



European Forum of National Laity Committees
Maynooth, Ireland, June 24th, 2016

The Layman in the perspective of Psychology, a draft

By Thomas Nordlöf, licensed psychologist

Starting out from The Story of Jesus at age twelve visiting Jerusalem I intend to explore the psychological dimension of being a layman or volunteer in the Church. In this context I am limiting layman or volunteer to a person not being payed economically for services given.

Introduction

In situations disagreements or conflicts appear I'd like to direct attention to the difficulty concerning the Eternal dimension of God and introduce a conflict between **rigidity** (adherence to the rule or the law and the eternal perfection of Gods intentions) and **flexibility** (obedience to the Law of Love or the conscience) has to be adressed in the organisation. Jesus himself is presenting a solution to this dilemma in stories like "the disciples harvesting on the Sabbath Day" and miracles performed on the Sabbath. The paradigm is: The Law is intended for Man and not Man for the Law. The challenge of being exposed to the interpretation of others is a challenge to mature in the daily life of the Church.

In connection to the Story chosen of young Jesus visiting Jerusalem we are given the possibility to reflect upon the two contexts **presence** and **absence**, the Promise and the Fulfilment of Promise. The Story of the Church is the story of postponement of the Return of the Lord.

THREE STEPS

1 - Perception and Cognition

Love defined. Before I enter the main subject i wish to present a definition of love as the full commitment in the others, our neighbours, coming into being as the person they are intended to in God's plan.

Who then is my neighbour? I will refer to the answer given by Jesus in the story of The Good Samaritan. You are the neighbour dependent upon the situation. You will become a neighbour in relation to the needing person. Which means it is the other person who perceives You as his or her neighbour.

Jesus and perception

The gift of Jesus

Noting a phenomen followed by **attending to** the happening. **Explore** and further as a competence to Your neighbour. Attach the perception **to oneself** in the purpose to explore. These steps presupposes the phenomenon of thinking, i e the faculty of learning from experience (reference WR Bion).





Jesus perception

In the **concrete here and now** interpreting the moment in the light of the Eternal, the Father. Jesus is proposing an other **frame of reference**. Jesus differs between **human thinking** "things that be of man" and **Gods thinking** "things that be of God". (Matt 16: 21-23;

The "logic" of Jesus

The Logic of Jesus is always surprising, difficult to predict and mostly paradoxical as a kind of "**third logic**". Which means that the disciple is averse from sheer copying eg. mimicking or through logical operations. Man cannot develop through ingratiation, putting oneself in line with the teacher. Jesus applies a kind of third position set against **the walls of logic** and human logic (all too human logic/thinking).

The solution is not built upon the individual, rather the interactor with Jesus has to understand that the issue is to let the things of God come to the fore and thereby make way for a **transformation** of the individual and of the collective perspective. **The things of God is already there**, As an example I refer to In the story of **the wheat and the weed** where we are challenged to let of and not act upon the impulse of a too rigid coping.

2- The use of Perception

The story of Jesus in the Temple is a story of the way of the Pilgrim where we get the possibility to act in relation to the **present and the absent Jesus**. It is a process, a possibility to grow grounded in the perception of Jesus.

3 – Our sense of Perception

We are presented to the possibility of loosening the perception from ourselves as ultimate subjects and give room for the eternal presence of the eternal in the finite existence of the believer, the knowledge of the Creation in the flow of time

The Role of the Layman

I'd like to reflect upon **the phenomenon of reciprocity**: If You consider the help **given** to the South and the Souths **gift** in return consisting in a revitalization of the life of the Western Church.

The agenda of Jesus is clear: He **never lays down conditions** to act for the receiver other than the demand of belief which is selfcorrecting. Jesus put emphasis on the phenomenon of belief, which means that he never directs his action at aiming a secondary purpose as membership in the movement. He just acts unconditionally. Jesus exhorts the receiver of healing to continue to live in the light of the new experience.

In our local church we are working on two levels: **Social enterprises** and **volunteering**.

Social enterprising is engaging people to work in professional settings giving the entrance into the sphere of Labour. Volunteering means participating in projects giving the opportunity to be activated.





European Forum of National Laity Committees
Forum Européen des Comités Nationaux des Laïcs
Europäisches Forum der Nationalen Laienkomitees

