roman Catholics remain.”²⁰ This ontocratic understanding, in which *substance* endures “untouched by history,”²¹ was re-enforced by the repetition of the same, with no temperance for variation. Thus, at Vatican I, the first schema of the dogmatic constitution on the Church could draw a line between the sub-stance of the Roman Catholic Church and any inferior deviations: “The Church is not part nor member of any other society and is not mingled in any way with any other society. It is so perfect in itself that it is distinct from all human societies and stands far above them.”²²

Professing its own *substantia* as perfection, the Church became resistant to change or breach. Neoscholasticism’s “perfect society” survived, virtually unchanged, into the twentieth

¹⁹ De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 227. Nb. – Henri de Lubac in the original French publication italicized and capitalized *La Religion* to emphasize the singularity of Catholicism’s uniqueness.

²⁰ Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church: Expanded Edition* (New York and London: Doubleday, 2002), 8.

²¹ O’Malley, “Reform,” 591.

²² Cf. Dulles, *Models*, 29. Dulles quoted from J. Neuner and H. Roos, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967), No. 361, 213-14. See also, *Collectio Lacensis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1890), Vol. 7, 567-78.

century. In 1943, Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici corporis* taught that "no one could be truly (*reapse*) a member of the Mystical Body without being a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Christians not united to the visible structure of the Roman Catholic Church by the threshold bonds of faith, sacraments, and obedience, were cut off from communion with Christ."²³

These explicit bonds of faith were classified by ecclesial Latin as *vinculis*. A *vinculum* ("bond," "chain," "fetter") implies surcease or constriction. Consequentially, the display of the *vinculis* to the Church became *the* paramount justification of the Catholic faith: as opposed, for example, the imitation of Christ, through anonymous acts of charity, out of love of God and neighbor.

CHURCH AS 'LIGAMEN' IN THE WORLD

By 1945, the distinctiveness and distance of the 'perfect society,' had been called into radical question by the events of immediate history. The Lateran Accords of 1929 and the *Reichskonkordat* of 1933 visibly tied the 'perfect society' to imperfect regimes and their legacies of domination and genocide, through *vinculis* of treaties and concordats, for political and territorial gains. As one Jewish theologian remarked, "Actions speak louder than words. People who profess God but gas men, women, and children or burn them alive are atheists whatever their words may be."²⁴ The bonds that tied the Church to European totalitarianism gave testimony to the inability of the institutional Church to exist "far above" "all human societies." The legacy of these political *vinculis* challenged the exclusivity of the *societas*

²³ Avery Dulles, S.J. "A Half Century of Ecclesiology." *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 423.

²⁴ Irving Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant," *Perspectives* (October, 1982): 27-42.

perfecta. By 1962, according to John XXIII, the Church had no recourse but to reform her expressiveness in a “way demanded by our times.”²⁵ Vatican II was the Church’s response to the demand, and this response eventually produced, in 1965, *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

In its opening statement, this pastoral constitution collapses the farness needed by a ‘perfect society,’ to float “far above,” isolated from “any other society,”²⁶ by comingling the “men of this age” with the “followers of Christ” to the point of identical struggles and desires.²⁷ Proximity and similarity demand a new relation. This new relation, in turn, necessitates a reclaimed understanding of shared dignity, rooted in the acknowledgement that all human persons are “created ‘to the image of God’” (*GS* 12, cf., Gen 1:26). All persons are, therefore, intimately connected to each other, and to “He Who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15), [and] is Himself the perfect man” (*GS* 22, cf., 2 *Cor.* 4:4). They are, ultimately, mysteries unto themselves, unto each other, reflecting the mystery of Christ, and through Christ the mystery of the Triune God.

For Jean-Luc Marion, the “revelation of man as created in the image and likeness of God institutes an unknowing that is all the more radical in that it is founded in the incomprehensibility of God himself.”²⁸ As such, man exceeds the possibility of *de-finition*; he resists any “finite essence,” for he reflects the ineffability of the excess that is God.²⁹ Resistance to the temptation of ‘*de-finition*’ reaches full resonance in *Gaudium et spes*, 28: “Respect and love

²⁵ John XXIII, Address *Gaudet mater ecclesia*, October 11, 1962 (solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council), sec. 15, trans. furnished by John Komonchak, S.J., online: <http://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>.

²⁶ See note 19.

²⁷ Cf., *Gaudium et spes*, 1: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

²⁸ Jean-Luc Marion, “Mihi Magna Quaestio Factus Sum: The Privilege of Unknowing,” *Journal of Religion* 85, no. 1 (January 2005): 21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14–16. Marion sees this awareness as a disposition necessary for co-existing.

ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently, than we do in social, political, and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.” This command cancels any tendency to dominate through forced-assimilation or exclusion. By extending ‘respect and love’ to all who are different from her, the Church identifies mutuality as an intended start for encounter. David Tracy marks the site of this nature, as “that unnerving place where one is willing to risk all one’s present self-understanding, by facing the claims to attention of the other.”³⁰

In article 42, the word for chosen to express this ‘turn to the other’ is *ligamen* (“bond,” “bandage,” “string,” “tie,” “fastening,” “nerve,” “ligament”), and like ‘ligament’ in English it implies an organic construct: flexible, connecting, a construct that neither constricts nor cancels movement, but rather accommodates fluctuation. *Ligamen* gives noetic weight to the existential aspect of Church *as* bond(-ing). *Ligamen* shares a common root with the word *religiosi* (“religious”), used by the Council, in the preceding paragraph of article 42, to denote the particular nature of the mission given to the Church by Christ. This sense of religious-mission-as-identity, which the Council puts forward, is in contrast to the missions that humanity commonly uses as identity markers: the political, the economic, and the social.³¹ This distinction allows for a framing of *essentia* as “a function, a light and an energy which can serve” (cf. Jn 1:4). Instead of the fortress-identity, opposed to the world, the Church, as *ligamen* might reveal the

³⁰ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 93.

³¹ Cf., *Gaudium et spes*, 42: “Christ, to be sure, gave His Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one.” Here, the Second Vatican Council cites the New Testament as evidence for this distinction (cf. Lk 6:37-38; Mt 7:1-2; Rom 2:1-11; 14:10, 14:10-12). The paragraph, though continues: “But out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place produce the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men, especially those designed for the needy, such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings.”

“human community” in a more perfect manner, one that transcends the order (*juris*) born of finite human *ratio*, and presences, instead, the indiscriminate way in which God sends down rain and sunlight (cf. Mt 5:44-45; Jn 7:24; 8:15). Writing specifically of article 42, Yves Congar notes “the Church at the very moment in which it is least *of* the world, can be most *for* the world.”³² In the act of becoming *ligamen*, there is implied an unfastening from the presuppositions of self-as-substance, in order to accommodate an attending sense of being toward the unanticipated claims made by the other.

Such an appreciation pushes Christianity into a new existing. Building on Heidegger’s insights, Karl Rahner claims, “Christianity in its fully and explicit form is not merely an abstract theory, nor a reality to be understood in an objectivistic and ultimately reified way,” but is a “real and existentiell relationship,”³³ in which “we are forming the eternity which we ourselves are and are becoming.”³⁴ All existentiell relationships are accordingly eschatological. For Rahner, waiting at the end of the investigations of Heidegger is a *theological* choice:

a choice between eternal death and eternal life before God, and not merely resoluteness toward death. In this case, to jar man loose from the pure idea and cast him into his own existence and into history, as Heidegger is doing, would be to prepare him, to make him attentive in advance to the fact—existential, historical—of a divine relation, would be to open him to “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” to the “World of Life, seen, heard, touched” by human hands, “Jesus of Nazareth”...³⁵

This critical choice calls being, in each decision, in each moment, to exist as “being in the strictest sense of the term the *out-come*.”³⁶ *Out-come* is an acting into Being-in-the-world. And

³² Yves Congar, O.P., “Part I, Chapter IV: The Role of the Church in the Modern World,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler and trans. W.J. O’Hara, American Edition (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 217.

³³ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych, (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 306.1/19/15 5:49 PM

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁵ Karl Rahner, “The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger,” *Philosophy Today* 8, no. 2/4 (Summer 1969): 137.

coming out *from* implies coming from out *into* – its *be*-ing in the becoming-new the bond, the close bond, between diverse entities alive apart in the world.

Heidegger, in 1950-51, writes of a jug:

In the gift of water, in the gift of wine, sky and earth dwell.
But the gift of the outpouring is what makes the jug a jug.
In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell.... The jug is
a thing insofar as it things.... In thinging, it stays earth and
sky, divinities and mortals. Staying, the thing brings the
four [sky, earth, divinities, mortals], in their remoteness,
near to one another.... The united four are already strangled
in their essential natural when we think of them only as sep-
arate realities, which are to be ground in and explained by
one another.³⁷

The jug performs its jugness into being. Its essence does not rest comfortably in the security of *substantia*. *Essentia* is bound up with *existentia*, and *existentia* attains character only in its irreducible performativity that it is commanded into performing in order to exist fully in its world. In the outpouring, the jug stays the vertical and horizontal, and brings the mortal and immortal into communion. Analogically, the Church is church insofar as she outpours in the performing bond. It is in her be-coming the gift of bond that she *out*-comes herself and thus *be*-comes herself *new*, imitating and reflecting the gift of God's gifting in his self-communication of his love. The Church confesses in *Gaudium et spes*, 24: "that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor." In *Contra impugnantes*, Thomas Aquinas uses *vinculum* to signify juridical bonds between men, bonds constructed according to the *ratio* of human intellect. Aquinas appropriates *ligatur* (related to *ligamen*) to honor, by contrast, the direct bond

³⁶ Karl Rahner, "Existence, 'The Existential,'" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol. 2, (New York: Herder and Herder, London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1968), 305.

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 1971), 170, 175.

between man and the divine.³⁸ By becoming *ligamen*, the Church turns from self to other outside her. By existing as *ligamen*, she stays love of God and love of neighbor in the outpouring of her very presence.

To commit to authentic respect and love for all, and to live in the world accordingly, attention is required to be directed continually in all directions. It requires that the Church take apart her ark: not to use the lumber and pitch to build bridges, but to leave the ark, and to fashion herself into *the* bridges and bonds that make the world whole.³⁹ To leave the ark or *adyton* behind is to enter intimately into relationship with the ‘unknowing’ mentioned above by Marion.

The “human communities and nations” (*GS* 42), between which the Church is to be *ligamen*, are, by their varied nature and history, constantly in a state of flux and modification, which they use to preserve both their distance and their competing identities. To bridge these shifting divides, the Church must continually *be-come* bond *new*.⁴⁰ In this continual renewal and resurrection of the bond, the Church frees herself from becoming an idol of her own identity. By this bonding of love and respect, the world will know the disciple of Christ (cf. Jn 13: 34-35).

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Contra impugnantes (Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem)*, trans. John Procter, O.P., updated and corrected by Joseph Kenny, O.P., accessed online, May 13, 2014, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraImpugnantes.htm#1>, Pars 1 passim.

³⁹ This totality expresses the existential ideal put forth by *ligamen*. In opening herself to becoming any and every bridge between any and every diverse non-Church element in the world, the Church places herself in the perpetual disposition of *minister perfectus* (perfect servant) instead of safeguarding the self-contained, self-conditioned *societas perfecta*. The quality of *perfectus* is no longer observed in the objectified form but in the efficacy of service, in how well she outpours in serving to bring about unity-through-difference in the loving unity of God’s gifting love.

⁴⁰ Karl Rahner speaks to the distinction between “an atomized beginning-ever-anew” and “becoming-new,” a way of being-in-history which “preserves the old, and preserves it all the more *as* old”—departing from the truth “which has been reached in order to discover it [...] again:” cf., Rahner, “Current Problems in Christology,” in *Theological Investigations*, I, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1961), 150.

‘LIGAMEN’ AND FRANCIS’ SENSE OF PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH

Love is elemental for the Church’s ability to become bond between diverse entities in the world, entities which may, by their expressed disposition and performative natures, pose hostile opposition to the Church, to Christ, to God (cf., *GS* 28). For Rahner, this “act of self-commitment to the other has a radical, absolute, unconditional quality by no means adequately founded or based on the antecedent grounds for that act.”⁴¹ By *be-coming* bond, the Church can come into fullness of its supererogatory identity.

Evangelization, Pope Francis exhorts, is more than simply quoting Scripture to an audience, or at a situation. “The Church which ‘goes forth,’” writes Francis in his exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*,

gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.⁴²

The ability to “touch the flesh” is, for Francis, conditional of a Christian’s existentiell. At a meeting with the poor in Assisi, the pope declared: “The Christian is not one who speaks about the poor, no! He is one who encounters them, who looks them in the eye, who touches them.”⁴³

To love, writes philosopher Luce Irigaray, is *to touch* in a way that “cannot be appropriation,

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, S.J., *The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbor*, trans. Robert Barr (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 17.

⁴² Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 2013, Vatican Archive, The Holy See, accessed March 14, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, sec. 24. Please note, that all further citations to this exhortation will be abbreviated, e.g. *EG* 24, and will refer to the English translation offered by The Holy See. Of interest is the special attention given this pericope in the index to the exhortation. Section 24 is given its own prominence from the surrounding sections.

⁴³ Francis, Address, meeting with the poor assisted by Caritas, Assisi, October 4, 2013, Vatican Archive, The Holy See, accessed May 3, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131004_poveri-assisi.html.

capture, seduction—to me, toward me, in me.”⁴⁴ Reminiscent of the call to reciprocity and correlation contained in *Gaudium et spes*, Irigaray writes:

This *touching upon* does not take place without a syntax constituting or bringing about the relation with the other. It is a grammar which prefers the question to the imperative... it privileges verbs expressing dialogue, doing together: it uses *to, between, with together*, rather than transitive forms, which always risk reducing the other to an object.⁴⁵

To bond is a transitive verb by definition. And ‘bond’ can reveal the character of either *ligamen* or *vinculum*. To-be-bond is not enough in itself to reveal the nature of the Christian’s existentiell. The will-towards-bond must be in-fused with the “love and respect” (*GS* 28) that opens up the *bond-ing* to be a bond that can be of “service to the world as it is,”⁴⁶ imitating God’s gift of non-violent love, and privileging the dignity of all who are touched.

Be-ing bond, the Church can reveal peace.

Francis grounds his exhortation in the imitation of Christ. In order to better understand the incarnational component to the *presencing* of peace, a reflection on the Resurrection story seems warranted. After Jesus’ execution, after the empty tomb, Jesus came to where the disciples were, hiding behind locked doors. Facing all those who had abandoned him at the time of his arrest and passion, Jesus “said, ‘Peace be with you.’”⁴⁷ Jesus, as the Risen Christ, bridged the distance measured by locked portals and the isolation, borne of fearful and shameful hearts. His very *presencing* and greeting was peace. He did not bring peace, as one might bring a contribution to a meal. His *be-ing* and his action became the gift. God gives the gift of non-

⁴⁴ Luce Irigaray, *I Love To You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 125.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 152.

⁴⁷ Jn 20:19 (NRSV).

violent love, a love that reveals its existence *in actu*. The bond *be*-comes a thing, when it things – in the very act of *bond*-ing. For peace to be, peace must presence itself. Before peace is given, it has no existence. It comes to be as it is occasioned to become within the space made for it. The bond becomes, and coming, makes the site which occasions the possibility for peace to reveal itself. Christ, who “is Himself peace,”⁴⁸ said to his disciples: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”⁴⁹ The name of the One who is peace causes peace to be revealed in the limit-state, in a way that teaches peace indiscriminately. The bond that comes into being out of love bonds in love, and bonding in love, reveals the gift of love which, in fraternal unity, is loving peace. The bond occasions the unfolding of non-violent love, which is, in very occasion of its being, the coming of the reign of God.⁵⁰

Peace is not an idea. Peace is the reality of a possibility for Reality to unfold itself into.

“Realities,” writes Francis:

are greater than ideas. This principle has to do with the incarnation of the word and its being put into practice: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is from God” (1 Jn 4:2). The principle of reality, of a word already made flesh and constantly strive to take flesh anew, is essential to salvation.⁵¹

Francis ties evangelization to this notion of taking flesh anew: of *religare*.⁵² The Church-as-bond reveals its bond in its *existentia*, not only between the diverse, worldly entities mentioned in

⁴⁸ Eph 2:14 (NRSV). Cf. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, “The Problem of Polarity,” in *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 345

⁴⁹ Mt 18: 20 (NRSV).

⁵⁰ Cf. Mt 5:43-48 (NSRV).

⁵¹ *EC* 233.

⁵² “To refasten,” cf. Eugene C. Bianchi, S.J., *The Religious Experience of Revolutionaries* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1972), 6. Of interest, as a point of comparison, is Friedrich Engel’s assertion regarding the etymological meaning of *religare* – “Religion is derived from ‘religare’ and means originally ‘fastening.’ Therefore, every bond between men is religion;” cf., Friedrich Engels, *Feuerbach, the Roots of the Socialist Philosophy*, trans. Austin Lewis (Chicago: C.H. Kerr, 1903), 78.

Gaudium et spes, but in the performative of *religare*, as a tracery that ties ever-broadening “horizons” to “the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God.”⁵³ While horizons beckon into being new possibilities of encounter and event, it is by tying itself to the “soil of human facticity” that the Church remains rooted in an incarnated concreteness, necessary for any authentic imitation of Christ.⁵⁴

This movement maps a “whole” that, for Francis, “is greater than the part, but also is greater than the sum of its parts,”⁵⁵ and “evokes” for Francis, “the totality and integrity of the Gospel which the Church passes down to us and sends us forth to proclaim.”⁵⁶ Francis selects the *polyhedron*, as a model for this reality, “which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness.”⁵⁷ This convergence presents the totality of the horizontal and the vertical, both in the *nexus* of the *hic et nunc*, but, also, against the *horizon* which unfolds between, and expands into, past and future. Such a site “truly has a place for everyone.” Such a site makes space, even for the discounted. For Francis: “Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked.”⁵⁸

When the Church exists as a very close bond, it calls into being the very possibility of such a polyhedron, because in being the bond of love, respect, and peace, it calls love, respect, and peace into *be-ing*. Love, respect, and peace, cannot bond as ideas. They can only bond to the extent that they reveal into reality that which, by name, they promise. They can only bond if they are authentic in *how* they exist. The Church-as-bond can only bond if it is received. And

⁵³ *EG* 235.

⁵⁴ Traces of ‘horizons’ and ‘fertile soil’ can be found in the thought of Heidegger. For a concise explanation of Heidegger’s correlation between these notions, see Frank Schalow, *The Renewal of the Heidegger Kant Dialogue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 100-103, esp. 102.

⁵⁵ *EG* 235.

⁵⁶ *EG* 237.

⁵⁷ *EG* 236.

⁵⁸ *EG* 236.

the world will receive the Church as love, respect, and peace, if the world judges the assertions of the Church as authentic. Bonding constitutes *praxis*, and as *be-ing* bond, the Church positions itself to be judged according to this practice. Francis notes: “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by ‘attraction.’”⁵⁹

A bond cannot bond, if it does not touch, and if its touch is not received. A touch is received by diverse parties in their predicaments, when those parties, according to the criteria cautioned by their diversity and their predicaments, judge the touch to not be a threat and to be of benefit. Such a touch must touch out of charity, i.e. “does not seek its own advantage.”⁶⁰ The touch then becomes receivable. *Ligamen* then becomes viable.

Francis boils down the mission of the Church, and of all Christians, to living out, in the day-to-day, Christ’s “new commandment, the first and greatest of the commandments, and the one that best identifies us as Christ’s disciples: ‘This is my commandment, that you love each other, as I have loved you (Jn 5:12).’” For Francis, “the heart of the Christian moral message” is “the essential requirement of love for one’s neighbour.” Without its fulfillment, no other claim has warrant.⁶¹ With its practice, the moral decline borne out of a ‘globalization of indifference,’ can be redeemed.

⁵⁹ *EG* 15.

⁶⁰ Cf., Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, trans. by Jean LeClerq, O.S.B., and Henri Rochais, with analytical commentary by Emero Stiegman (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 34-35. Saint Bernard, in his “Letter on Charity to the Holy Brethren of Chartreuse,” makes mention of three examples of *love-ing*: the love of a slave, of a hireling, and lastly “of a son who honors his father.” The first is the love of one “who fears for himself;” the second, the love of one “who thinks only of himself.” The last is a love which “does not seek its own advantage.” There, in the son, is Charity to be found, who, like Christ, “holds nothing as his own,” and whose love, like Christ, is oriented towards “what is good for the many.”

⁶¹ *EG* 161. Jesus explores the ramifications of this within the parable-moment presented in Lk 10: 25-37. “Neighbor” is restricted to the one who outpoured mercy to the bloodied traveller. Samaritan-as-*ligamen* is contrasted with the actions of the priest and Levite who keep distance, and do not stop, out of perceived duty to ritual purity. Inheritance of eternal life is exclusively linked within the pericope to the *ligamen* that ties the merciful to love of God and love of neighbor.

CONCLUSION

In his now famous interview with Antonio Spadaro, Pope Francis said that “Vatican II was a rereading of the Gospel in light of contemporary culture.”⁶² This rereading is made explicit in the employment of *ligamen* in article 42 of *Gaudium et spes*, the Church’s pastoral response to the modern world. *Ligamen* marks a radically new possibility for self-understanding as ‘bond.’ Instead of making use of bonds to restrict or surcease movement, the Church can become herself bond, in order to draw together, into fraternal unity, the diverse entities in the world. She is free to authentically become the entelechy to which John Henry Newman points. Becoming the loving bond between the diverse within the world and within history, the Church constantly calls herself into becoming anew, honoring Bernard Lonergan’s sense of history and the nature of incarnation. The word *ligamen* reveals itself in *Gaudium et spes*, at the apex to Part I. The Council uses *ligamen* to help define the possibility of the Church’s mission, and to show how her “religious” (*religiosi*) nature affords the Church the occasion to bond for the world, as opposed to floating far apart from the world, as had been envisioned at Vatican I.

Ligamen calls the faithful to *re-orient*, not only towards their world in the fullness of its diversity and predicament, but as Avery Dulles notes, “to all God’s truth, no matter who utters it.”⁶³ Dulles, against the horizon of 1968, writes: “The modern believer cannot and should not be asked to accept the world view of ancient or medieval Christians. He should be encouraged to think as a man of his own day.”⁶⁴ *Ligamen* positions the Church outside its past notions of ark,

⁶² Pope Francis, Interview with Antonio Spadaro, S.J., editor in chief of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, re-published online by *America*, September 30, 2013, accessed November 28, 2013, <http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview>.

⁶³ Dulles, *Models*, 3.

⁶⁴ Avery Dulles, S.J. “Dogma as an Ecumenical Problem.” *Theological Studies* 29, no. 3 (1968): 406.

fortress, temple, or perfect society. It positions the Church to become the bond between the interstices that worldly entities construct to emphasize their identity, often violently, against other entities, that they denigrate according to ‘*de-finition*.’⁶⁵ In the interstices, the Church becomes close enough to the other to effectively exhibit her gift: her love, her respect, her peace, for each and every other.

⁶⁵ See page 7 passim.