

Zeitschrift:	Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie
Band:	105 (2015)
Heft:	2
Artikel:	How might the catholicity of the church be a theological answer to the challenges of the globalisation?
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-583631

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How Might the Catholicity of the Church Be a Theological Answer to the Challenges of the Globalisation?

Franz Segbers

The Old Catholic Churches have many ecumenical relationships even though they are minority Churches.¹ At the very beginning of the Old Catholic movement in the late nineteenth century there was a rapid realization of the common catholic heritage with Anglicanism. In time this lead, in 1931, to the Bonn Agreement which established full communion between the Anglicans, specifically the Church of England, and the Old Catholic Churches. Similar agreements with the orthodox Churches and with the Lutheran Church in Sweden have since been concluded. Differences in numbers did not really matter. What was important was that the Churches expressed their mutual *catholic* identity. However, in respect to this expression of identity, there exists one exception: the concordat expressing full communion with the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. The signing of this concordat in 1965 was an event greater than initially expected. For the concordat with the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* has the important distinction of constituting a new historical moment for the Church and for theology. The same might be said with respect to full communion with the Indian *Mar Thoma Church*. The relationship with these both Churches represents a very important historic and theological milestone.

My contention in this article is that, in the agreement with the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* and the proposed agreement with the *Indian Mar Thoma Church*, the Old Catholic Churches not only confirm their common catholic faith with respect to these churches, they effectively turn away from the context of being a Eurocentric Church, long dominated by European thinking about the meaning and scope of catholicity, towards what has been called ‘polycentric Catholicity’. The challenge, now, is to

¹ This is a revised and extended version of a lecture given in Busan, Korea, on 4 November 2013 at the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, and also in Utrecht at the International Workshop “Challenging Catholicism” on 21 September 2014, organized by the Old Catholic Seminary at Utrecht University and the Department for Old Catholic Theology, University of Bern. – With thanks to Prof. Dr. Dr. Douglas Pratt (Waikato University and University of Bern) for his corrections of the English text.

delineate the transition from a Eurocentric Church to a polycentric and so genuinely universal catholicity. The Roman Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz created the term ‘polycentric Catholicity’ to signify the transition from a culturally more or less homogeneous, and in this sense monocentric, catholic church of the West, towards a church which has several centres in different cultures and is thus on the way to becoming a truly worldwide Roman Catholic Church.² I will explain the significance of this transition in five theses.

Thesis 1: The transformation from a European dominated catholicity towards a polycentric catholicity.

Instead of the common classification ‘Antiquity – Middle Ages – Modern Age’, I would like to suggest a different theological and ecclesiological classification in three periods, according to their different references to universalism. The first period was the relatively short, but for the theological identity of the Church extremely fundamental, time of the Early Church in Jerusalem. In the first council in Jerusalem Peter and Paul wrangled about the identity and way of being Church as it emerged out of the Jewish context and into the global Roman Empire. This initial phase of Church history is a period of the Church in transition from Jewish to Gentile Christianity and an emerging early form of universal catholicity.

In the second, and relatively long, phase an increasingly monocentric cultural Christianity was formed, which in the West emerged as distinctly European. It began with the Church itself converting from being a community more or less in opposition to the Roman Empire to being a licit, even favoured, religion of the Empire. The emperor Constantine invited the Church to become the religion of his empire. The second age is an era broadly spanning a millennium and a half wherein the form of Church was that of a dominating monocultural catholicity which, in the Western European context, issued in the imposition of uniformity over colonized people.

Finally, the third period is that of worldwide Christianity in our modern and recent era of globalization. In this context, the Churches are challenged to rediscover and redefine their universal and global catholicity by turning ‘back’ towards the universal and global Catholicity such as per-

² Cf. Johann Baptist Metz, ‘Im Aufbruch zu einer kulturell polyzentrischen Weltkirche,’ in: *ZMR* 76 (1986) 140–153.

tained to the time of the early messianic and prophetic Church as it transitioned out of its originating Jewish context.

Transitions occur in different ways. The Latin American Theologian, Enrique Dussel, speaks of ‘tides of evangelisation’.³ Like rivers flowing towards the coast and into the sea, so Church history shows that the Gospel is always flowing back from the peripheries to the centre, as it did in the transiting from Palestine to Rome, or from Ireland to continental Europe. Since the 15th century the Christian missionary activities of Western Christianity have ranged throughout the world with, at times, the accompaniment of violence: Christian mission has sometimes been a case of Bible and sword. After some five centuries of evangelization at the periphery – the motif of ‘overseas mission’ (over there, away from us at the centre, or ‘home’) – we are now witnessing the Gospel ‘flowing back’ from the peripheries, where the spiritual centre now lies, to the centre, where the political and economic centre still lies and where the Gospel is relatively peripheral. The ‘Mother Church’ at the centre is now challenged by the Gospel of the Churches of the peripheries. And this provokes anxiety and reaction on the part of the Churches at the ‘centre’ not unlike the early Christian community in Jerusalem experienced when Paul was confronting them with the universalism of the Gospel going out into the Gentile world.

The majority of the Christians today live in the global, and poor, south. The late Obispo Maximo Tomas Millamena of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* explained the privilege of the global poor people and Churches saying: “What we have is a theology that leads us to confront the evils of social injustice and inequality, a theology that is revealed through participation in our people’s struggle for social and spiritual emancipation, a theology that seeks to transform to the demands and designs of the people.” Bishop Alberto Ramento, the martyr Bishop of the poor peasants and workers, in answer to his announced imminent killing: “I know they are going to kill me next. But never will I abandon my ministry to God and His people.” Such as these are bringing the prophetic Gospel back from the peripheries to the centre. Like the water coming back from the mountains to the sea, so the Gospel that went with mission to remote regions is coming back to the source of outreach. The poor are now evangelizing the

³ Enrique Dussel, ‘Die Gezeiten des Evangeliums,’ in: *Concilium* 22 (1986) 382–388.

rich Churches. The former evangelized poor, oppressed and colonized people are now the evangelizers of the rich and self-satisfied.

Thesis 2: The Old Catholic Church was formed in opposition to the outcome of the first Vatican Council, in particular its decision about infallibility and the worldwide jurisdiction of the pope. The context of these dogmas has been affected by attempts to strengthen the imperial order within the Roman Church.

All Churches have the same origin in the messianic-prophetic Christianity in Jerusalem. The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, like all poor Churches, reminds us, the rich Churches in Europe, of the ongoing history of colonialism and imperialism which today is named 'globalization'. The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* is the product of the Filipino people's resistance against Spanish and American colonization. The returning of the Gospel from such a periphery is a reminder to the rich Churches to see their own guilty history through the eyes of the victims of that history. Further, the Indian *Mar Thoma Church* reminds us that there has ever been Christianity in Asia, at least the same, if not longer than, Christianity in Europe. The *Mar Thoma Church* has ever had its own experiences of living in a multicultural context, something that the European Churches have now to learn. The existence of the *Mar Thoma Church* relativizes and calls into question the European-centred view of Church history, understood to have spread across the whole world only since the conquest of Columbus. When Francis Xavier came to India he was surprised to meet there already the Gospel and Christians.

The name 'Old Catholic Churches' is not only a reminder of the initial undivided Church of the first half-millennium, but also of the early non-imperialistic catholicity, the catholicity of a genuinely inclusive universalism. Döllinger's letter to the Archbishop of Munich may illustrate how the political and theological aspects of the Old Catholic movement were inter-related. Döllinger stated that he could not accept the new dogma about Pope's primacy on the basis of four arguments: as a Christian, as a theologian, as a historian, and as citizen. The fundamental reason he gave was that the Roman Church, in its dogmatic proclamation, was seeking to establish the Empire of this world, an imperial Catholicity that Christ him-

self had refused.⁴ The remembrance and tradition of an anti-imperial catholicity is a neglected part of the Old Catholic ecclesiology.

Thesis 3: Catholicity in the context of the Roman Empire.

The context of Jesus' time was the brutal oppression of the occupied Palestine under the Roman Empire.⁵ Jesus was born, lived, taught, healed, and was crucified in and by an empire. In stories and parables, in healing and exorcism, in meal and miracle, Jesus provided an alternative to the reality of empire in his time. Faced with this empire, Jesus said: "You know that those who are regarded rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them" (Mk 10:42). He announced the gospel of life as the critique of all forms of domination in the empire, and set into history a force for building new communities in the face of empires. After Jesus' crucifixion as an opponent of the Roman Empire, mockingly styled as 'King of the Jews', Paul disseminated the Gospel and founded communities throughout much of the Empire. "Instead of being opposed to Judaism, Paul's gospel of Christ was opposed to the Roman Empire".⁶ Amidst a slave society there began a form of universalism embracing all communities: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). The central symbol was the Supper, the sharing of bread and wine among poor and rich in the Eucharist (1 Cor 11). Many accusations were pronounced against the first Christians: "they ate all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:7). Paul understood his assemblies (*ekklēsiai*) to be communities of an alternative society. They were "in but not of" the Roman imperial order. He set the gospel of Christ and the new communities in opposition to the Roman imperial order: the whole system of domination, power relations, imperial values, and ideology of "peace and se-

⁴ Quoted in: Urs Küry, *Die altkatholische Kirche. Ihre Geschichte, ihre Lehre, ihr Anliegen*, Stuttgart (EVW) 31982, 62.

⁵ Cf.: Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire. The Kingdom of God and The New World Disorder*, Minneapolis (Fortress) 2003; Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament. An Essential Guide*, Nashville TN (Abingdon) 1955; Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar. The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke*, Grand Rapids MI (Eerdmans) 2008.

⁶ Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, New York (TPI) 2004, 3.

curity” are dominated by the “rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:8). Paul says, in the letter to the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:1.2). Applying the titles of the Emperor to Christ could be seen as a challenge to the authorities.⁷ Joerg Rieger suggests: “What sounds like purely religious terminology to modern ears could be heard as a subtle challenge of the Roman Empire.”⁸

To be sure, Christian communities have not always been harmless social gatherings. In the second century Ignatius of Antioch was accused of participation in a riot, arrested, and taken to Rome. During his transportation to Rome he wrote seven letters to the churches. In one of these he introduced the term ‘catholic’ as the designation and identification of the church and he spoke of the ‘catholic church’ (*katholikē ekklēsia*).⁹ He named the Church ‘catholic’ as a network of solidarity all around the Roman Empire. For Ignatius it was more desirable to be thrown to the beasts than to survive among the ‘rulers of this age’. Were Ignatius to be found guilty, he would be condemned to death. This would be carried out by way of a fight with wild animals in front of a bloodthirsty crowd.¹⁰ Ignatius had spoken about the ‘diabolos’ and this ‘diabolos’ was none other than the Roman Emperor.

Ignatius wrote negatively about heretical and those outside the catholic faith: “They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released; none for the hungry or thirsty.”¹¹ Catholic Christianity stood for affirmative values. It is important to note that he used the term ‘catholic’ in a triple meaning: a combination of right faith with the right practice, as in his letter to the community of Smyrna; as referring to the whole church all over the world – the Roman Empire – and at the same time each single local church. And, thirdly, he used the term ‘catholic’ in a theological sense, that of a tradition embodying a set of biblical and ethical traditions concerning human solidarity, justice and compassion, and of the non-negotiable dig-

⁷ Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire. From Paul to Postcolonial Times*, Minneapolis MN (Fortress) 2007, 23.

⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁹ Ignatius, Smyrn. 8.2.

¹⁰ Ignatius, Rom. 5.

¹¹ Ignatius, Smyrn. 6.2 (transl. W. Holmes, 2007).

nity of all. Accordingly, in the very beginning faith is not defined by dogmas of what is right, but by right practice and actions: the right faith is the care for the widow, the orphan and the hungry. Ignatius brings up here what later has been called the biblical ‘preferential option for the poor’.

There is no doubt that early forms of catholicity within the Empire developed in the Roman Empire as an era of early globalization. The order of the Roman Empire was war, victory and repression, which was named the Roman peace (*Pax Romana*). Contrary to this, the set of Christian values include the dignity of every person and, especially, respect for the poor and oppressed. The network of catholic Churches lived a distinctive set of values. Christians followed a different logic that yielded covenant, nonviolent justice, and love reaching out to all persons. The people, not the elite, the poor and not the powerful are the chosen of God. Importantly, these values and the network of catholic Christian communities can be understood as an implicit undermining and, in effect, a progressive overcoming of the structures of the Roman Empire and its legitimacy, without recourse to riot or uprising. Today we have to rediscover the catholicity of the earliest Church times. Could this networking in the first centuries, which has been named ‘catholicity’, be an example for struggling against empire today?

Thesis 4: Globalization and the rediscovering of the catholicity of the Churches.

The Roman Empire was arguably an early form of globalization. The concept of catholicity has its origins in the context of the domination, exploitation and power structures of the Roman Empire. For the former Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, Konrad Raiser, it is no coincidence that forms of conciliarity in the Early Church were developed and used just at the time of early forms of globalization of the Roman Empire. That is the reason why he speaks of a “catholic alternative of globalization” which is rooted in the capability to connect the local with the global or universal.¹² ‘Catholicity’ leaves room for diversity *and* unity. That is the reason why catholicity and conciliarity are connected. The catholicity of the Church will be realized in forms of conciliarity. At least

¹² Konrad Raiser, ‘Katholizität in der ökumenischen Diskussion,’ in: idem (ed.), *Schritte auf dem Weg der Ökumene*, Frankfurt a.M. (Lembeck) 2005, 160–196, here 194.

partly, catholicity and conciliarity have always been resisting structures of power within both Church and society.¹³ The universal Church is the communion of all the local churches, but the universal Church is not the sum of all the local churches. All together, they are the same Church of God present and acting in this world. The Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches has pointed out: “Catholicity enters into the very concept of church and refers not simply to geographic extension but also to the manifold variety of local churches and their participation in the one *koinonia*. Each local church contributes its unique gifts for the good of the whole Church.”¹⁴ This concept allows two dimensions of the Church – its locality and universality – to be held together not as separate entities but as integrated dimensions of one reality. This finds expression in the Eucharistic celebration which “embraces the Church both in its local and universal dimension”¹⁵.

The core of a catholic alternative vision of globalization is the connectedness of the global and the local in the way that it is celebrated in the Eucharist: as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.¹⁶ Catholicity means being nourished and sustained in and through the Eucharist. The Philippino theologian Eleuterio J. Revollido explains that the “Eucharist is presence and presence is a function of action. It is not just the comfortable real presence of Christ in the Eucharist but also to face and be challenged by the disturbing personal presence of Christ in the poor and the down trodden.”¹⁷ He adds:

“It is our invitation to transform globalization by having a firm grasp of the reality and to become uncompromising prophets, to have a Eucharistic vision in transforming globalization and to prepare ourselves for a self-giving sacrifice for justice, peace and abundant life for all. There is no other way but to do

¹³ So Peter Steinacker, ‘Katholizität’, in: TRE 18, 2000, 72–80, here 78.

¹⁴ Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Church: Local and universal. A Study Document Commissioned and Received by the Joint Working Group* (1990), para. 19, in: http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/jwg/doc/i_jwg-n6_6.html [9.2.2015].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 24.

¹⁶ Franz Segbers, ‘A Eucharistic Vision for a World of Hunger,’ in: Marsha L. Dutton with Emily K. Stuckey (eds.), *Globalization and Catholicity: Ecumenical Conversations on God’s Abundance and the People’s Need* = Beiheft zu IKZ 100, Bern (Stämpfli) 2010, 208–223.

¹⁷ Eleuterio J. Revollido, ‘Prophetic Voice, Eucharistic Vision, and Martyrdom in Transforming Globalization: An IFI Experience and Perspective,’ in: Dutton / Stuckey, *Globalization and Catholicity*, 184–197, here 196.

it in dialogue and in communion as catholic churches, journeying together for God's kingdom, 'here on earth as it is in heaven'.”¹⁸

A re-defined and re-claimed notion of catholicity could be a new ecclesiological answer to the challenge of globalization. Because, just as in ancient Roman times, once again 'empire' is the key word demarcating the present. Once again the Churches are faced by an Empire and they are once again challenged to be a framework for an alternative theological thinking. Therefore catholicity is the framework for a new understanding of what it means to be catholic in the modern era of globalization. As the spirit, logic and practice of the Roman Empire contradicted the gospel so the spirit, logic and practice of the neoliberal globalization also does today. The term 'empire' refers to the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military powers that constitute a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests. This is one of the basic marks of empire throughout history.¹⁹ What does it mean to be the Church in the midst of empire? Catholicity is a good framework for theological reflection of the globalization. My question is: What can we learn from the first Christians and the Early Church in their context of the Roman Empire for our own context of the Empire of global capitalism?

Thesis 5: Catholicity in the midst of the imperial globalization today: a counter-model to economic globalization in diversity and unity, local and global.

The defenders of neoliberal globalization speak of globalization as a kind of secular catholicity. But this kind of globalization creates victims – the marginalized and excluded. Contrary to this, true catholicity is an adequate theological answer to the challenge of globalization. Catholicity is about wholeness, and fullness, and conciliarity – and that means relationship. The defenders of the neoliberal project of globalization understand globalization as a secular version of catholicity. In opposition to this, the 1998 Assembly of the WCC declared: “The vision behind globalization includes a competing vision to the Christian commitment to the *oikoume-*

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cf. Franz Segbers, “... bis ans Ende der Erde” (Apg. 1,8). Imperium, Globalisierung und die Wiederentdeckung der Katholizität der Kirchen,’ in: Marlene Crüsemann / Carsten Jochum-Bortfeld (eds.), *Christus und seine Geschwister. Christologie im Umfeld der Bibel in gerechter Sprache*, Gütersloh (GVH), 2009, 241–259.

ne, the unity of humankind and the whole inhabited earth.”²⁰ That Assembly recommended that “the logic of globalization needs to be challenged by an alternative way of life of community in diversity”.

But globalization presents a chance for reformulating and rediscovering catholicity. Catholicity needs to be realized amidst of the ambiguity of the globalization, not as a refusal but as a power of transformation towards more justice, humanity and respect for the dignity of differences. The manner in which the Church responds to differences and integrates differences in its own life is the decisive test for the realization of her catholicity. Catholicity has three dimensions, the wholeness, conciliarity, and fullness of the Church. Perhaps we can learn from Christians in the context of the Roman Empire and the experiences of Christians in the Third World Countries what catholicity with its the three dimensions of wholeness, conciliarity and fullness means in the midst of empire today.

(a) Wholeness: a worldwide Church

The quantitative understanding of catholicity focuses on the universality of the Church. Ignatius addressed all Churches within in the Roman Empire as, in effect, a network. Each one church is in mutuality with all other churches. The overarching unity of the diverse churches is an anticipation of the unity of humankind. Being Church means to live unity in diversity in the midst of empire as a visible sign of God’s intention for the world. An ecclesial entry point for a catholic ecclesiology in the midst of empire is that of a worldwide communion of different Churches. And in turn this offers an alternative vision to that of empire. This communion ecclesiology offers a theological foundation not only for ecumenical unity but for the unity of humankind by way of overcoming differences. What makes this catholicity a concept of our time is that it affirms the dignity of difference within unity. This is exactly what is meant in the statement *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* that the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism affirmed in 2012:

“The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world. We must participate in God’s mission in unity,

²⁰ Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Harare, Zimbabwe, 3–14 December 1998. *Together on the Way. Official report of the Eighth Assembly*, in: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/fprc2d-e.html> [9.2.2015].

overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one" (John 17:21).

God's people, gathered in the new communities as a form of universalism of Jews, Gentiles, slaves, freed, males and females (Gal 3:28), constituted one of the first world's global people. Paul's vision of this new universalism started in the gatherings of the first Christians. And Ignatius had taken up the thread saying that, contrary to the 'heretics', the Catholic Church has her identity in caring for the widows, the orphans, or oppressed, the hungry or of the thirsty. Compassion is the idea of the biblical justice (*zedakah*). It is not an act of mere charity. What *zedakah* signifies is that no one should be without the basic requirements of existence. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks remarked that: "This has been absolutely fundamental to the kind of society the Israelites were charged with creating, namely one in which everyone has a basic right to a dignified life and to be equal citizens in the covenantal community under the sovereignty of God."²¹ The biblical *personae miserae* (cf. Ps 72) are the centre of the Catholic Church as well. This meaning of Catholic tradition includes a set of biblical and ethical values of human solidarity, justice and compassion, and of the non-negotiable dignity of everybody. According to this biblical tradition the right catholic faith is found in the transformative communities that constitute the network of Churches all over the Empire. Empire and imperialism are the attempt to impose a single way of life on a plural world. Catholicity balances the global with the local, the unity and the diversity. The adoption of Christianity to different cultures in the world has been one of the great achievements and we have to follow such work in today's world. Catholicity is helpful in empowering resistance and alternatives to the logic of neoliberal economic globalization.

(b) Conciliarity: the dignity of difference and a network for solidarity

Catholicity, expressed as a social construct, is manifest as a global community of men and women working together towards the fullness of life and respect for the dignity of all peoples and nations, the promotion of the integrity of all creation, and the pursuit of justice and peace. Catholicity calls for giving room for differences. That is the reason why catholicity is

²¹ Cf. Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference. How to avoid the Clash of Civilization*, London (Continuum) 2003, 114.

connected with conciliarity. Conciliarity is the attempt to create partnership without dominance or submission. Conciliarity occurs when different groups of people, differing in power, but each acknowledging the integrity and sovereignty of the other, mutually interact or engage in common endeavours. Conciliarity presents a counter-model over against the imperial inheritance and polarization of the contemporary project of globalization. Catholicity is an alternative way of life of community in diversity. This counter-model is one of catholicity-in-conciliarity. Catholicity is the alternative programme taking place in the midst of today's empire: building networks from below to strengthen the very struggle against the empire. As a community of faith, steeped in nationalist history and workers' struggle, the members affirm the church's commitment to its historical mission and ministry in empowering the poor, the deprived and oppressed, through its missionary work worldwide. What makes the compound of conciliarity and catholicity a fruitful concept for our global world is that it affirms the dignity of difference and so the reality of diversity. Conciliarity and catholicity, separately and together, are inherently pluralistic.

Solidarity is the new word for catholicity. It marks the end of the era of 'mission', qua paternalistic intervention, and the starting point of mutuality and togetherness (2 Cor 9:13) of the Churches at the peripheries with the Church in the political and economic centres. For example, as mentioned above, the (Old Catholic) Churches in the centres (of Europe) are learning from the Philippines and from India. This indicates a new era of solidarity and exchange in operation, one far removed from the missionary policies and praxis of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. And what do the Churches in the centres learn? They see the effects of a world in disorder. Pope Francis pointed out, in his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, with respect to the dominant economic order that: "Such an economy kills."²² This is a judgement about an economy of exclusion that delivered the majority of the people into powerlessness and weakness inescapably. By contrast, solidarity is the mutual responsibility of the Churches and Christians, globally, that is, in catholicity and conciliarity. In this world, solidarity entails struggling against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; the lack of work, land and shelter; the denial of social and labour rights; and in confronting the empire of money. The old

²² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium. Apostolic Exhortation*, in: <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en>, para. 53 [10.2.2015].

model of a Eurocentric and uniform catholicity is being transformed into a universal and global catholicity. The Churches in the centres are opening themselves to receiving the mission of the poor and marginalized Churches. Conciliarity prevents the Churches in the centre from controlling the testimonies of faith and the responses of action coming from the poor Churches in the peripheries. The earlier evangelized in the colonies by the conquistadores are now converted into evangelists to those of the earlier conquistadores. The evangelizing Church is the Church of the poor because the centre of the Church is, now, the poor. This finds echo and endorsement in the theological phrase ‘the preferential option for the poor’. There is today a pressing need to substitute the neoliberal spirit and logic: over against exclusion, advocate instead participation; over against accumulation, advocate sharing; over against speculation, promote gratuity; over against competition, encourage cooperation; against the promise of the economic globalization building one world through growth and competition, promote the project building one world by way of globalizing justice, respect, freedom and rights for all.

(c) Fullness: Witness of the Gospel and the Missio Dei

The Church does not have a mission; the Church is mission. The Church takes part in God’s mission for this world. God’s mission is freedom, justice and peace for all human beings. For this mission, the Church is an instrument. The church comes to be as the church engages in mission. God shares God’s mission with women and men. Mission calls the church into being to serve God’s purposes in the world. The universality of human dignity, which is damaged in the lives of the poor and oppressed, belongs in the very midst of being Church. That we can learn from Ignatius of Antioch, who used the term ‘catholic’ as a kind of right practice (*orthopraxis*) expressed in caring for the widow, the orphan, and the oppressed or, in more modern terminology, as the preferential option for the poor, is the mark of catholicity. Catholicity is not a confessional meaning for a singular Church, but the signal for a right practice of the faith. In the midst of the Empire of Globalization there occurs the counter-project of God: *The missio Dei*. Ignatius pointed out that the Church is to be a “sign and servant of God’s design”. The Church, as *koinonia* in Christ, is community. Injustice is therefore both an ethical and an ecclesiological issue. In the era of globalization, solidarity and God’s mission for this world have a new meaning: the church’s commitment to its mission and ministry in

empowering the poor, the deprived and oppressed, through its missionary work. Ethics and ecclesiology are closely interrelated.

Catholicity provides a theological and ethical dimension of being the Church Catholic in the full sense of the word. All over the world Churches are confessing the Creed: “We believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.” The Church confessing this Creed is called to resist the empires of power and injustice. The Church is thus a moral community. Power, oppression and injustice contradict its very Creed. Catholicity inspires an active force for justice, peace, and compassion within a global perspective by connecting the local and the global. Catholicity is about building alternative and transformative communities of life with the poor, in mutuality with sisters and brothers, and respecting others in their diversity. That is the reason why ‘catholicity’ models a transformative alternative to the economic, political, and cultural power of the empire. Christianity in India – in the form of the *Mar Thoma Church* – is an example how to live in the midst of a multireligious society of Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* connects the Churches in the political and economic centres with the struggle for justice and human rights. They both confess the faith in an exemplary manner. The poor Churches have a spiritual force that is able to inspire and to missionize the Churches in the centres. The relationship is the way wherein the Gospel may be brought back from the peripheries to the centres, which are thus evangelized by the current peripheries. That is the reason why the relationship with the *Mar Thoma Church* and the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Churches of the poor global south, has a deeper ecclesiological dimension as a model providing an answer to the question: what does it mean to be a Catholic Church in a globalized world? That is very timely in a world divided between poor and rich, and in which the Old Catholic Churches, as partners in this very particular conciliarity, are based in the North.

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die Bezeichnung der Kirche als «katholisch» und frühe Formen von Konziliarität wurden bereits von Ignatius von Antiochien in einer Zeit entwickelt, als eine frühe Form von «Globalisierung» sich im Imperium Romanum abzuzeichnen begann. Die Katholizität der Kirche wie auch die Form konziliarer Beziehungen der Kirchen miteinander, die räumlich und sprachlich voneinander getrennt waren, drückte wenigstens indirekt eine Form des Widerstandes gegen die politische Ordnung des Imperium Romanum aus. «Katholisch» wurde zu einer *nota ecclesiae*, nicht nur für den globalen und lokalen Zusammenhalt von Gemeinden im Römischen Imperium, sondern auch für deren theologisch-ethische Qualifizierung. In Abgrenzung zu Häretikern sah Ignatius die Identität der Katholizität der Kirche in deren Sorge um die Armen und Ausgegrenzten. Abermals müssen Kirchen auf die neoliberalen, ökonomisch-politische Globalisierung eine Antwort finden. Die «Katholizität» der Kirchen ist in der Lage, eine theologische Antwort auf die Globalisierung zu formulieren, wenn sie die dreifachen Inhalte der frühkirchlichen Katholizität in die Gegenwart zieht: die Ganzheit als weltweite Kirche, die Würde der Differenz und das Netzwerk der Solidarität als Konziliarität sowie die Fülle des Glaubens als Teilhabe an der *Missio Dei*. Die Ekklesiologie der altkatholischen Kirche wie auch ihre Entstehung enthalten die Erinnerung an eine nicht imperiale Katholizität. Das prädestiniert sie, der neoliberalen Globalisierung theologisch die Katholizität als Gegenmodell entgegenzustellen.