Religion and Catholicism in Belo Horizonte: survey data and theological-pastoral reading

Religião e catolicismo em Belo Horizonte: dados de pesquisa e leitura teológico-pastoral

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Abstract

The dynamics of today´s world draws our attention. Turnover is faced with perennial. Thinking of pastoral actions in today´s world supposes a clear understanding of reality. Thus, the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, commissioned a survey conducted in 2012, named "Values and religion in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte". The research follows the same intuition of surveys carried out during the preparation of previous Archdiocesan assemblies. This reflection aims to present data from the survey and think of the challenges in the theological-pastoral domain by means of the ecclesial identity of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. The survey attests the presence of pluralism and religious mobility and criticizes the lack of inter-religious dialogue. It appreciates social morality and puts into question the sexual morality of the Catholic Church. It shows satisfaction in face of celebrations and suggests more training from religious leaders. In this reflection, survey data and theological-pastoral challenges are presented through ethical commitment. Finally, we suggest deepening into a completely ministerial church.

Keywords: Religion; Catholic Church; Identity; Theology; Pastoral.

Resumo

A dinamicidade do mundo atual chama a atenção. A rotatividade confronta-se com o permanente. Pensar ações pastorais no mundo atual supõe clara compreensão da realidade. Nesse sentido, a Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte encomendou uma pesquisa realizada em 2012, intitulada "Valores e religião na Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte". A pesquisa segue a mesma intuição de levantamentos feitos em preparação a assembleias arquidiocesanas anteriores. Esta reflexão visa a apresentar os dados da pesquisa e pensar os desafios no âmbito teológico-pastoral a partir da identidade eclesial da Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte. A pesquisa atesta a presença do pluralismo e da mobilidade religiosa e critica a falta de diálogo inter-religioso. Valoriza a moral social e questiona a moral sexual da Igreja Católica. Apresenta satisfação diante das celebrações e sugere maior formação das lideranças religiosas. Nesta reflexão são apresentados dados da pesquisa e desafios teológico-pastorais a partir do compromisso ético. Por fim, sugere-se o aprofundamento em uma igreja toda ministerial.

Palavras-chave: Religião; Igreja Católica; Identidade; Teologia; Pastoral.

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Introduction

Today's world is very dynamic. Changes in the political, cultural, economic, and religious field happen quickly. Data from Census 2010 explain this reality. In the religious segment, Evangelicals had the fastest growth. In 1980, they represented 6.6% of the population, in 1991 they were 9.0%, in 2000 they were 15.4%, and in 2010 they reached 22.2%. It is noticed that the Catholic religion remains majority, but keeping the slope observed in earlier decades. In 2000, they represented 73.6% and in 2010 they were 64.6%. From 1872 to 1970, the percentage of Catholics varied 7.9%, decreasing from 99.7% to 91.8%. Spiritualists increased from 1.3% in 2000 to 2.0% in 2010. Those with no religion were 7.3% in 2000 and they reached 8.0% in 2010 (IBGE, 2010).

For religious leadership, hierarchical or lay, having a good diagnosis of data on reality is of paramount importance to think and design its pastoral activities. The Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, aware of changes and the importance of clarity of data on reality to plan IV Archdiocesan Assembly, which will be held in October 2012, commissioned a survey from the Vertex Institute. It was titled "Values and religion in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte" and coordinated by PhD Professor Camargo Malchus. The survey took place in two stages. The first, conducted in April 2012, raised quantitative data; and the second, carried out in August and September 2012, raised qualitative data. This reflection took into account only data from the quantitative research, as they were tabulated.

The survey conducted in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte answers to the same intuition of previous assemblies, above all the first Archdiocesan Assembly entitled "Assembly of God's People", held in 1996. "A new ecclesial way of expression was born, just from the spirit of the II Vatican Council" (LIBANIO, 2011). Interactive participation is increasingly a requirement of contemporary society.

The purpose of this reflection is to think of the ecclesial identity of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte by means of the survey "Values and religion in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte" (2012). It is divided into four moments. First, we present some data from the survey, such as research universe, religion in childhood and current religion, image of the Catholic Church, social and sexual morality, relation of the Catholic Church to the other religions, and the satisfaction of its believers[1]. Then, we propose some general theological-pastoral challenges. Deepening, we discuss the identity of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. Finally, we suggest to resume the Church understood as ministerial, which, thus, will certainly have the force of missionary communion, participation, and activity.

1 Survey data

The quantitative survey had the participation of 28 cities in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte and 2,826 people were interviewed. The research universe was classified as: rural and urban zones, gender, age group, education level, income, color, and marital status. The margin of error and confidence interval is 1.8% and 95%, respectively. Table 1 displays the research universe.

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[1] In early 2013 the first volume of the collection on the history of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte will be released, coordinated by PhD Professor Caio César Boschi, titled *A Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte e a contemporaneidade* [The Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte and contemporaneity]. In this volume, there are two chapters, titled "Globalization, ethical relativism and secularization" and "What do them say that I am? Religious sense and its achievements in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte", which present more data and analyses from this research.

Table 1: Research universe

Cities	28	
People	2,826	
Residential zone	Rural: 9%	
	Urban: 91%	
Sex	Male: 48%	
	Female: 52%	
Age group	16 to 17 years: 1%	35 to 44 years: 21%
	18 to 24 years: 14%	45 to 59 years: 25%
	25 to 34 years: 24%	≥ 60 years: 16%
Education level	Illiterate to incomplete/complete Primary School: 26%	Incomplete/complete Higher Education: 10%
	Incomplete/complete Elementary School: 25%	Incomplete/complete Graduate course: 2%
	Incomplete/complete High School: 37%	
Income	Up to 1 minimum wage: 16%	From 5 to 10 minimum wages: 8%
	From 1 to 2 minimum wages: 41%	From 10 to 20 minimum wages: 2%
	From 2 to 5 minimum wages: 30%	> 20 minimum wages: 1%
	NW/NI: 1%	
Color/race	Brown: 54%	Yellow: 2%
	White: 28%	Indian: 0%
	Black: 15%	NR: 1%
Marital status	Married: 45%	Separated/divorced: 6%
	Single: 36%	Widow/widower: 5%
	Married-like: 7%	

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 4).

The survey took into account two situations: family's religion in childhood and respondent's religion today. We find out a religious plurality at both moments. There is an actual presence of various religious designations living together in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. Pluralism is not mere discourse, but reality. In this plural living together, the Catholic religion has a marked presence in the childhood's religion and a less marked presence in the current moment. We notice the presence of a strong religious mobility, growth of all religions and decrease in the Catholic religion, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Childhood's religion and current religion

	Childhood's religion		Current religion	Growth
Catholic	84%		60%	- 24% (loss)
Pentecostal	5%		9%	+ 90%
Neopentecostal	4%		13%	+ 210%
Historical Protestant	3%		6%	+ 100%
Non-Christian religious movements	1%		2%	+ 100%
Spiritualist	1%		3%	+ 200%
With no religion	1%		6%	+ 500%
African-Brazilian religions	0%		1%	

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 10).

In this plurality of religions, Catholicism remains hegemonic (60%). However, it is the only one that does not grow, but loses believers. Data are in line with Census 2010, which attest that 59.9% of the population in Belo Horizonte are Catholic. Census registered 25.1% of Evangelicals. As there is no distinction among the Protestant designations, a comparison to the survey becomes limited. Census registered 4.1% of Spiritualists and the survey, 3%. Census indicates 8% with no religion and the survey, 6%. Census points out 2.9% for the other religions and the survey, adding the index of non-Christian and African-Brazilian religious movements, totals 3%.

The survey reveals that, within the period under study (from childhood to nowadays), religious mobility is constant and it goes towards all directions. The transit from Catholicism to Neopentecostalism was 10% and from Neopentecostalism to Catholicism was 3%; from Catholicism to Pentecostalism was 6% and from Pentecostalism to Catholicism was 7%; from Catholicism to Historical Protestantism was 4% and from Historical Protestantism to Catholicism was 1%. The group "with no religion" was that with the fastest growth. This group is characterized by having people with no ties to a religious institution, although people develop a spirituality of their own. This does not imply atheism. About 3% of them leave Catholicism and go towards the group "with no religion"; Pentecostalism feeds this group with 16%; Historical Protestantism with 15%; and NeoPentecostalism with 13%. The Protestant designation is that providing this group with the largest amount of believers[2].

What would be the causes leading people to change their religion? The survey pointed out several of them. We highlight 7 that were more repeated: "feel better/have peace of mind" (13%); "preach more/know better" (12%); "do not know why/with no reason" (12%); "knew the truth" (10%); "relatives/friends' influence" (9%); "started going and liked it" (5%); "obtained a cure in the church/got rid of addictions" (5%). These reasons signalize characteristics of the current society, where prevail the

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[2] There is great research and literature on the Brazilian religious transit today. We cite the work organized by Teixeira and Meneses (2006): *As religiões no Brasil: continuidades e rupturas* [Religions in Brazil: continuities and ruptures].

meaning crisis and dissatisfaction. Existential emptiness and fragmentation lead to varied searches and the religions end up becoming a "self-help" relationship. There are no traces of new ties or commitments to the new religious option.

Regarding the Catholic Church's *image*, the survey found out that, as a religious institution, it has, overall, a good estimate. People have evaluated in a positive way some institution's general aspects, such as, for instance, its ethical value, reliability, and commitment to poor people. However, this evaluation does not hold, at the same proportion, with regard to be present and committed to poor people's struggle. Table 3 presents a synthesis of data obtained from respondents when asked about certain aspects of the institution. As an analytical criterion, we regard as positive the results > 60%.

Table 3: Catholic Church's image

	Agree	Disagree
It is an ethical institution	72%	14%
It is a reliable institution	69%	17%
It is committed to sick people and present in hospitals	63%	20%
It is present and active in villages and slums	59%	22%
It is closer to the poor rather than the rich people	51%	24%
It is present and active in prisons	42%	26%

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 39).

The survey sought to know what is people's perception regarding the *social morality* of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. The answers signalize that it is rather positive than negative. There are three topics standing out due to their positivity: its social mobilization strength, its commitment to peace and

social justice, and its positive presence in the social communication media. The three topics where negativity stands out are: it does not disclose actions, it barely works against corruption, and it is barely committed to the protection of Indian people and the environment. Table 4 shows whether people agree or not that the Catholic Church adopts such a practice.

Table 4: Catholic Church and social morality

	I agree it has	I disagree it has
Social mobilization strength	81%	7%
Commitment to peace and social justice	79%	7%
Positive presence in social communication media	77%	9%
It evangelizes through the social communication media	71%	15%
It is committed to the defense of women	70%	11%
It is able to gather and evangelize youth	69%	17%
It is involved with current affairs	69%	9%
It contributes to reduce problems related to drugs and addictions	67%	17%
It is committed to preserve the dignity of black people	65%	13%
It is committed to ecology and environment	60%	15%
It is committed to preserve the dignity of Indian people	60%	12%
It works against corruption	50%	22%
It discloses properly what is made	50%	28%

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 54).

For understanding people's conception about the Catholic Church's sexual morality, the survey worked on with 4 topics: the issue of second marriage; birth control and the prohibition of contraceptive methods; repression of condom use; the impact on the Church's image of cases of pedophilia conveyed in the media. Table 5 shows, in percentage, respondents' answers.

Table 5: Catholic Church and sexual morality

	Agree	**Disagree**
The cases of pedophilia conveyed in the media affected church's image	78%	13%
The church is right to criticize people's second marriage	34%	52%
The church is right to criticize birth control and prohibit the use of contraceptive methods	20%	68%
The church is right to repress condom use	15%	77%

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 48).

Unlike social morality, sexual morality had negative signalization by respondents. The cases of pedophilia within the Catholic Church, conveyed by the media, draw attention, since they affected its image (78%). And it is also impressive the percentage of people who criticize the church's attitude of repressing condom use: 77% of respondents. More than half of respondents criticized the way how the church deals with people's second marriage and birth control. Through data, there is a clear signalization that the Catholic Church must broaden the debate with society about its sexual morality.

The survey shows that leaderships in the Catholic Church are nicely related to the *other religions*. Among respondents, 79% think they respect what is different. However, the evaluation is more negative regarding practical initiatives to construct

dialogues between religions, since only 53% think the Church takes such initiatives. The survey allowed the Catholic Church to have access to look at itself and to other religions' look towards it through the focus of "respect" and "dialogue". Table 6 presents data on a scale from 0 to 10.

Table 6: Catholic Church and the other religions

	It respects religions	It dialogues with religions
Catholics	8.7	7.0
Historic Protestants	7.5	4.6
Pentecostals	7.0	4.8
Neopentecostals	7.1	4.9
Non-Christian religious movement	5.1	4.5
Spiritualists	6.6	5.4
With no religion	6.9	5.7
Agnostics	6.5	4.5

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 59).

Visibly, the negative evaluation is focused on the practical aspect of the dialogue and not on the aspect of respect. Catholics were those who best evaluated Church's practice: both topics under investigation account for, on average, 7.8 points. Among the other groups surveyed, that of those "with no religion" thought of Church's practice in the most positive way, obtaining an average of 6.3 points. Religions named "Historical Protestants", "Neopentecostals", and "Spiritualists" reached an average of 6.0 points. "Pentecostals" come shortly after, with an average of 5.9 points. The group of "Agnostics" had an average of 5.5 points. The most critical group was the so-called "non-Christian religious movement", with an average of 4.8 points. The view of religions and groups surveyed concerning the attitude of the Catholic Church with

regard to respect to the practice of dialogue is, overall, negative, since the average does not go beyond 5.7 points. Numbers suggest: more than respecting the different religion, the challenge is developing practices of dialogue between religions.

The evaluation of the relationship between *clergy* and *lay people* in communities, overall, may be marked as positive. Priests both help and receive well those who look for them (74%). Criticism lies on the transparency of financial resources, as only 40% agree that there is transparency. When asked about the requirement of celibacy for practicing priestly ministry, just above half of respondents does not agree with such obligatoriness (52%). Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7: Catholic leaderships and lay people

	I agree	I disagree
Priests preaching help people	76%	9%
Priests receive well those who look for them	72%	9%
There is transparency in the administration of financial resources	40%	25%
Celibacy is needed by priests	35%	52%

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 57).

The survey shows a good degree of *people's satisfaction* regarding celebrations (76%). They are regarded as easy to be understood and related to everyday themes (69%). The survey finds out an incentive to the theological education of lay people (71%). Table 8 displays the answers. Respondents had to answer whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposed statements.

Table 8: Satisfaction and theological education

	I agree	I disagree
There is satisfaction to participate in masses and celebrations	76%	6%
God's word is nicely preached and used	73%	10%
Lay people have a good theological education	71%	10%
Masses and celebrations are easy to be understood	69%	10%
Masses and celebrations deal with everyday themes	69%	9%

Source: Camargos (2012, p. 42).

Although the evaluation is positive, both concerning the satisfaction to participate and regarding priests preaching, the survey, by listening to "Church's messages" – item left open for respondent's personal expression – indicates the wish that the "living word is better preached", as well as "the Bible's truth". There is an indication that the biblical text is more worked on in the communities.

Survey data, by themselves, announce their richness. Much information is brought to light. Many analyses and perspectives may be drawn from various views. Our reflection, at this point, will be conducted through the theological-pastoral look and, in advance, it is recognized as one among many possibilities. The question that shows up to us is: which challenges do these data pose to the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte from the theological-pastoral look?

2 Theological-pastoral challenges

The survey provides important data for the theological-pastoral reflection, because it portrays the current religious profile of the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte. When we are faced with survey results, at first, we notice the actual presence of religious plurality in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. Catholicism, even having a hegemonic position, share the sacred space with a variety of religious designations[3]. Pluralism and religious mobility arouse our attention, because it is not only the presence of diversity, but, especially, the religious transit that occurs between the various designations. And, also, the increase in the group named "with no religion", that of people seeking to develop their spirituality with no ties to religion (Table 2).

For the theologian Claude Geffré (2004, p. 136), "religious pluralism may, thus, be regarded as a historical destination allowed by God, whose ultimate meaning is not revealed to us". This author understands religious pluralism as "common destiny of humanity" and as a "new theological paradigm". Therefore, pluralism is a reality that is imposed to all religions and it requires new attitudes from them, above all, of openness, dialogue and re-readings of theological conceptions. Religions have a great contribution to offer for the construction of a better world, encouraging harmony, peace, and social justice.

Particularly through Catholicism, both theological reflection and pastoral actions will have to be dialogically thought. Pastoral is the place of constant creativity. Religious leadership needs this clarity, because in the light of the Gospels, the tradition of the Church and its documents must be creative and deeply revolutionary in its pastoral action. The pastor is the one who cares for and, when looking at green grass and fresh water, leads his flock to this place. In the contemporary world, the good pastor is the one who talks to his believers, listens to their wishes, grasps their

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[3] The survey found out the presence of 142 different religious designations among its respondents.

quest for spirituality, and seeks to respond in a creative way to these challenges. Worldview and creativity define pastor's identity. Christ, king and messiah, is the good pastor who cares for and "gives his life for his sheep" (John 10, 11).

There are many types of pastoral action that we may define as *ad intra* and *ad extra*. *Ad intra* are those actions directed towards inside of the church and they keep the joy of everyday community life. They are pastoral, such as liturgy, welcoming, music, baptism, Bible circle, prayer, catechesis, youth, confirmation, family, support, communication, and so on. *Ad extra* are those actions directed towards outside of the church and they signalize its prophetic and missionary spirit. They are pastoral, such as those for workers, children, marginalized women, human rights and the rights of minors, fishermen, health, migrants, land, African-Brazilian people, prison, AIDS, sobriety, elderly people, human mobility, people living in the streets, nomads, and so on. The concern of pastors and pastoral leaderships is providing all pastorals in their community with a good administration, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, so that they have the attention required and a good performance.

The research "Values and religion in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte" points out many pastoral challenges in all fields surveyed: religious pluralism and mobility, social and sexual morality, the Catholic Church's relation to the other religions, and the satisfaction of its believers. A change is required in the way how to think of pastoral activity to respond satisfactorily and meaningfully to people's demand in today's world. Fear of venturing into new pastoral practices does not justify the persistence of old attitudes. There are many reactions in face of the survey results. We highlight a few: a) disregard them and say that these data are already known; b) react by searching for a convenient pastoral plan to capture/convert believers; c) analyze what are the specificities of each community and improve them; d) experience all things with a new spirit. A creative and current way of experiencing love and promoting satisfaction and ethical commitment. We will emphasize the latter attitude, because we think that the *new spirit* enables openness

enough to read data and see challenges as opportunities for new possible ecclesial constructions.

We do not intend to provide answers to each reality under study (pluralism and religious mobility, social and sexual morality, Catholic Church's relation to the other religions, and satisfaction of its believers). The Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte has its history wrapped by pastoral projects aiming at participation, justice, and evangelization among other goals. The first of them was "Constructing hope". It started in 1990 and had as one of its goals knowledge on the archdiocese reality. Many researches were conducted (LIBANIO, 1992). From it emerged the I Assembly of God's People in 1996, which extended the range of ecclesial understanding and participation (LIBANIO, 2011). The II Assembly took place only in 2003 and in line with the first project. It inaugurates, however, a new moment in the history of the archdiocese. From it a new archdiocesan pastoral project was born, named "Living church", whose subtitle changed according to the focus of each subsequent assembly. The II Assembly focused on the "God's people in communion" (2005-2008), the III Assembly emphasized the proposal of a church "Always on mission" (2009-2012) (ARQUIDIOCESE DE BELO HORIZONTE, 2012). In October 2012 there will take place the IV Assembly and the pastoral project will be named "Living church: God's people on mission".

Taking this profile into account and in line with the survey data, we will think through the identity of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte by means of their ethical commitment, characteristic focus on the evaluation of respondents. What survey data may we highlight to rethink the ecclesial identity of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte?

3 Survey data and the Catholic Church's identity in Belo Horizonte

The survey shows that people believe in the Catholic Church. Among respondents, 72% think it is an ethical institution, 69% claim it is reliable, and 58% define it as a church that is committed, active, and closer to poor people. Concerning its role in social life, 81% think it has a social mobilization strength, 79% claim it is committed to peace and social justice, 65% say it works in defense of the dignity of women and black and Indian people, 60% point out it is committed to the environment, and 50% agree that it works against corruption. Data point out the construction of a church based on ethical principles and having a great mobilizing force (tables 3 and 4). Through these data, we will focus on thinking of theological-pastoral actions that make clear the Catholic identity in the current context.

Identity may be perceived, according to Paul Ricoeur[4], as *idem* and *ipse*. The *idem* identity is that *fixed* in time, it is the core that remains regardless of social, political, and cultural changes. The *ipse* identity is that in *continued construction process*, therefore, it is never static and finished, but always open to new possibilities. Applying this concept to the Catholic Church, we may say that the Church has within itself both notions of identity. On the one hand, it brings, for centuries, the core of its faith in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the understanding of faith in Jesus Christ always receives new interpretations to remain current and meaningful to its believers. Both notions of identity, fixed and under construction, are crucial to keep the Catholic Church in time and allow its continued updating.

These two approaches to identity are clear in the survey, because, on the one hand, it shows the church of Jesus Christ as being ethical and committed to poor people. On the other hand, it points out the need to further deepen this commitment and invest in those who are more excluded from society (poor people, prisoners, and Indians – tables 3 and 4). *Idem* and *ipse* are interconnected by demarcating identity

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[4] Paul Ricoeur (1991, p. 12-14) introduces the distinction between *ipse* and *idem* identity.

and always allowing new construction, they stimulate creativity so that the church becomes attentive to tradition and, at the same time, open to signs of the times.

Survey data show that the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte has constructed the image of an ethical church, committed to its people and its liberation process, and it is recognized as having a social mobilization strength. This ecclesial identity flame must be kept and expanded. We could demarcate the identity of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte as *Church of God's People and committed to the announcement and construction of God's Kingdom*. "Church of God's People" is a revival of the early Christian community that starts its construction fueled by the faith in the resurrected one and, at the same time, supported by the hope of God's Kingdom. It is in line with the II Vatican Council, which extends and universalizes this concept by stating that "all men are called to belong to the new God's people" (CONCÍLIO VATICANO II, 1987). Everyone is called, especially those baptized, to be subjects of its construction as a pilgrim in history. It seeks to overcome the dualism between clergy and lay people and to encourage unity in the church.

"Committed to the announcement and construction of God's Kingdom" refers to the prophetic spirit of Jesus Christ that was taken by the Christian church throughout its history. The solidarity that Jesus Christ had with regard to the excluded people of his time was taken as missionary spirit by the early church and it extended throughout its life. God's kingdom is a place where a dignified life and human rights are possible for everyone. It is going through a personal and inner process of conversion to God. The Christian mystique starts by feeling the divine touch through reality and its appeal to lifestyle change. This conversion is made clear in the engagement in a community of faith, in solidarity, and in social struggles in defense of life dignity and human rights, as well as planetary care. It means tuning in to the historical Jesus, committed to the construction of a life project of his own, God's Kingdom.

Church of God's People committed to the announcement and the construction of God's Kingdom is the identity demarcation of a participatory and inclusive church, open to dialogue, plural, and engaged in the social liberation process. It means witnessing the love that unites and sustains Trinity and that always feeds it again with solidarity between People – Father-Son-Spirit –, inspiration and reference for the organization and dynamics of ecclesial life. As an expression of God's word in the world, it is always an interconnection between particular church and universal church, chaired by the representative of Peter and bishop of Rome. The universal church exists only "in and through particular churches" (CONCÍLIO VATICANO II, 1987). Hence the importance of strengthening particular churches. It is in them and through them that there is church. The harmony and solidarity that must unite and sustain the relationship between particular church and universal church is an expression of openness and the universal salvific will of God, which invites everyone to be in a permanent state of dialogue and available for the service of constructing God's Kingdom.

Glimpsed and stared by Jesus Christ, God's Kingdom remains as a target[5]. While there are poor and excluded people and planetary life remains endangered, it will mean that Christians, who believe in the one who introduced them to faith, will not be able to rest in peace. There is a continued call for living along and community engagement in defense of a dignified life and planetary care. This way of thinking makes Christian community life significant and challenging. The creation of new communities, encouraged by God's spirit and committed to construct the Kingdom, becomes constant.

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[5] In the Latin American theology, mystique and method are interconnected. The mystique reflects the mystery of a God who suffers by the suffering of excluded people and, from there, screams for release. This awareness and indignation enables the emergence of a new method for doing theology: we start from contemplation of reality, then the same reality is read in the light of the Sacred Scriptures and tradition, and, finally, we construct action strategies for transforming this reality. Leonardo Boff proposes this interconnection between mystique and method in five moments: "(1) a spiritual meeting, it is worth saying, an experience of the Crucified one suffering by crucified people; (2) an ethical indignation by which we condemn and reject this situation as inhuman, which requires overcoming; (3) an attentive look that implies a structural analysis of mechanisms producing poverty-oppression; (4) a critical judgment either from the eyes of healthy faith, either from the eyes of healthy reason about the kind of society we have, marked by so many injustices and the urgency of transforming them; (5) an effective action pushing forward the liberation process through the oppressed ones; (6) a celebration that is a collective celebration of the victories achieved" (BOFF, 2011).

What are the communities and how can each of them help constructing better relationships, social life, and be attentive to environmental problems? These challenges apply to all communities, both in rural and urban areas. There is no community without affective moments of socialization. The community environment is a privileged space for constructing personal accomplishment, for feeling satisfied, and, finally, for being happy. We understand that being-in-the-world (body) and being-for-the-others (psychic) is being-for-transcendence (spirit)[6]. As being-in-itself, man has an inner structural unit, within himself. However, when he starts relating to others, with the world and with the transcendent, this unit starts being endangered and difficulties emerge. This shows that the human being, even having a basic structural unit, is not ready and finished forever. He is dynamic and, in the relationships he establishes, while becoming a person also sees himself as different from everything and everyone. This finding enables him to constantly make new appropriations of himself (*ipse*), that is, to go deeper in order to prepare his own identity (*idem*), to define who he is to himself. To live means getting into the dynamics to be always reconstructing his existential identity (*idem* and *ipse*).

The affective socialization environments in the community and the clashes, social struggles, and planetary defenses are actual and opportune moments for new reconstructions. Feeling fulfilled and happy, therefore, giving a meaning to life means growing with regard to the balance between being-in-the-world, being-for-others, and being-for-transcendence. Being a church committed to the announcement and construction of God's Kingdom means being aware that within the community and social engagements – either in defense of dignity and human rights, fighting against corruption, caring for and mobilizing in defense of environment or talking to different religious traditions – the utopic horizon is that of satisfaction and abundant life for everyone (John 10, 10).

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[6] For understanding the composition of human being as body (externalization), psychic (interiorization), and spirit (depth) see Panasiewicz (2011, Cap. 1).

In these communities, there is no room for exclusion. Everyone is invited to participate and engage in the process of personal balance, social liberation, and planetary care. Everyone is responsible for the community well-being. Clergy and lay people must think collectively of ways to enable the community to be "environment of socialization" of the deepest life experiences and that everyone gets involved in the community achievements. According to the words of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, "everyone is called to collaborate as living members, with the whole strength she/he received from Creator's goodness and Redeemer's grace, for the Church growth and its continued sanctification" (CONCÍLIO VATICANO II, 1987). Therefore, it is a leaders' duty to encourage and keep the creative and participatory spirit of all members. Thus, they should always be present in every important moment, watching and encouraging community life.

Following this compromise spirit, how can we think of participation in particular church?

4 Ministerial church: communion, participation, and mission

A few years ago, the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) found out that "the organization of the Catholic Church is very dependent on the priest and the parish" (CNBB, 2003). This centralization endangered the dynamics of communion and participation in community life. The conception of Church of God's People, proposed by the II Vatican Council, takes out of focus the church model driven by the institution and proposes an ecclesial model where the key is community life and, thus, everyone is called to participate. *Ministerial church* means that everyone is called, in Christ and by the Spirit, to be subjects of the church and to share the life communion in the community and in the mission in the world. There is a co-accountability pact between clergy and lay people, and the latter "must practice a precious action to evangelize the world" (CONCÍLIO VATICANO II, 1987). The dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* – Peoples' light – signalizes the importance of a

completely ministerial church by addressing the various functions in the service of hierarchy (ch. III), lay people (ch. IV), and religious people (ch. VI). In *Christifideles laici* – The lay believers (1988) –, Pope John Paul II draws attention, in the subtitles of his apostolic exhortation, for dignity, participation, co-accountability, and education of lay people by being available to evangelization in the church. Pope Benedict XVI, in a message sent to participants in the International Forum of Catholic Action, in Iaşi, Romania, states that "the Church needs mature lay people, who are 'co-responsible' for its universal mission and not simply regarded as clergy 'collaborators'" (BENTO XVI, 2012). There is a constant invitation for educating lay people and becoming co-responsible to construct a church that is *God's people and committed to the announcement and the construction of God's Kingdom*.

In this relationship between clergy and lay people, there are some challenging situations that need special attention. On the one hand, there is absence of the priest in the community dynamics and, on the other hand, there is a priest centeredness in the community organization and decision-making. It is essential, therefore, that the priest is present in the community life, encouraging and stimulating the participation of everyone without causing any dependence and having a dialogical approach. Going beyond the community, it is important that the ecclesial leadership thinks of the communities network as a meeting space where everyone – people, groups, movements – are available to the evangelizing mission and to the construction of God's Kingdom, either by physical presence and through virtual social networks. Openness to the other, according to the differences of each one, enriches the collectivity. As St. Augustine stated, "in essential things, unity, in doubtful things, liberty, and in everything, charity". Love is the mark of Christian otherness.

Who is reached by this conception of church? It is suggested that this spirit of *Church of God's People and committed to the announcement and construction of God's Kingdom* permeates all communities of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte so that clergy and lay people get involved and lead each community to take significant steps in welcoming, mutual care, and social, political, and cultural achievements. The

ecclesial leadership plays a special role: to encourage and enable the construction of socialization environments, allowing the involvement of all people and the creation of new communities. It is up to the lay leadership the attention to routine, that is, community administration, coordinating the pastoral and administrative councils. Therefore, a good education of lay people and the clergy is of crucial importance for a committed church at the service of constructing God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ life, narrated in the Gospels, is its stronghold.

It is proposed, therefore, that the clergy is the conveyor of living spirituality, centered on the God's word, especially, in Jesus Christ life. Be the promoter of spiritual life in the community and celebrate the Eucharist so as not to be a repetitive and monotonous ritual[7]. It is suggested that creativity and development of Christian mysticism are encouraged. Would this lead to rethink the ministerial Catholic Church and decentralize the Eucharistic liturgy the priest? Remembering the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the mission of the Christian community. New possibilities to celebrate the table of the word and the table of the Eucharist do not mean to trivialize the ritual and the Christian faith, but significantly upgrade the Christian specificity. How could we be creative and safeguard the theological meaning of sacraments? Awakening the community autonomy so that it finds its wishes and capabilities is the spiritual animator's task. Finally, it is suggested to prepare the lay leadership to coordinate these new moments of the community with joy. *The new and creative way of being Christian is the leaven of community life*.

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[7] Data from the qualitative survey, which are not tabulated, yet, show speeches of respondents with recurrent references to the mass as a repetitive ritual, monotonous or tiresome. The sociologist Dr. Pedro Ribeiro de Oliveira reads these data and presents it in this issue of *Horizonte*: Oliveira (2012).

Conclusion

The survey "Values and religion in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte" enables various analyses and perspectives. Some of them were outlined. Thinking through ecclesiology in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte allows demarcating positive aspects in order to encourage them and change negative aspects that do not favor the ecclesial dynamics. It awakens creativity so that the life project, narrated in the Gospels of Jesus Christ, is experienced in a purposeful manner and always updated by their followers. Faith in him gathers and unites the community by awakening the creativity to make "all things new" (Revelation 21, 15).

Church of God's people and committed to the announcement and the construction of God's Kingdom is a revival of the prophetic and missionary spirit of the initiator of the Christian faith, Jesus Christ, who made the following proclamation on the mountain and today he talks to his followers from the mountains of Minas Gerais:

> Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5, 13-16).

Flavor and light! Constructing a meaningful life and allowing that this meaning inspires and encourages new life constructions, personal, social, and planetary is the *raison d'être* of the Christian church.

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