

International Service Organism of Parish Cells of Evangelization

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Theological synthesis on the System of Parish Cells of Evangelization

Foundations - Pastoral Principles - Methodologies



by the Theological Commission of the
International Service Organism of
Parish Cells of Evangelization

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Introduction

The Theological Commission of *the International Service Organism for Parish Cells of Evangelization* met on February 18, 2015 for the purpose of responding to a request made by the Pontifical Council for the Laity: to present briefly and concisely the experience of PECS from a theological point of view. To this principal end, we identified three converging objectives:

1. To challenge, through this presentation, those pastors (priests and bishops) and theologians who have no personal experience of this ecclesial reality and to invite them to a “pastoral conversion” for the missionary renewal of our parishes.
2. To distinguish the levels of theological reflection which allows for a better understanding of the Cell System experience:
 - a. The foundations: the pneumatology, the cristology, the eccesiology, the missiology of the new evangelization, the biblical hermeneutics.
 - b. The pastoral principals: the systemic structure of interpersonal relationships, the organicity of the processes, the triple integration, the pastoral vision.
 - c. Applications: the processes of evangelization, the training (formation) of disciples, the development of leaders, the catechetical and sacramental life.
3. To clarify the evangelical contribution of this experience in its ecumenical context, all the while emphasizing its authentic Catholic value.

Problem

The Second Vatican Council initiated a great movement of renewal, a “permanent reform” (*Ecclesia in via peregrinans vocatur a Christo ad hanc perennem reformationem*” *Unitatis Redintegratio* § 6), for the Church, desiring to renew itself in line with its fundamental mission. *Evangelii Nutiandi* of Paul VI remains an essential theological and pastoral reference to live what we call now, the ‘pastoral conversion’ (*Document d’Aparecida 2007 and Evangelii Gaudium 2013*) within the ‘new evangelization’ (*St. John Paul*). Since this great prophetic movement allows a real and profound missionary transformation in the parish, more remains to be done from a theological point of view than a pastoral. PECS is a pastoral methodology (systemic and integrative) which involves the entire parish being trained in this missionary renewal.

In November 1986, don Piergiorgio Perini, pastor of S. Eustorgio, discovered the PECS experience in the parish of St. Boniface (Pembroke Pines, Florida, USA). He returned with the “Cell Leaders Training Manual” considered as the basic document with a general vision of the cell experience and a basic plan to launch the pastoral methodology and begin cells of evangelization in the parish. Few changes were made to this basic document. The recognition of PECS by the Pontifical Council for the Laity which was confirmed by its Statutes in 2009 and definitively recognized in 2015, has allowed us to identify the main and essential axes of the cell experience and to clarify its ecclesiological framework (cf. Statutes, Article § 1 The ecclesial physiognomy of cells). But a fundamental theological reflection merely allows us to dig and to question certain innovative aspects of this pastoral approach inspired by the missionary experience of Protestant evangelical communities. This document not only promises to present a definitive understanding of this pastoral vision, but

above all to contribute to the beginning of reflection and clarification. An immense theological-pastoral construct opens up before a rich and abundant experience, novel and prophetic where we discover how the Holy Spirit has overtaken the theological reflection by an evangelistic experience already very fertile and a source of great hope for the life of the Church.

1. The essential “pastoral conversion” for the missionary renewal of our parishes

The phrase, already used in the *Document d’Aparecida* (7.2 Pastoral conversion and the missionary renewal of communities, §365-372) and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Chapter 1: The missionary transformation of the Church, § 19-49), allows us to understand the process by which a pastor can welcome this new pastoral vision in order to go from “pastoral maintenance” (*Verbum Domini* § 95) to a resolutely missionary pastoral mode.

In order to live this pastoral conversion, the pastor engaged in the Parish Evangelizing Cell System is called, among other things:

- To put in place a kerygmatic pastoral plan;
- To train the baptized so that they are able to engage more actively in evangelization as missionary disciples;
- To launch a pastoral plan of small ecclesial communities at the service of ‘the mission’ and Christian formation, so that the parish is considered a “community of communities” (*Evangelii Gaudium* §28) capable of reaching out to the ‘periphery/marginalized’;
- To develop authentic lay leaders who will share the responsibility and leadership in forming new leaders.

The Parish Evangelization Cell System, as a pastoral vision, assists the pastor in living this community transformation which first and foremost happens by his personal conversion because it touches his very 'being' as a priest and because for him, it is a matter of recognizing in a practical and lively way:

- the centrality of the missionary mandate of the resurrected Jesus (Mt 28,18-20; Mk 16, 15; Lk 24, 46-49; Jn 20, 21; *Redemptoris Missio* § 22-23) at the heart of all his pastoral actions;
- the foundation of evangelization as being essential to the fertility, to the communion and to the growth (quantitative and qualitative) of the parish (*Redemptoris Missio* § 49);
- and the power of the priestly ministry to the service of persons and communities who are in need of discovering the transforming force of sanctifying grace and of the value of the spoken Word of God (Act 20, 32; *Spe Salvi* § 2,4 and 10).

2. Foundations - Pastoral Principles - Applications

This triad allows us to distinguish three levels of necessary reflection in order to have a proper theological understanding of pastoral realities. A reflection on the **foundations** assures that pastoral practice conforms to the teaching of the Scriptures and Tradition, as well as the Magisterium of the Church. Reflection at the level of **principles** allows us to understand and to recognize the particular domain of 'pastoral or practical theology', primarily based on an ecclesiology of spiritual and numeric growth. (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* §57). Reflection on the **applications** allows us to exercise the necessary pastoral discernment in applying methodologies, studies, and strategies in light of the contexts, cultures, needs and necessities in that particular environment.

A. Foundations

All the Church's teaching is concerned with the centrality of the evangelizing mission (cf. Letter of Pope Francis to the Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University of Argentina, 3 March 2015). But with regard to PECS, some doctrinal themes should be discussed:

At the pneumatological level:

- The Holy Spirit, the principal Agent of evangelization (*Evangelii Nuntiandi § 75*).
- The Holy Spirit, Protagonist of the mission (*Redemptoris Missio § 21-30*).
- The Holy Spirit and the emergence of charisms and ministries (*Christifideles Laici §45-56*)
- The Holy Spirit who sanctifies the Church (*Lumen Gentium §4*).

At the Christological level:

- The Christ, first and greatest Evangelizer (*Evangelii Nuntiandi § 7*).
- Jesus Christ, the only Savior (*Redemptoris Missio §4-20*).

At the ecclesiological level:

- The Church, the universal sacrament of healing (*Lumen Gentium §48*).
- The Church and its essential missionary identity (*EN §14; AG §2*).
- The growing Church (*LG §3,5,7,8,17,18,26,28,30,42,45,CD §1; AA §2,3; AG §5,7,9,36; SC §2; UR §24*).
- "The Eucharist, source and summit of all evangelization" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis §5*) allows us to understand the foundational place of Eucharistic Adoration when launching PECS. As the source, Eucharistic adoration is the first step in

the process of evangelization and as the summit, the newly converted are called to the fullness of the sacramental life.

The missiology of the new evangelization:

Evidently, all these topics and many others besides, should be delved into in a complementary dynamic, taking into account mainly the ecclesiological paradigm of growth. This paradigm is considered the dynamic basis proper to the PECS called constantly to growth and to multiplication by evangelization, the formation of disciples and the development of leaders.

The “new evangelization” understood as a new context of church activity (Redemptoris Missio §33-34) to which the PECS has subscribed, has not found sufficient theological developments to take into consideration all aspects of this novel experience and to clarify its relationship with regard to the notion of mission. It is a question of opening up a new theological construct. The pastoral experience has somehow preceded the theological reflection. The following example demonstrates this very clearly. It allows us to better see how we pass from the level of “Foundations” to the level of “Principles”.

The type of biblical interpretation:

A particularly innovative point, the pastoral vision of the PECS is impregnated with an implicit and not a formalized interpretation of the application of the Word of God. This type of interpretation finds the beginning of its theological elaboration in the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 4.A-Actualization). But the reflection even goes a little further to find a use for the Word of God in the sense of pastoral application and the organization of ecclesial communities. This type of interpretation is particularly present in the Basic Manual for leader training. Biblical texts are used for pastoral purposes at different levels and in different contexts for the PECS. In a Catholic

setting, no formal study has been published on the subject. Here are some lived examples of the pastoral applications of the Word of God in the PECS:

- The missionary mandate of the resurrected Jesus as the basis and justification for the implementation of the PECS.
- The biblical understanding of Oikos for the development of a teaching on the process of evangelization.
- The concept of the House-Church as the scriptural background for the meeting of the cell in the home and not in the local parish.
- The application of the Jethro principle (Ex. 18) for the structure of the network of cells within a system of accountability where leaders are called to give an account of the lived experience.

B. Pastoral Principles

The pastoral principles which emerge from the experience of the PECS relevant to a basic theology which considers the Church, not only a sociological reality, but more profoundly and ontologically (*Lumen Gentium* § 8) as being the Body of Christ “growing”. We should equally not lose sight of the fact that the ontological and unifying character of the ecclesial body “growing” cannot be understood without the affirmation in *Lumen Gentium* §1 about the Church which is “ in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”. Otherwise one runs the risk of considering the growth only from a numeric or sociological point of view. From this perspective, what is at the base of the PECS then, is what we can call in a sense an “implicit theology” since it is not formalized, but greatly illuminated by the light of faith, allowing us to understand the resolutely intentional character of growth, development and multiplication. The term “system” which denotes

the totality of the experience is actually used in its etymological sense (in Greek, *sustèma* signifies: a biological organ). Following a certain Pauline ecclesiology inspired by Ephesians 4:11-16, one can use several images of the biological body and can justify the use of the term “cell”.

The systemic structure of interpersonal relations:

The Church, in its very nature, is relational, beginning with the Triune-God, itself a relationship of Persons, and relational among the baptized who have received the grace of salvation. If John Paul II characterized the teachings of the Second Vatican Council by the terms Mystery-Communion-Mission (cf. the first three chapters of *Christifideles Laici* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis* § 59), it is because the common denominator of this threesome is relationship. This is why we can talk about the systemic structure of interpersonal relations at the heart of the ecclesial body. The PECS reveals to a great extent, the essential relational character of the Church which evangelizes in a variety of situations and ways:

- In evangelization: the preferred method is that of “oikos” evangelization: also called “evangelization within existing relationships” or evangelization of proximity.
- In the everyday meeting in the cell group: fraternity is encouraged and stimulated.
- In the training of disciples: relational accompaniment is considered an important factor of growth.
- In the development of leaders(leadership development): attention given to a person is beneficial to the process of multiplication of leaders and their sense of responsibility. We know that the use of this English term can be understood in other cultures and languages. Leadership has been sufficiently explored from a biblical and Christian standpoint

in the setting of the evangelical communities that came out of the Reform. Thus we have defined leadership in the Christian context as “the relational quality a person is able to influence over a group of persons in order to fulfill a vision received from God.” In the *Basic Manual* of PECS which came from the USA, the term “leader” was adopted in its proper and original meaning without discussion. The term “leader” is accepted in the Statutes of the International Body (cf. chapter 3, articles 21-22).

- In the assembly of the community, the parish will begin to appear more and more like a family where a real and authentic “spirituality of communion” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* § 43-45) is lived harmoniously.
- Among parishes which have the PECS, since the communion of sister-parishes stimulates pastors and the baptized to have even more courage to face the different challenges of evangelizing in a post-Christian and post- modern world.
- For the pastor involved in the PECS, his pastoral conversion will consist primarily in changing from a pastoral mode of ‘functionalism’ to one of relationship. “Functionalism” is a recurrent theme of Pope Francis. The last use of this term was in his *Address to the participants in the Pontifical Missionary Societies on June 5, 2015*. (cf. also in *Evangelii Gaudium* § 95).

The organicity of the processes

The ecclesial body is a whole perfectly united, not only because it is woven with interpersonal relationships and with reciprocal and mutual interactions, sustained by the grace of Christ and the Spirit of communion, but also because it is organically structured by the dynamic processes of development and growth. Each one of these processes can be understood through 3 characteristics: 1. The

relationship; 2. The steps in the process; 3. The end. The PECS consists of several processes:

- The process of evangelization: called “the net” or “the bomb” which was inspired by chapter 2 of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* where Paul VI presents evangelization as an integral process.
- The process of conversion.
- The process of integration of new members into the larger community.
- The process of forming disciples within the cell.
- The process of leader development.
- The process of cell multiplication.
- The process of implanting the PECS in a community or transitioning to the PECS.
- The process of building a cell network structure within the parish.

In order to manage all these processes, the pastor should understand that he is also involved in a process of development with regard to his own pastoral competencies. So that the community can develop harmoniously, he should also understand that he is integrally and personally implicated in each of these processes since he is sacramentally tied to the future of his community. If we have a good understanding of LG § 10 and PO § 12, concerning the sacramental character of the Church where ordained ministers are organically in service to the priesthood of the baptized, the growth in holiness of the community is in some way tied to that of the ordained minister and vis-versa.

Triple integration

The systemic relationships and the organicity of the processes can therefore allow a triple integration of the evangelizing and growing Church.

1. Integration of cells:

Just as the biological cell is the basic unit of life, one could say that the cell of evangelization is the basic unit of the PECS. The cell in itself is complete. It needs to be nourished in order to grow healthily. It is designed to multiply, a sign of its evident vitality. It has internalized deeply the dynamic of multiplication and of spiritual growth. This is the reason why the cell needs to meet regularly (weekly) to be nourished along the five dynamics of growth in the Christian life (fellowship, praise/worship, formation, witness, and service). It grows by welcoming new converts and persons touched through their baptismal call, and it multiplies in order to replicate and amplify the movement towards evangelization. Thus, the cell of evangelization, taken by itself, is an integrated and integral whole.

2. Integration into the ecclesial body:

Just as the biological cell is tied to a much larger body without which it could not survive, the cell of evangelization is in living and vital relationship with the parish understood as the ecclesial body living the evangelizing mission for the growth of the Church. We know that the cell dies if it is separated from the body and that the body is healthy to the extent to which each cell is also healthy. Moreover, each biological cell is in good health because it is completing a task, a function, or a service for itself or for the body as a whole. Can one imagine a cell that is of no use to the body as a whole? It is the same with the cell of evangelization.

3. Pastoral integration:

Just as the biological body, which develops an innumerable amount of cells, it needs intelligence in order to co-ordinate the growth and harmonious development, over time, of its members, organs and systems. The ecclesial body which evangelizes should itself organize the development of the cells of evangelization under the watchful

eye of the pastor in a wise and equitable way. The pastor has the “vision”: 1. of the cell as the place where the totality of the Christian life is lived, 2. of the development of the ecclesial body and 3. of the pastoral integration of the two previous levels.

The philosophical-theological methodology of integration is more than likely the closest idea to a practical theology based on an ecclesiology of growth. We know the principle: “a science is exact to the extent that its method is adjusted exactly to its objective.” Since the ecclesial body is an integral and integrative reality, this approach of unbridled integration by Karol Wojtyla in his moral anthropology and his missionary ecclesiology, is quite pertinent and adapted to its object: the Church always *in status missionis*.

The pastoral vision

In order to understand the expression “pastoral vision”, one needs to have a good grasp of the dynamism of the pastoral application of the Scriptures and the methodological dynamism of integration. The most explicit example of this process of the vision, dependent on this double theological dynamism, is the one we find in the Book of Nehemiah. The teaching in Nehemiah allows us to understand this biblical reality as a process composed of steps: 1. Nehemiah responds to the call and welcomes the vision (Neh. 1); 2. He clarifies and defines this vision (Neh. 2: 1-15); 3. He communicates the vision (Neh. 2:16-18); 4. He realizes the vision (Neh. 3) despite numerous and various obstacles (Neh. 4-6). Once accomplished, the vision becomes a source of fertility and renewal for the people of Israel. (Neh. 7-13). The reference to the Book of Nehemiah as a model of the visionary process is well known and used extensively in Evangelical communities coming out of the Reform. It is applied, in large part, in the establishment of pastoral projects. In the teaching documents of the PECS, we refer to it

regularly. In fact, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, there are almost a dozen such “visions” (orama) which structure the historic development of the Church in its evangelizing mission. The episode of Cornelius in Acts 10-11 is an excellent example. But it is a one-time event. But in the Book of Nehemiah, we have a complete visionary process as such.

If the pastor is really driven by this teaching, the tri-fold integration of the PECS will happen in a harmonious and equitable manner, along the view of what Paul envisioned when contemplating growth in the body of Christ. He wrote in Ephesians: “Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16). This is possible to the extent that the pastor promotes, not only the objective of evangelization and the spirituality of communion within the cell, but also and above all, the objective of Christian formation, concentrating on the leaders who are able to ‘multiply’ this formation within the cell system and the parish community at large. This is called in Pauline terms: equipping “the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

This vision of growth which runs throughout all of the New Testament and which is particularly summarized in this rich and profound passage in the letter to the Ephesians (4:11-16), is taken to heart by the pastor for the life and development of his parish community. So, more than just a method, the PECS is first a pastoral vision with a substantial and open perspective which allows for the integration of several methods. Driven by this vision, the pastor will find within himself the resources of grace which will give him the strength to undertake this pastoral adventure of

evangelization within a dynamic of growth and of multiplication. The ministry of the pastor, involved in the PECS, has no other objective than to actualize and apply what Paul himself lived while he was among the Christians of Colossi: “to bring to completion... the word of God “(Col. 1:25, literal translation) so that the Gospel “bears fruit and grows throughout the whole world” (Col. 1:6).

C. Applications

The methodological, pedagogical and strategic applications of the PECS are specifically presented in the training sessions, in regional, national and international seminars. The International Service Organism of Parish Cells of Evangelization oversees the spread of the pastoral vision, the formation of pastors and leaders, and the publication of educational documents. These applications are expressed in four contexts principally:

1. The evangelization process is largely described in the *Basic Leader Training Manual*.
2. Discipleship training, which is presented in the *Basic Manual*, is also part of new publications.
3. Leader development is intentionally discussed in the *Basic Manual* : this challenge to multiply leaders aims to clarify the understanding of leader formation. Here, also, the accompaniment Guides serve to better understand how leaders are called to grow in order to multiply.
4. Catechetical and sacramental integration: the experience of the PECS carries the fruit of evangelization by welcoming the newly converted and the re-converted. In the local communities we are witnesses to the establishment of news

ways that allow people to deepen their catechetical and sacramental life in the relational context of the cell. We find that this context allows for true loyalty and an increased participation in the life and mission of the parish. But this is not formalized and merits to be considered from a theological point of view more so than a pastoral one.

3. The contribution of evangelical communities that came out of the Reform

After having briefly discussed the Foundations, Principals and Applications of the PECS, we should address the delicate question of this pastoral approach which comes out of the evangelical communities of the Reform. Four ecumenical criteria guide us in this reflection:

1. The profession of the Catholic faith: “Catholics hold the firm conviction that the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church "which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him". They confess that the entirety of revealed truth, of sacraments, and of ministry that Christ gave for the building up of his Church and the carrying out of its mission is found within the Catholic communion of the Church....” *Directory for the application of principles and norms on ecumenism, Vatican, 25 March, 1993,§17.*)
2. The recognition of graces lived within the separated communities: “some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church...” (*Unitatis Redintegratio* § 3).

3. The call to conversion: “For although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervor that they should, so that the radiance of the Church's image is less clear in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of God's kingdom is delayed.” (*Unitatis Redintegratio* § 4)
4. The contribution of our separated brethren to the edification of the Catholic Church: “Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification.” (*Unitatis Redintegratio* § 4)

A global and clearly “Catholic” vision (according to the whole) permits us to welcome and even integrate (with wisdom, from a profoundly ecumenical perspective and according to the criteria of experienced discernment by Catholic pastoral theology) innovative and original elements coming out of Evangelical communities which experiment with new approaches, promoting real ecclesial growth. In the United States of America, the movement of “Evangelical Catholicism” is already working in this way. With regard to the PECS, we can identify three major influences.

First source: the movement for the growth of the Church

It is clear that the movement for the growth of the Church (the Church Growth Movement), which was born in the United States in the nineteen seventies, greatly impacted the PECS in proposing the study of “the oikos” as a process of evangelization. The Church Growth Movement founded research institutes to evaluate the various methods of evangelization and to encourage the creation of new approaches which promote the renewal and development of Christian communities. They verified, with scientific

proof to support, the value and efficiency of various approaches of evangelization.

From the point of view of training, the Basic Manual deliberately welcomes the input from this Movement. Here are some concrete examples which are found in the work by Win and Charles Arn (*The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, Faith and Holiness Edition, Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, 1988), major promoters of the Church Growth Movement:

1. the advantages of oikos evangelization (p. 38-41);
2. the biblical foundations of 'oikos' (p. 28-31);
3. the oikos list (p. 66-80);
4. the levels of receptivity and the events of transition (p. 77);
5. the levels of spiritual life or the shell of Engel (p. 81-93);
6. the necessity to develop a program of integration for the newly converted (p. 43-53), which will be taken on by the cell experience and the evangelization process.
7. faith sharing in a relational context (p. 94-107).

Globally, the Church Growth Movement can be better understood by what we call the "process of conversion". Already, the evangelization process gives structure to the necessary and complementary steps that allow a newly converted to be integrated into the community, but we also need to understand how a person, from a subjective point of view, enters into a process of transformation. These steps are studied in a book by Nicolas Standaert, *L'Autre dans la Mission* (Edition Lessius, Bruxelles, 2003,"2-The process of conversion", p. 25-41).

We present these seven steps in order with a brief explanation: 1. The context (a religious, social, cultural, political etc... point of departure); 2. The crisis (the most important factor of

rebound to the converted); 3. The quest (to find meaning, consistency and harmony); 4. The encounter (all converted are brought to live a new stage through one or more personal interventions); 5. Interactions (this step is the most delicate since the newly converted should enter into a new network of relationships and should experience a certain break with the past network); 6. The commitment (the converted reconstructs his identity by remembering and narrating his personal story); 7. The consequences (are linked to a surprising finding: in this entire process, the converted is the active agent, free and responsible for his conversion).

Second source: the Cell Church movement

From an historic point of view, this is the most explicit source. In the first version of the *Basic Manual*, the pastoral team at St. Boniface in Pembroke Pines, Florida with Father Michael Eivers, never hesitated to speak, at the time, of the very first cell church experience in Seoul with the Presbyterian pastor, Paul Yonggi Cho (*House Cells and the Life of the Church*, Edition Vida 1989, American edition: *Successful Home Cell Groups*, Bridge Publishing, 1981). A more objective study is presented by Karen Hurston in *The Largest Church in the World* (Edition Vida, 1996, American edition: *Growing the World's Largest Church*, Gospel Publishing House, 1994). This Christian community experienced its greatest rate of growth over the course of the last century (from 1,500 faithful in 1965 to 900,000 in 1995) and helped launch an untold number of cell groups. Even if it is currently having legal issues, the impact of this Seoul community cannot be underestimated.

While the influence of the Church Growth Movement begins to diminish at the start of the 1990's, it is the movement of cell

churches that is taking over. It has become indisputable from the point of view of international research, that the greatest factor in Church growth is the 'planting' of cells of evangelization. Based on extensive research we can study the various models of cell churches, their ecclesiology, their principles, their method of implantation, the factors of growth or failure, their principle of cultural adaptation, the methods of formation for those responsible for cells, etc. An example of a research center which was established in the USA is "Touch Publication" in Texas with Joel Comiskey in particular, who is considered the premier international specialist on the theology of cells. It is a booming environment both from the point of view of testimonials and from the fact that biblical reflection on this reality becomes indispensable for evangelization. The bibliography presented in the annex gives witness to this great ebullience in evangelical communities in the domain of cells.

Third source: the innovative concept of the formation of disciples

In evangelical circles, "Discipleship", which is understood to mean the delivery of catechetical content in order that the disciple may grow in all areas of the Christian life is distinct from "Disciple-Making" (the formation of disciples) which includes in this formation the dynamic of growth with a view to the multiplication of disciples. Thus, the well-formed disciple, having attained maturity, can hear the call of the risen Jesus to evangelize and to form other disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19 and 2Tim. 2:2).

This biblical concept and evangelical innovation works wonderfully in the context of cell churches. We are accustomed to placing discipleship in the context (1) of a model of 'preaching' or (2) of a model of 'programmes' (catechetical, scholastic or other). But relational oikos evangelization and the cell experience has caused two other complimentary models to emerge among them so that

the Christian may attain full maturity and himself become an accomplished disciple capable of forming other disciples. We are speaking of: (3) a model of formation seen as a 'process' (one needs to have a global vision of disciple formation along the steps which are integrated into a single goal of maturity and multiplication) and (4) a model of 'relational accompaniment' (it is necessary, in a community and cell context, to accompany persons individually in the form of sponsorship as Jesus himself did with his disciples). One can find numerous studies of this kind within evangelical communities born out of the Reform and in particular, within the context of cell churches. It should be noted that the concept of "missionary-disciples" according to the definition given in the *Document of Aparecida and Evangelii Gaudium* surprisingly resembles this vision of formation.

Actually, we can confirm this finding from international research: the cell models which have concentrated on this objective and on coherent studies of these last two models of formation are experiencing more rapid and exponential growth than the community of Paul Yonggi Cho in Seoul. But the theological and pastoral integration of this vision of formation has not yet happened in the Catholic setting for two reasons: 1. reflection on this question is too recent even if it merits special attention; 2. this reflection requires more reason for pause and discernment given that important doctrinal aspects are at stake in the implementation of these studies.

Conclusion

This document, which was intended to be brief and succinct, has perhaps not responded to its first mission. In presenting the PECS from a theological point of view, we have become aware of the enormous construct which opens onto biblical, ecclesiological and pastoral themes that are deeply innovative, even uncharted. The Holy Spirit blows where he wills, we do not know where he comes from or where he goes..... (cf. Jn. 3:8). In daring to take the path of the new evangelization, it can only but invite us, more from a theological point of view than pastoral, to be guided by the grace of God on a path that is at the same time audacious, dynamic and unexpected in service to a Church that is always being called to growth. Have we perhaps had a strange feeling of being shaken in some of our theological concepts or approaches? This is perhaps a sign that the theologian is himself called to experience a “theological conversion” in order to better respond to the pastoral needs of a Church that wants to be renewed by a radical call to evangelization. Let us conclude with a recent explanation by Pope Francis:

Teaching and studying theology means living on a frontier, one in which the Gospel meets the needs of the people to whom it should be proclaimed in an understandable and meaningful way. We must guard against a theology that is exhausted in academic dispute or one that looks at humanity from a glass castle. You learn so as to live: theology and holiness are inseparable.” (*Letter of Pope Francis to the Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina, 3 March 2015*).