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Foreword

With an international symposium in Freising near Munich from the 1 to 5 July 2013 on the topic "Strangers Home World", a two-year research project on the subject of passing on faith in social and religious processes of transformation came to a successful and dignified completion. As part of the project, the question on how to deal with the experience of a secular age, also termed post-secular by some, and the consequences for the Church's pastoral care and the place of religious orders in society from various angles was the subject of discussion. Increasingly the aspects of individuality and plurality, identity and community are the focus of debate in the form of workshops, seminars and publications. The world is not an opponent or a reality from which the Church and religious orders – and inevitable theology as well – should isolate themselves. Rather, it is necessary to take the world with all its challenges serious, to pick up on incarnational lines of thought and to understand the world, as it portrays itself, as God's creation. This again means that it must also be asked to what extent a world that has become (more) secular in terms of the experiences in and with it have been included in the monasteries and in the Church's way of life and method of representation.

The concluding symposium attempted to take account of these different lines of thought. Thus this publication has collected together all twenty contributions to the symposium. It begins with a fundamental address by the bishop of Nelson in Canada and former general minister of the Capuchin Order, *John Corriveau*, on the subject of community. In a time of increasing individualisation and pluralisation, the question of community cohesion is being asked more frequently. Corriveau takes up these developments and places the spirituality of *communio* and the lived relationship at the heart of his considerations. A spirituality of *communio* challenges us to take the Trinitarian relationship as the basis for a model of interaction in a secular world. Here, Corriveau addresses a central idea that has been broached in the project again and again in various ways over the last two years: a spirituality of living out "being with" people is the great challenge of a secular world for the Church and religious orders.

Based on the concept of *communio*, the two following contributions by José Casanova and Slavica Jakelić direct attention to the global community and the challenge of secularisation for global society. For some, secularisation still seems to be a phenomenon of north-west European societies and countries, yet the phenomenon of secularisation today affects

many other countries beyond the borders of Europe. *José Casanova* also shows that the paradigm of secularisation which he differentiates into the historical process on the one hand and the typical appearances of disappearing religiosity in the public on the other, seems – also as a consequence of the ongoing discussions and the various definitions of this concept – ill-suited to express the processes in Europe and around the world. Confessionalisation and deconfessionalisation appear to be far more able for dialogue and more constructive. Individualisation and pluralisation, according to one of the sociologist's conclusions, should not cause the Church great anxiety or be considered the bugbear of modern development. Rather, these unchangeable trends in a global secular age are challenges for the Church to strengthen the power of its own plurality and thus grow responsibly as the truly catholic Church.

Slavica Jakelić examines social movements in their supporting role for a fruitful dialogue between the secular and the religious. She highlights the fact that necessary theological discourse must go hand in hand with practice, and more critically, learn from this practice in order to have a constructive impact. Representatives of secular and religious worldviews and values often share the desire to promote integrity and dignity of human existence and to do whatever possible to make the world better and more worth living for everyone. It is about a practice (that is shown in the examples of the USA, South Africa and Poland) in which – for the benefit of humanity – secular and religious leaders recognise the commonalities in all this difference and attempt to implement them for the benefit of everyone.

Following these fundamental articles of a spiritual-theological and religious-sociological nature, the publication follows the order of the symposium in that the other articles, organised into topic sections, address detailed individual aspects and important issues on passing on faith in social and religious processes of transformation.

András Máté-Tóth gives a short and concise insight into the situation of religion in Central and Eastern Europe. Religion is also in upheaval in eastern European societies. Máté-Tóth does not conceive secularisation as a clear trend but as a bundle of different issues and challenges. In this respect, he understands religious communities, and especially Christian communities, as a religious melting pot of pluralism and thus richness. The prevailing motives of a reversion to religiosity should not be isolation from the world and condemnation of secular social structures; rather the discovery of one's own richness and traditions which may help modern people in their search for the meaning of life should be

a priority. Máté-Tóth and his remarks are the beginning of a block of four articles that describe transformation processes in the secular world and allow for a more universal understanding of the issue. Thus *Angel Méndez Montoya* ventures a look towards Mexico and thus to Latin America. Similar to Máté-Tóth, in Latin America he also sees trends of secularisation and post-secularism. He understands them as an invitation to celebrate pluralism, which is a fact in the world and the Church, and to remove barriers between secular and post-secular and between secular and religious. Mendez Montoya calls for understanding the incarnation as the paradigm of the radical option of God for the *saeculum* and thus infiltrating or even lifting the barriers mentioned above. Based on Charles Taylor, *Marcin Lisak* calls for an understanding of secularism that represents a fundamental condition of life, a pre-ontological milieu where any belief in God is no longer axiomatic. Religion is therefore just one of the possibilities and patterns of interpreting the world that a person or a group of people can choose. For Lisak, the keyword of nomadic religiosity is significant. Very much in the spirit of Jakelić, *Francesca Restifo* addresses the problem of radical poverty and a changing understanding of human rights. She prioritises the practice of lived commitment, and also calls for a fundamental shift to be made from the attitude of giving and a charity from above towards the dignity of every individual based on human rights and the right to life and life's necessities. The boundaries of religiosity, charity and the secular disappear. The needy person is the priority, irrespective of religion, because he is as he is, created, wanted and loved by God in this world. This should be reflected in the actions of charitable institutions and more so by state institutions. With her thoughts on Franciscans International, Restifo forms the bridge to the next block with four articles on Franciscan perspectives on the transmission of faith in social and religious processes of transformation.

The spiritualities of the Mendicant Orders, and especially the spirituality of the Franciscan movement, are on the one hand particularly challenged by the queries and developments of a secular society and are accordingly under the microscope. On the other hand, however, they are capable of emphasising the main points again in a particular way. *Martina Kreidler-Kos* illumines the aspect of community and individuality by ascertaining these elementary principles of Franciscan life with a view to history. "Our friary is the world" – this phrase, taken from a legend about Saint Francis, who makes a pact with Lady Poverty, dissolves the boundaries in the understanding of the concept of community and the individual implementation of Franciscan spirituality beyond the walls of the friary.

Borders no longer apply, nor do principles of order that should be protected by borders. The view opens up to the entire world.

Thomas Dienberg emphasises the simplicity and poetic power of a language that needs to be rediscovered and redeveloped in the secular context. Respect for the word, completeness, an authentic language that emphasises what is spelled out by life: this is the kind of language spoken by Francis. In this language, he is poetic and narrative at the same time, and reaches people, touching them at their core. Dienberg searches for a Franciscan school of language that fulfils the beauty and the power of language, but also the brokenness of people, which should and can be found in a language of announcement. *Wayne Hellmann* takes up the keyword of beauty by referring to Saint Bonaventure and his theology of the sacrament. An initial discipline for the understanding of sacramentality and the sacraments is in the humble view of creation and all created elements. Things, such as bread and wine, can teach people and prompt them to use all their senses so that the outer element of a sacrament such as bread develops mystical power, representing beauty. Bonaventure's theology of sacraments avoids an understanding of outer things and elements as pure 'mediators' for the divine. As a consequence, this results in the question of form, for example, of the Eucharist as an event that also affects the senses: in eating bread and drinking wine, there are sensuality and enjoyment, power and beauty. *Andreas Brands* ultimately asks the practical and also pressing question of the lived community. Is it just a nice ideal, a ritual community? Individualistic tendencies can also be observed in religious life. A secular world with the characteristics of individualisation and pluralisation has its effects on the understanding of community in religious life. It is therefore necessary in the education of brothers to be mindful of the fact that commitment in the community is to be learnt and lived so that community life is not just found in prayer but its power also unfolds in daily life and in pastoral care.

The next block with four articles distances itself a little from the previous considerations and their spiritual practical perspectives and once again attempts to provide a new theoretical impetus. These can also of course serve as reading aid for the texts discussed above. *Alessandro Cortesi* understands the present situation as an opportunity and an invitation to discover and reflect on God's footprints or the experiences of faith in a new way. This is a demanding process but one which pays off for the Church, according to Cortesi. This is an opportunity to place focus back on the relationship with Jesus Christ and His way of life and to use this relationship as an example of living for Christians and

the Church. Thus Church and faith can be reanimated in times of upheaval and their power can develop particularly in witnessing to the relationship with Christ.

Thomas Eggensperger asks for an evaluation of modernisation processes and calls for a differentiated view. For him, individualisation processes are at the centre of the processes of modernisation. This accentuation ultimately enables one to say goodbye to the concept of secularisation and all of the problematic implications entailed by this. Individualisation and pluralisation are characteristic of modernisation processes. Accordingly, they permeate almost all of the articles in this volume thematically. Furthermore, Eggensperger also calls for a look at the interim space, at a sphere that comprises and implies the political, the public, the secular and also the religious. For this purpose, Eggensperger brings the unloaded term 'mundane' into the discussion and advocates the thesis: modernisation is individualisation in the sphere of the 'mundane'.

From an ethical point of view, *Bernhard Kohl* goes into the relationship between human dignity in a plural society and its violability as a heuristic principle for determining its content. Proceeding from the observation that it is becoming increasingly more difficult in legal discourse in plural societies to express the legal norm of human dignity in a materially positive way, in jurisprudence, the procedure of a "recognising overall assessment of the individual case to determine a violation of dignity" is applied which gets closer to human dignity through the *via negativa* in the occurrence of a violation. Questions therefore arise regarding how the recognition of human vulnerability can contribute to a context-sensitive outlining and to a constantly expanding protection of human dignity and which impetus an incarnational Dominican spirituality/theology can provide. For *Stefan Knobloch*, reality and religion/faith portray themselves in today's world as very differentiated. Aside from talking about secularisation, for him it also makes sense to talk of a sacralisation of the world. The 'ragamuffin of religion ostracised in secular modernity is cautiously lifting up its head in post-secular society', according to Knobloch. Yet the People of God, those responsible as well as pastors in the Church lack the attentive contemporaneity with the world of today. This world, as it is, is the world pervaded by God and therefore the pastoral space. Perceiving God from the needs of others is one of the principle tasks of pastoral action today, especially for Franciscan pastoral care.

The final block with four more articles follows on from Knobloch and addresses pastoral action in a changing world: how can faith be passed on today? Firstly, *Michael Plattig* once again inquires after the relationship between community and the individual in light of a

broad transmission that places the community in the centre of Christian faith lived out. Faith is passed on in and through implementation in the community. It is not about the experience of community per se. It is not group feeling that is crucial, rather a common faith. Community is always in the becoming. Therefore, individuality and community must remain in fruitful tension and be understood as a challenge to be reshaped each time. Reforming and reshaping are therefore deciding characteristics of a lived community in religious orders and in the Church. This has consequences for pastoral care. *Ulrich Engel* also emphasises that religious life is under scrutiny today and must orient itself once again towards the standard of the Gospel in the 'asymmetries of the fuzzy present'. In his view, the necessary contemporaneity only works in the manner of Paul's "hós me" (1 Cor 7:29f). This kind of neo-existentialist religious life means: living in the 21st century *as though* one were at home in the Gospel – and *vice versa*. This is a huge challenge that Engel seeks to develop with the help of ten theses. Thus to some extent, Engel develops the outlines of a *vita consecrata* *situationalis* that also includes pastoral action in its requirements, since it is about authenticity and witnessing to the Gospel in post/modern circumstances. *Willi Anderau* sees a pastoral and ecclesial contemporaneity of religious orders and Church in the modern world, especially in the area of media. It succeeds when the Church and religious orders engage with and are inculturated in the secular development of media society and its forms of communication. Quality and opinion journalism at a critical distance, not in sleek court reporting could be the strengths of the Church and religious orders in a media world – and this is the crucial distinguishing mark. *Joseph Nuzzi* ultimately reports on specific and practical attempts at implementation in a parish of Franciscans in the metropolis of New York. A place of faith and passing on faith has arisen in the middle of Manhattan in a lengthy process, the liveliness and creativity of the Gospel shines out and is passed on. Nuzzi makes clear that these processes and methods that were applied in New York are not readily transferable to other situations. Yet for him, the core elements are the same everywhere: the development of a committed and inspiring liturgy; a culture that is welcoming all people; the development of a culture of personal relationship in a community and the creation of options to live out discipleship in the service of others, particularly those in need of help. Here, too, it is once again about authenticity, about respect and dignity, about putting into practice the recognition that God reveals himself and can be found in the world and in people.

The concluding contribution of the conference volume shows the results of an empirical study of more than a year on the understanding of the world and the consequences for

pastoral care and religious life, which *Michael N. Ebertz* and *Lucia Segler* carried out on behalf of the project team. The members of the male Mendicant Orders in the German-speaking world were surveyed on their understanding of the world with the help of interviews and questionnaires. Looking at the social profile, the religious profile and the profile of the religious order and community of the brothers surveyed, Ebertz and Segler establish that the characteristics of secularisation are less defining factors than the tense relationship between pluralisation and individualisation. This is condensed in the various theses that Ebertz and Segler develop from this study.

The publishers hope that the readers can use the abundance of thoughts and stimuli from the articles for a fruitful debate on the topic of “Strangers Home World” with this publication. Individualisation and pluralisation challenge the Church, religious orders and theology. The view of the world invites us to accept these challenges positively. This book wishes to contribute to this.

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