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KERYGMA OF JOY FOR DEFENDING MINORITY: COMPASSION THEOLOGY FOR REDEMPTION IN THE WORLD OF CHAOS

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Abstracts:

In a world marked by human suffering, systemic injustice, global crisis and marginalization of minority groups, the Christian proclamation of joy, kerygma, may seem counterintuitive or insufficient. However, this article argues that the Kerygma of Joy, as articulated in Evangelii Gaudium by Pope Francis, offers not only a spiritual vision but also a theological and pastoral praxis for defending minorities. Joy, in this framework, is not temporary happiness but a radical affirmation of human dignity in the face of suffering and exclusion. Drawing on biblical sources, patristic insights, and contemporary theological voices, particularly J.B Metz theology, this article explores how kerygma of joy becomes a counter-cultural stance that resists despair, empowers witness, and fosters solidarity with the marginalized. It further engages real-world contexts where Christian communities live out this joyful resistance in defense of minority identities, including religious, ethnic, and socio-political minorities. The article concludes by offering a pastoral vision that reclaims joy as an eschatological sign and a missionary strategy. In doing so, it invites the global Church to redefine evangelization not as cultural dominance or institutional expansion but as embodied compassion, dangerous memory, and solidarity in joy with those on the peripheries.

Keywords:

Kerygma of Joy, J.B Metz Compassion Theology, Intercultural Theology, Human Suffering.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking of Kerygma of Joy, Jesus is an inspiration for understanding the definition of this diction. Jesus' proclamation took place not in temples or lecture halls, but in streets, homes, and among the suffering. Mature Jesus was not a theologian who stayed at the school of theology and debated doctrinal concepts with other theologians such as Pharisees, Sadducees, and Torah experts, as He did when He was 12 years old (Luke 2 and Matthew 13) [1]. Most importantly, Jesus is the teacher who frees and even redeems human suffering as a representation of God's Mercy (Luke 16:4-24)[2]. Kerygma of joy is a radical, redemptive, and contextual praxis rooted in compassion theology.

In the context of things stand against the kerygma of joy, Jesus strongly criticized the inconsistent interpretations of Jewish religious culture that failed to bring salvation to humanity, as willed by YHWH. Jesus' harsh criticism of Jewish theologians is evident in the "eight woes" directed at the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, and 29)[3], as well as the "six woes" spoken against the

1 NRSV, NRSV Catholic Edition Gift Bible (Nasville: Catholic Bible Press, 2020).Luke 2: 46-47, " 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." And then, Matthew 13:54: When Jesus teaches in the synagogue, the people are astonished and say, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?". Interpretation: Both texts portray Jesus as possessing exceptional wisdom—divine wisdom—not learned through formal rabbinic channels.

2 Ibid. There is very famous quote about Lazarus and Rich man in Luke 16:4-24. 19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' It is clear that in kerygma, Jesus really cares about the peripheries.

3 John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume IV: Law and Love (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009). Meier notes that Jesus, as a Jewish teacher, spoke in the tradition of the prophets to call religious leaders to redeem marginal people (Jew) in order to achieve authentic holiness.

Pharisees who invited Him to dine (Luke 11:37–54)[4]. At its core, Jesus' critique condemned rules, political ideologies, or religious dogmas that caused suffering for the weak while granting unjust advantages to those in power. From the beginning of creation, YHWH desired to grant joy by saving humanity, yet those in power often obstructed God's salvation under the pretext of religious law. Jesus denounced this misguided cultural hermeneutics by calling them "fools," "hypocrites," and even "brood of vipers" (Matt. 3:7; Matt. 12:34)[5]. Those fools, hypocrites and brood of vipers are causing crisis in humanity.

In today's life, this contemporary world is increasingly marked by crisis in humanity: wars and ecological disasters, systemic injustice and poverty, rising secularism, and widespread existential anxiety[6]. In such a climate, the Church's proclamation of the Gospel often feels muted, even irrelevant[7]. The kerygma of joy, central to Christian faith, risks sounding hollow against the backdrop of human suffering and moral fragmentation. How can one authentically speak of "good news" when so many experience life as anything but?[8]

Therefore, as emphasized by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the proclamation of the Gospel should be done with joy, not with fear or burden. Joy is the essence of the Gospel; mission flows from joy (EG §1–8). Therefore, teaching God's word to people as an act to redeem human from their suffering is definition of kerygma of joy. While joy is often

4 L. S. Stegemann, Jesus and The Hope of The Poor (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers., 2009). Stegemann bold this verse to highlight Jesus' presence is to give salvation for the poor and criticize the man in power who destroys hope of the poor.

5 Ibid.

6 W. I. Robinson, Global Capitalism and The Crisis of Humanity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2014).

7 Enrique Dussel, "Epistemological Decolonization of Theology," in Decolonial Christianities, ed. Raimundo Barreto & Roberto Sirvent (Springer, 2019).

8 Stephen Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and the Cape Town Commitment," International Review of Mission 104, no. 2 (2015): 193–202. Actually, the background of Evangelii Gaudium was Pope Francis' concern about a growing "spiritual worldliness" in the Church—where ritual and doctrine overshadowed genuine compassion, evangelization, and joy.

emphasized in catechetical theoretical teaching or liturgical celebration contexts, little attention has been given to its power as a theological-pastoral response to structural dehumanization and redemption of human suffering as a method of kerygma[9]. Kerygma should be able to transform the lives of individuals and communities to salvation, especially when lived in solidarity with the marginalized. I strongly see the Church need to act more to improve method of kerygma[10]. This article seeks to fill that gap.

It is impossible to perform kerygma of joy if we don't recognize human suffering, that is what J.B Metz said after reflecting his sorrow experience in Nazi era, 1940s[11]. There is interesting analysis why in many countries, religious switching has caused net losses: for every 1 person joining Christianity, about 3 have left, most becoming religiously unaffiliated[12]. There is research from Bullivant saying, it was because Catholic Church perceived hypocrisy have driven especially younger people away[13].

Building his Compassion theology, Metz worried that it seems the institution of Catholic Church has become less understood the meaning of human suffering[14]. As well researched by Enrique Dussel in *The Epistemological Decolonization of Theology*[15], Christianity underwent a long and complex evolutionary process in its institutions, culture, and theology. Starting from a small group of Jewish sects that opened up to

9 Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology (London: Fortress Press, 1974).

10 Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

11 Johann Baptist Metz, "Suffering Unto God," University of Chicago Press Journals, no. Theology (1994), https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/448730.

12 Stephen Bullivant, Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Publisher Oxford University Press, 2019).

13 Ibid.

14 Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World (Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981).

15 Dussel, "Epistemological Decolonization of Theology."

"pagan" groups, this small community, which became the precursor of the Christian community, attracted the sympathy of the poor, oppressed, slaves, and other minority groups in the Greco-Roman empire. This early Christian community slowly pushed back the authority of the Roman Empire, which was seen as the center of power and civilization, sacred, and even believed to represent divinity. By the fourth century, this small "messianic" community gradually developed into an influential power that criticized, then became a partner, member, and even defender of the imperial power structure. "The Messiah, crucified by the Roman Imperial soldiers," wrote Dussel, "is now recognized as Christ, no longer 'the suffering servant of Isaiah,' but Pantokrator, the Almighty in the Byzantine basilica."[16]. The essence is that religious people need to understand that kerygma is only possible if we release our superiority to understand human suffering.

Therefore, we can understand why Metz emphasizes that human suffering must be the starting point of theology[17]. Theology should not merely be an academic speculation or a game of dogmatic narratives detached from the real-life realities of human existence, nor should it become something that ignores human suffering. Metz considers suffering a fundamental aspect of human life. He does not see suffering merely as something to be avoided or resolved but as an inevitable reality that shapes human experience. In this context, suffering is not only related to personal or physical hardships but also encompasses social and political suffering experienced by individuals or groups, such as oppression, injustice, and violence[18].

16 Ibid.
17 Johann Baptist Metz, Poverty of Spirit (New York: Paulist Press, 1968).
18 Johann Baptist Metz, "Suffering Unto God."

The kerygma of joy needs to be applied contextually. Human suffering in the present era is likely different from the suffering during the Roman oppression in Jesus' time or the struggles of World War II in J.B. Metz's era. When discussing suffering in today's context, the author observes various global crises, such as the potential depletion of clean water by 2040 due to excessive water pollution caused by human egoism[19]. Additionally, 99% of the air is already polluted, making people more vulnerable to severe diseases simply by breathing, a consequence of uncontrolled capitalist industrialization[20]. Furthermore, human rights violations in many places are increasing due to ideological and cultural clashes[21]. The researchers consider it essential to analyze expert opinions stating that the kerygma of joy for humanity faces significant challenges in a world dominated by global egoism. This study is being prepared, will be conducted, and will be evaluated because the kerygma of joy in the Gospel must contribute to alleviating these anxieties—just as Jesus' vision did after being baptized by John the Baptist (Luke 4:16-30).

Yet it is precisely in this context that the Church is called to rediscover the kerygma of joy—not as sentimental optimism, but as a resilient, eschatological hope rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ[22]. This *kerygma* is not only to be preached but embodied through a theology of compassion: a theology that refuses to separate

19 Derek Vollmer and Ian J. Harrison, "H2O≠ CO2: Framing and Responding to the Global Water Crisis," Environmental Research Letters 16, no. 1 (2021).

20 World Health Organization, "WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines," Particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide. (2021): 1–360.

21 David Hollenbach, "Human Dignity in Catholic Thought," The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (January 1, 2014): 250–259, accessed February 17, 2022, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-handbook-of-human-dignity/human-dignity-in-catholic-thought/59CC5468CE70AEFAB88AB7151F5A8BD6.

22 Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and the Cape Town Commitment." We can also understand the message in EG, "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus... a joy which is not born from ease or comfort, but from the certainty that we are infinitely loved." (Evangelii Gaudium, §1)

proclamation from solidarity, doctrine from suffering, or truth from tenderness[23].

This article explores the intersection between joyful proclamation and compassionate theology as a redemptive force in a world in chaos. It draws especially on the pastoral vision of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the political theology of J.B. Metz, and intercultural perspectives that emphasize mercy and inclusion. By reclaiming compassion not as a passive emotion but as a prophetic theological praxis, the article argues that only a kerygma shaped by compassion can meaningfully respond to the wounds of our age.

The structure of the article is as follows: after examining the theological roots of joy and compassion, it will assess the current global and ecclesial context of crisis. It will then present a constructive proposal for how a compassion-centered kerygma can serve as a path of redemption for both the Church and the world.

THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF JOY

The Christian understanding of joy is deeply embedded in the theological and biblical tradition. Joy (*chara* in Greek; *simchah* in Hebrew) is not merely an emotional reaction to external pleasure but a profound spiritual state rooted in communion with God[24]. In the Hebrew Scriptures, joy is a covenantal response to God's saving acts—an expression of gratitude for divine liberation and fidelity. The Psalms are replete with exclamations of joy rooted in justice and deliverance: "You

[23] R Barron and J Martin, "The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium" (2014), https://books.google.com/books?id=ob3CAwAAQBAJ.

[24] Gerhard Friedrich Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964). Explores "chara" in Greek and shows how joy in the New Testament is deeply tied to salvation, grace, and divine presence, rather than fleeting pleasure.

have turned my mourning into dancing" (Psalm 30:11)[25]. Here, joy arises from the experience of salvation in the midst of suffering—a theme that will later find its fullest expression in the paschal mystery of Christ.

In the New Testament, joy becomes central to the life and mission of Jesus. From the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus proclaims the "good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18)[26], a message charged with eschatological joy. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–12) frame the paradox that those who mourn, suffer persecution, or live in meekness are blessed, because their lives anticipate the coming reign of God[27]. Joy, then, is not the absence of suffering, but the presence of divine hope amidst it. Jesus' parables—the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son (Luke 15)—each end with rejoicing, symbolizing God's own joy when communion is restored[28]. Thus, joy becomes a theological marker of salvation history.

The incarnation itself is an eruption of joy into history. The angelic announcement to the shepherds declares, "I bring you good news of great joy for all people" (Luke 2:10)[29]. This joy is universal, inclusive, and redemptive. It breaks into a world marked by imperial oppression, religious exclusion, and existential fear. The joy proclaimed at Jesus' birth foreshadows His entire mission: to restore the broken image of God in humanity through radical compassion and sacrificial love. The Gospels portray Jesus as one who rejoices in the Spirit (Luke 10:21) and who invites His disciples into a similar joy—one not taken away by suffering

25 Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1960). Shows that simchah (joy in Hebrew) refers to joy in response to God's presence, deliverance, and covenant faithfulness

26 Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid. In the New Testament, joy (Greek: chara [χαρά]) is a deep spiritual reality, not merely a passing emotion or reaction to external circumstances. It is rooted in relationship with God, produced by the Holy Spirit, and intimately connected with faith, salvation, and the presence of Christ.

29 Stegemann, Jesus and The Hope of The Poor. Stegeman use the bible of Luke to highlight the meaning joy in Luke always related with a hope for the poor from God.

(John 16:22)[30]. Gospel joy is a transformation from sorrow to salvation because human have full communion with God's love.

Early Church Fathers also highlighted joy as a defining feature of Christian life. St. Augustine viewed joy as the deepest desire of the human heart fulfilled only in God: "He who has God has everything. He who has everything except God has nothing."[31] For Augustine, joy (*gaudium*) is the fruit of loving rightly—*ordo amoris*—where love is properly directed to God and neighbor. Similarly, St. John Chrysostom urged believers to "rejoice always" even amidst trials, interpreting suffering as a participation in the passion of Christ and thus a gateway to resurrection joy[32]. These insights established joy as a spiritual virtue linked with theological hope and divine love.

In the theology of Thomas Aquinas, joy is understood as a fruit of charity and an effect of beatitude. Joy (*laetitia*) arises when the will rests in the good possessed—ultimately, God Himself[33]. Thus, Aquinas links joy with the *beatific vision*, the final goal of human existence. However, Aquinas also recognizes the temporal joy that comes from participating in divine life through grace, virtue, and sacramental life. Therefore, Christian joy has both a *proleptic* and *teleological* character—it is a foretaste of the joy to come and a participation in the eternal now of God's love[34].

30 NRSV, NRSV Catholic Edition Gift Bible. The quotes is, ""So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." The interpretation is The joy promised here points forward to the fullness of communion with God, even beyond this life.

31 Ryan Coyne, Heidegger's Confessions: The Remains of Saint Augustine in "Being and Time" and Beyond (Religion and Postmodernism) (University Of Chicago Press, 2015).

32 W Mayer, "John Chrysostom as Bishop: The View from Antioch," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 56, no. 3 (2005): 455–477.

33 Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Summa Theologiae," A Brief Life of Thomas Aquinas (2024): 71–86.

34 Ibid. Aquinas clarifies that perfect joy belongs to beatitude, which is found in God as the highest good.

This theological root of joy stands in stark contrast to modern cultural understandings that equate joy with pleasure or success[35]. In secular societies, joy is often commodified or individualized, disconnected from transcendence or solidarity. The Christian tradition resists such reduction. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Spe Salvi*, "Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope… a trustworthy hope." Joy in this sense is eschatological: it arises from a hope that is "already but not yet"—anchored in Christ's resurrection and the coming of God's kingdom[36].

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis reclaims this theology of joy as a cornerstone for the Church's mission in the world. "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus" (EG §1). For Francis, joy is not peripheral but foundational to Christian identity and evangelization. It is a joy born of mercy, sustained in prayer, and enacted through solidarity with the poor. Francis echoes Metz's warning that theology must not turn a blind eye to suffering, insisting that "an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral" (EG §10)[37].

Pope Francis' pastoral theology affirms joy not as a fleeting emotional high but as a "missionary joy" rooted in the lived experience of God's love and forgiveness. This joy becomes a defiant proclamation against despair, nihilism, and apathy. It is a kerygmatic joy—proclaimed not merely through words but through the lives of those who embody compassion, peace, and justice. The Church's missionary impulse is

35 M. E. Seligman and M. Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology. An Introduction.," The American psychologist 55, no. 1 (2000): 5–14, accessed February 2, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/11946304_Positive_Psychology_An_Introduction.

36 Encyclical Letter et al., "Spe Salvi" (2007).

37 Seri Dokumen et al., EVANGELII GAUDIUM EVANGELII GAUDIUM SUKACITA INJIL, 2013.

sustained by this joy, which flows from the personal encounter with Christ and leads outward in service to the marginalized[38].

Johann Baptist Metz extends this theological trajectory by introducing *compassion* as the inner form of memory and resistance. For Metz, joy must not be divorced from suffering; it must emerge as a redemptive response to it. Theologically, joy becomes credible only when it is shaped by *dangerous memory*—a memory of the victims of history and a refusal to accept a theology that glosses over the cries of the oppressed. In this sense, joy becomes subversive: it challenges theological indifference and compels the Church to act in solidarity with those who suffer[39].

Therefore, the theological roots of joy are inseparable from compassion and eschatological hope. Joy is not a tranquilizer, nor a cosmetic emotion masking injustice[40]. Rather, it is the fruit of divine love incarnated in a broken world. It is rooted in memory, sustained in hope, and expressed in solidarity[41]. Any credible kerygma in today's fractured context must reclaim this kind of joy—not as an escape from suffering but as a theological act of resistance, redemption, and communion[42]. In this light, the kerygma of joy is both a spiritual and political proclamation: God is with us, and therefore, joy is possible—even in the midst of chaos[43].

38 Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and the Cape Town Commitment."

39 Petr Jandejsek, "From Dangerous Memory To Dangerous Hope: Reading the Theology of Johann Baptist Metz," Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica 13, no. 2 (2023): 47–63.

40 Simeon Bera Muda, "DEI VERBUM 'ALKITAB BUKU YANG TERBUKA,'" Jurnal Ledalero 12, no. 2 (September 7, 2017): 249, accessed February 10, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325058260_DEI_VERBUM_ALKITAB_BUKU_YANG_TERBUKA.

41 Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and the Cape Town Commitment."

42 Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation.

43 Barron and Martin, "The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium."

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND J.B METZ'S COMPASSION THEOLOGY

Johann Baptist Metz (1928–2019) is widely regarded as one of the most influential political theologians of the 20th century. His theology emerged as a response to the horrors of the Holocaust and the spiritual failures of the Church in the face of genocide, injustice, and ideological violence[44]. For Metz, the Auschwitz experience is not simply a historical tragedy; it is a theological scandal. Theological reflection, he insists, must begin not with abstract doctrines, but with the memory of suffering, a memory that provokes ethical responsibility and compassion.

J.B Metz is well known for his theory to redeem human suffering with his "Compassion Theology"[45]. We, as authors, recognize the universal truth in his statement. Metz stated his theory after reflecting on his own experience from great suffering during the Auschwitz era (1940) and interpreting it theologically, in light of the Passion of Christ. Suffering always become an inevitable and important part in humanity, he says[46]. J.B. Metz makes Jesus as an inspiration for viewing suffering as a means for humans to understand and apply *compassio*, a kerygma of joy for attaining salvation[47]. As being stated by J.B. Metz, the author believes that theologians need to address the 'dangerous memories'[48] of humanity that vividly reveal human suffering due to injustice and ideological conflicts[49]. Afterward, theologians should contribute more deeply by offering a

44 Johann Baptist Metz, "Suffering Unto God."
45 John K. Downey, ed., The Legacy of Johann Baptist Metz: Faith, Justice, and the Passion for God (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999).
46 Jandejsek, "From Dangerous Memory To Dangerous Hope: Reading the Theology of Johann Baptist Metz."
47 Johann Baptist Metz, "Suffering Unto God."
48 Jandejsek, "From Dangerous Memory To Dangerous Hope: Reading the Theology of Johann Baptist Metz." "Dangerous memories" (gefährliche Erinnerungen) is one of J.B. Metz's most important theological concepts. It refers to memories of suffering, injustice, and the crucified Christ that disrupt comfortable or conformist religion and compel us to change the world in the name of compassion and justice.
49 Ibid.

theological perspective as a concrete solution to human suffering, as well as a consequence of being bearers of good news of God (Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 11:4-5; Luke 15:5-7)[50]. Theology should not only wrestle at the level of rational analysis based on *cogito ergo sum*.

J.B. Metz often critiques systematic dogmatic theology, which is preoccupied with making rationality the basis of theological concepts while ignoring the real events of human suffering as the foundation of theological thinking. This article propose that theologians must work in accordance with Jesus' vision and mission in the world, which is to free humans from suffering with tangible Love (Luke 16:4-24).

Metz's concept of "dangerous memory" (*gefährliche Erinnerung*) is central to his theology[51]. Drawing on Walter Benjamin and the biblical tradition, Metz defines dangerous memory as a memory that disrupts the status quo, challenges systems of power, and calls the faithful to conversion. Those who don't have dangerous memory, would never understand human suffering, never understand passion of Christ, and most importantly never genuinely understand kerygma of joy. Unlike comforting or nostalgic memory, dangerous memory insists on remembering the victims of history—the forgotten, the tortured, the silenced. It is this memory, Metz argues, that should animate Christian theology and discipleship, since it reflects the crucified Christ who stands in solidarity with the suffering[52].

50 Jo Robson, "Towards a Spirituality of Solidarity with Johann Baptist Metz and Edith Stein," Teresianum 65 (2014): 235–262, http://theotherjournal.com/2012/09/17/reversed-thunder-the-significance-of-prayer-. This verse speak about Good News as message of peace, salvation, and divine kingship. the interpretation is also coherent with N.T. Wright – Paul and the Faithfulness of God, stated that Isaiah 52:7 to Paul's theology: "good news" is the announcement that God is acting decisively to rescue the world.

51 Jandejsek, "From Dangerous Memory To Dangerous Hope: Reading the Theology of Johann Baptist Metz."

52 Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World.

For Metz, theology must be done “after Auschwitz.” This means that any theological discourse that ignores the cries of the victims or attempts to make suffering theologically "useful" is morally and spiritually bankrupt. Instead of offering metaphysical justifications for suffering, Metz invites theology to stand in lament, resistance, and compassion. In this way, compassion is not an abstract emotion or mere sentimentality. It is a praxis, a political and theological disposition rooted in memory, solidarity, and justice[53].

Metz critiques what he calls bourgeois Christianity, a form of faith that has been domesticated by comfort, privilege, and institutional alignment with the powerful. In his view, much of Western theology has become obsessed with rational systematization—concerned more with logic than with life, with order than with justice[54]. This theological rationalism, says Metz, tends to ignore the existential wounds of humanity and is complicit in maintaining unjust structures. Compassion theology, in contrast, begins with the wounded and directs theology toward liberative action[55].

The Passion of Christ, for Metz, is the paradigmatic event of dangerous memory. In the cross, we encounter not a glorified abstraction of divine victory, but a crucified Messiah—abandoned, tortured, and publicly executed by the Roman Empire. This memory is dangerous because it refuses to forget the victims of history and exposes the ongoing violence of empire. The Eucharist itself becomes a political act when

53 Edmund Arens, “Johann Baptist Metz,” The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon (2019): 624–626.
54 Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World.
55 Ibid.

celebrated as a remembrance (*anamnesis*) of the crucified, not merely as a rite of private piety[56].

Metz's emphasis on memory and suffering aligns closely with his understanding of compassion. Compassion (*compassio*) means "to suffer with," but for Metz, it also implies action. True compassion calls for engagement, not detachment. To "suffer with" means to risk one's own comfort and to break with ideologies that normalize indifference. In this way, compassion becomes the foundational virtue of a theological anthropology that recognizes the dignity and vulnerability of all persons, especially the marginalized[57].

A theology of compassion, as envisioned by Metz, critiques not only political systems but also the Church itself. He challenges the Church to become a community of remembrance and resistance, rather than an institution of preservation and assimilation. The Church must remember Christ crucified in the faces of today's victims: the refugees, the poor, the abused, and the forgotten. Compassion must be institutionalized—not merely preached. This requires a reformation of liturgy, catechesis, and mission[58].

Metz's theology also bears significant implications for intergenerational ethics. He is concerned that a society obsessed with progress and success has lost the ability to remember. In his view, "the shortest path to forgetting the victims is to lose the capacity to suffer with them." Compassion theology demands that we resist this forgetfulness by keeping alive the memory of pain—not to glorify it, but to transform it through solidarity and resistance. This becomes especially urgent in a

56 Paul Budi Kleden, "Pandangan Johann Baptist Metz Tentang Politik Perdamaian Berbasis Compassio," Diskursus - Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Stf Driyarkara 12, no. 1 (2013): 82–102.

57 Ibid.

58 John K. Downey, The Legacy of Johann Baptist Metz: Faith, Justice, and the Passion for God.

media-driven culture that moves quickly from one tragedy to the next without reflection[59].

Compassion, in Metz's theology, is also deeply eschatological. It is oriented toward the Kingdom of God, a reality that is both already and not yet. The practice of compassion anticipates this future kingdom by refusing to accept the current world as final. To suffer with others is to refuse resignation and to protest against injustice. It is to say that the suffering of one is the concern of all. Compassion thus becomes a sign of the reign of God breaking into history through acts of mercy, resistance, and joy[60].

One of Metz's most powerful theological contributions is the claim that theology must "learn to weep." This is not a sentimental statement, but a radical critique of dispassionate intellectualism in theological discourse. Theological knowledge, Metz insists, must be permeated with affect, empathy, and moral outrage. In a world saturated with suffering, to remain emotionally detached is to become spiritually complicit. Compassion theology insists on emotional depth as an epistemological virtue[61].

The figure of Jesus in Metz's theology is not the Pantokrator enthroned in imperial cathedrals, but the suffering servant walking alongside the oppressed. Jesus is the memory that disturbs every ideology of power. The compassion of Jesus—expressed in His healing of the sick, welcoming of sinners, and condemnation of hypocritical religiosity—is the model for theological praxis. Jesus' compassion is not only salvific but

59 Ibid.

60 Johann Baptist Metz, A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity (New York: Paulist Press, 1998).

61 John K. Downey, The Legacy of Johann Baptist Metz: Faith, Justice, and the Passion for God.

political: it challenges structures of exclusion and demands radical inclusion[62].

In light of Metz's theology, Christian kerygma must be reimagined as a proclamation that begins with compassion. This means preaching not only the resurrection but the cross, not only the glory but the groan. A compassionate kerygma refuses triumphalism and instead speaks from the wounds of history. It invites the Church to embody the Gospel through solidarity with minorities, rather than doctrinal imposition. Such a kerygma can speak credibly in a post-secular, suffering world[63].

Compassion theology offers a critical tool for the renewal of pastoral ministry. In contexts where people suffer from poverty, discrimination, or abandonment, the Church must prioritize accompaniment over doctrine, presence over perfection. Pastoral agents must be trained not only in theology but in empathy. Theological formation, in this light, must be restructured around the memory of suffering and the practice of mercy. This is the pedagogy of compassion that Metz implicitly proposes[64].

Metz's theology is deeply prophetic. It speaks against religious complacency, against theological neutrality, and against ecclesial comfort. His compassion theology is both a lament and a protest, a theological act that cries out with the suffering and against the powers that cause suffering. For this reason, Metz's work resonates not only in Europe but globally, especially in liberation theology, intercultural theology, and postcolonial theological movements that center the voices of the poor[65].

In conclusion, Johann Baptist Metz's compassion theology challenges the Church to rediscover its prophetic vocation through

62 Robson, "Towards a Spirituality of Solidarity with Johann Baptist Metz and Edith Stein."
63 Kleden, "Pandangan Johann Baptist Metz Tentang Politik Perdamaian Berbasis Compassio."
64 Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World.
65 Arens, "Johann Baptist Metz."

dangerous memory, solidarity with the suffering, and radical compassion. His vision offers a powerful framework for rethinking the kerygma of joy—not as emotional optimism, but as a theological response to suffering. In a chaotic and fragmented world, compassion becomes the heart of theological integrity and the soul of credible evangelization. Metz's legacy thus remains a vital resource for building a Church that remembers, resists, and rejoices with those on the margins[66].

KERYGMA IN A WORLD OF CRISIS

The 21st century is marked by an unprecedented convergence of crises: wars and forced migration, ecological collapse, rising global inequality, ideological polarization, and a growing sense of existential despair[67]. These crises do not exist in isolation but are interwoven, forming what theologians and sociologists call a "polycrisis."[68] In such a world, the credibility of religious discourse—and specifically the Christian kerygma—is increasingly questioned[69]. How can one proclaim joy in the midst of such suffering? What relevance does the Gospel bear when the human condition appears more fragile and fragmented than ever?

Within this fragile global landscape, the kerygma—defined as the proclamation of the saving message of Jesus Christ—risks becoming irrelevant if it does not respond to the cries of the poor, the excluded, and the earth itself. The Church can no longer preach salvation as an abstract doctrine or future reward disconnected from people's daily lives. The

66 Kleden, "Pandangan Johann Baptist Metz Tentang Politik Perdamaian Berbasis Compassio."

67 Robinson, Global Capitalism and The Crisis of Humanity.

68 Masakazu Toyoda, "Can We Save the World from Chaos ?," Japan Spotlight, no. August (2024): 2024, https://www.jef.or.jp/journal/.

69 Agnes M. Brazal, "Dialogue and Proclamation of Truth: Reception of Nostra Aetate and Ad Gentes by the FABC," Journal of Dharma 42, no. 4 (2017): 411–434, accessed February 10, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323250251_Dialogue_and_proclamation_of_truth_Reception_of_Nostra_Aetate_and_Ad_Gentes_by_the_FABC.

kerygma of joy must respond to the *here and now* of crisis, not merely the *then and there* of heavenly promise. It must enter the chaos with compassion, not with condemnation[70].

One major contemporary challenge to the kerygma is the crisis of institutional credibility. The Church, especially in the West, faces declining membership, scandals, and moral disillusionment. Studies from Pew Research Center show that religious switching is accelerating: for every person joining Christianity, nearly three are leaving, particularly among the youth. Many cite reasons such as perceived hypocrisy, judgmentalism, and failure to address real-world suffering. This erosion of trust demands not a defensive posture, but a radical rethinking of how the Gospel is preached and lived[71].

Another obstacle is secularization, not simply as the absence of religious belief, but as a worldview where transcendence is dismissed and meaning is constructed without God[72]. In many societies, religion is seen as private, irrelevant, or even oppressive. This cultural context creates a deep theological challenge: how can joy be proclaimed when many no longer believe in a source of ultimate joy?[73] The kerygma cannot retreat into nostalgia or polemics. It must offer a joy that makes existential sense and speaks to the human heart in its deepest questions.

70 Dennis Madrigal and Enrique Oracion, "Rethinking Catholic Education: Experiences of Teachers of a Catholic University," Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal 6, no. 1 (2018): 13–26, accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327172960_Rethinking_Catholic_Education_Experiences_of_Teachers_of_a_Catholic_University.

71 No Title, n.d., https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/modeling-the-future-of-religion-in-america/.

72 Stephen Bullivant, Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II.

73 Yuval Noah Harari, "Sapiens: Sejarah Ringkas Umat Manusia Dari Zaman Batu Hingga Perkiraan Kepunahannya," ed. Nunung Wiyati, Pustaka Alvabet (2017): 530 halaman, accessed February 17, 2022, https://pdfroom.com/books/sapiens/bG5wQzPmgq4. In this book, Harari made research, there is pessimism in modern people about religious culture. Some atheist even think that Catholic priest is representation of modern witch.

The ecological crisis is perhaps the most urgent and global threat facing humanity. Climate change, pollution, and resource depletion endanger the very conditions for life on Earth[74]. The kerygma of joy, therefore, must become ecological. As Pope Francis asserts in *Laudato Si'*, the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one and the same. A kerygma that ignores the groaning of creation is no Gospel at all[75]. The proclamation must now include an ethic of care, stewardship, and ecological justice—rooted in the belief that creation is a gift and sacrament of God's love[76].

Rising nationalism, xenophobia, and religious persecution have also made the world more hostile to minorities. In this climate, the joyful proclamation of the Gospel must become a defense of the vulnerable. The kerygma cannot remain neutral or universal in a way that silences particular sufferings. Rather, it must take sides—with the poor, the refugee, the persecuted. Just as Jesus located His ministry on the peripheries of empire and temple, the Church must position its kerygma among the wounded and excluded of today's societies[77].

The crisis of truth, fueled by disinformation, ideological propaganda, and digital echo chambers, also undermines the reception of the Gospel. In a world where truth is politicized and trust is fractured, the Church must proclaim the Gospel not merely with words, but with

[74] William E. Rees, "The Ecological Crisis and Self-Delusion: Implications for the Building Sector," Building Research and Information 37, no. 3 (2009): 300–311.

[75] Pope Francis, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home," Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader, Eleventh Edition (2019): 503–510.

[76] Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction: Religion and Ecology-What Is the Connection and Why Does It Matter?," The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology, no. September (2009): 1–18.

[77] Dokumen et al., EVANGELII GAUDIUM EVANGELII GAUDIUM SUKACITA INJIL.. We can go specifically to key sections:: §§186–190, 197–201. Quotes:"The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others… especially the poor and suffering" (§88), "Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor" (§187), "The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others" (§177).

integrity of life. Joyful witness becomes credible when lived out in transparency, humility, and justice. The kerygma must be incarnated, not only in preaching, but in ethical commitment and authentic relationships[78].

In this world of chaos, joy is often dismissed as naïve or escapist. Yet the Christian understanding of joy is not optimism, it is resistance. Joy becomes an act of defiance against despair, a sign of resurrection in the midst of death. The early Christian communities, persecuted and poor, nevertheless sang hymns and celebrated Eucharist because they believed joy was not determined by circumstances, but by the presence of the risen Christ. This same spirit must animate today's kerygma: joy as counter-cultural, prophetic, and liberating[79].

Kerygma in a time of crisis must also be contextual and intercultural. The Gospel is not a one-size-fits-all message; it must take flesh in every culture and social context. This means listening deeply to local histories, languages, and struggles. It means translating joy into forms that are meaningful to particular communities: for Indigenous peoples, for women in patriarchal societies, for youth in digital worlds. Evangelization today requires a theology of encounter, humility, and cultural discernment[80].

In light of these challenges, Pope Francis' emphasis on "missionary discipleship" becomes vital. Evangelization is not a campaign or conquest, but a personal encounter with Christ that transforms and sends one forth in love. The kerygma of joy is not a message shouted from above but

78 Encyclical Letter et al., "The Holy See" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006).

79 NRSV, NRSV Catholic Edition Gift Bible.. The quotes: Acts 5:41: "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Acts 2:46–47: "Day by day… they broke bread… with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people."

80 Madrigal and Oracion, "Rethinking Catholic Education: Experiences of Teachers of a Catholic University."

shared eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart, especially with those on the margins. "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus" (EG §1). That joy must become the source and fruit of all missionary activity[81].

Theological formation must also be restructured in response to these crises. Seminaries, catechetical programs, and lay ministries must integrate social analysis, environmental ethics, and trauma-informed care into their curriculum. Evangelization in the modern world cannot be rooted solely in dogmatic formulas or scholastic logic. The kerygma must emerge from a theology that sees, feels, and acts in response to real suffering, as J.B. Metz has insisted. Only such a formation will prepare missionaries who can speak with credibility in a broken world[82].

It is equally critical to reclaim the liturgical space as a place of joy that resists despair. Too often, liturgies have become either somber rituals disconnected from life, or entertaining spectacles that lack spiritual depth[83]. Authentic liturgy is where the community remembers, laments, hopes, and celebrates. It is where dangerous memory becomes public joy, and where the Eucharist becomes both healing and protest. The joy of the Gospel must be heard in song, sacrament, and communal celebration—even when tears are still fresh[84].

The kerygma of joy also requires new media strategies and digital evangelization. In the digital age, proclamation cannot be limited to pulpits. Podcasts, videos, social media, and interactive platforms are the new frontiers of mission. However, the challenge lies not only in content

81 Barron and Martin, "The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium."
82 Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World.
83 Dokumen et al., EVANGELII GAUDIUM EVANGELII GAUDIUM SUKACITA INJIL. Key Sections: §§24, 122, 135. Quote: "The Church must not be caught up in a despondent and disillusioned way of life… rather, she must rediscover the joy of the Gospel and express it even in her liturgical celebrations." (§24)
84 Ibid. Key Sections: §§6, 122–126, 229

creation but in digital *presence*: being real, dialogical, and vulnerable. Joy must be communicated not only in doctrine but in tone, affect, and human connection—something sorely lacking in many online religious spaces[85].

To be a kerygma of joy in a world of crisis is to live in tension: between despair and hope, between memory and prophecy, between mourning and dancing. This tension must be embraced theologically, not resolved cheaply. Joy must pass through the cross before it can reach resurrection. As such, the Church must offer not simplistic answers, but companionship in suffering. The kerygma must be humble enough to listen, bold enough to speak, and compassionate enough to stay.

In summary, the proclamation of joy in today's world must be rooted in compassion, contextualized in crisis, and embodied in witness. It must resist the forces of dehumanization, ecological devastation, and theological indifference. Kerygma is no longer just about preaching Christ. It is about becoming Christ to a world in pain. Only then can the joy we proclaim be trusted. Only then can the Church recover its missionary heart, not as a power structure, but as a wounded healer, singing joy in the ruins.

COMPASSIONATE KERYGMA FOR THE MARGINALIZED

The credibility of the Christian proclamation in the modern world depends not merely on doctrinal precision but on ethical witness—particularly the Church's response to the suffering of the marginalized. The kerygma of joy, if it is to be taken seriously, must be embodied as a

[85] Pope Francis, "Working Summary of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis, 'Christus Vivit', Dedicated to the Young," no. 17 (2019), https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2019/04/02/190402b.html.

compassionate presence among those most excluded from society: the poor, refugees, ethnic minorities, the disabled, the abused, and the spiritually abandoned. These communities are not objects of mission—they are, as Pope Francis affirms, the privileged place of divine encounter[86].

Compassionate kerygma begins with listening before speaking. Before announcing the Gospel, the Church must first hear the cries of the people, their pain, their cultural narratives, and their historical wounds. This aligns with J.B. Metz's emphasis on "dangerous memory" and Pope Francis' call for a Church with an "ear to the people." Such listening is not passive—it is the first act of love, a theological practice of attentiveness that dismantles the arrogance of superiority and opens a space for mutual transformation[87].

To proclaim joy in the context of marginalization requires a fundamental shift from triumphalism to humility. Historically, evangelization has sometimes been complicit with colonial agendas or cultural dominance. A compassionate kerygma, by contrast, does not impose but accompanies. It speaks from the margins, not the center. It shares life with the oppressed, not as benefactors, but as fellow pilgrims seeking redemption in the face of dehumanization[88].

In pastoral practice, compassionate kerygma calls for incarnational presence. Theologians, catechists, and missionaries must be formed not only in doctrine but in empathy, intercultural awareness, and trauma-informed care. The proclamation of the Gospel should come not just from pulpits, but from clinics, refugee camps, street corners, prison chapels,

86 Paus Fransiskus, "Ensiklik Fratelli Tutti (Saudara Sekalian)," no. 124 (2020). Key Sections: §§24, 68–71, 187
87 Johann Baptist Metz, A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity.
88 Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology.

and online spaces where wounded people seek meaning and community. The Word must become flesh again, dwelling not in abstraction but in solidarity[89].

Scripture provides a powerful model for this approach. Jesus' own ministry was decisively shaped by His closeness to the marginalized: lepers, Samaritans, women, tax collectors, and the poor. His parables affirm the lost, the small, and the broken. His healings restore dignity. His table fellowship challenges social norms. In all this, Jesus proclaims joy not as an escape from suffering but as the fruit of mercy and restoration. The kerygma today must follow this same logic of compassionate reversal[90].

Compassionate kerygma also demands a critical reflection on power within the Church itself. Are our structures inclusive of the marginalized? Are voices from minority communities included in preaching, catechesis, and theological development? Do our liturgies reflect diverse cultures and contexts? A compassionate proclamation cannot be credible if it speaks joy while silencing or excluding the experiences of those it claims to serve.

The Church's social mission is a vital expression of this compassionate kerygma. Ministries of education, healthcare, advocacy, and economic empowerment must not be separate from evangelization but integral to it. Joy must be seen in concrete acts of justice and mercy. As Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "The Church must be a Church for the poor and of the poor" (§198). When marginalized communities see the Church standing with them—not above them—they can begin to hear the Gospel not as doctrine, but as hope[91].

89 Stegemann, Jesus and The Hope of The Poor.
90 Ibid.
91 Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and the Cape Town Commitment."

This approach also reshapes the notion of conversion. Compassionate kerygma does not aim first to change someone's religion or worldview, but to facilitate healing, dignity, and communion. True conversion emerges from encounter with love, not coercion. As such, the goal is not institutional expansion but transformation of life and liberation from despair. Evangelization becomes a space of mutual conversion—where the evangelizer, too, is evangelized by the presence of Christ in the poor[92].

In this framework, joy becomes prophetic. It is not a denial of suffering, but a declaration that suffering will not have the last word. A compassionate kerygma announces that God is present in the peripheries, that every person is beloved, and that salvation is not reserved for the righteous but extended to the wounded. This joy breaks the chains of shame and awakens in the marginalized the truth of their divine dignity. It is a joy that resists, heals, and liberates[93].

In conclusion, the kerygma of joy must take the form of compassionate solidarity if it is to be credible in a world of exclusion and pain. Compassion is not an accessory to evangelization—it is its very soul. Only when the Church learns to see Christ in the faces of the marginalized, to share their struggles, and to walk alongside them with humility, can the Gospel truly be proclaimed as good news. This is the joyful resistance to a world of indifference: not sentimental, but sacrificial; not loud, but incarnate.

PASTORAL PROPOSAL FOR THE CHURCH

92 Stegemann, Jesus and The Hope of The Poor.

93 C. W. Ellison, "Spiritual Well-Being: Conceptualization and Measurement.," Journal of Psychology and Theology (1983): 330–340.

In light of the theological reflections on joy, compassion, and the suffering of the marginalized, the Church today is called to undergo a profound pastoral conversion. This chapter proposes a renewed pastoral strategy: a *kerygma of joy shaped by compassion*, lived in solidarity with the poor, and rooted in a theology of presence. Such a proposal must not remain theoretical but must touch every dimension of Church life—preaching, catechesis, formation, mission, and structure[94].

First and foremost, preaching and proclamation must be reimagined through the lens of compassion theology. Homilies and catechesis should begin with human experience—especially the pain, questions, and hopes of contemporary life—and then illuminate them with the light of the Gospel. The tone must shift from condemnation or abstraction to empathy and encouragement. Preachers are not judges or lecturers, but wounded healers bearing joyful witness to Christ's mercy in their own lives and in the lives of their communities[95].

Second, the formation of pastoral agents must prioritize empathy, intercultural sensitivity, and spiritual accompaniment. Seminaries and theological faculties should integrate courses on trauma, intercultural theology, political ethics, and ecology alongside traditional disciplines. Formation should cultivate what Pope Francis calls a "culture of encounter" rather than a culture of separation. Priests, religious, and lay

94 Barron and Martin, "The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium.". Specifically we can go to Key Sections: §§25–33 (on pastoral conversion), §§135–139 (on joyful preaching), §§169–175 (on catechesis), and §200 (on mission)

95 Dokumen et al., EVANGELII GAUDIUM EVANGELII GAUDIUM SUKACITA INJIL.. Section on Preaching: §§135–159. Key Quotes: "The homily should be brief and avoid taking on the semblance of a speech or a lecture." (§138), "A preacher who does not prepare is not 'spiritual'; he is dishonest and irresponsible." (§145), "The preacher must know the heart of his community in order to speak the Word with empathy." (§154).

ministers must be prepared to live with, suffer with, and learn from those they serve—especially those on the peripheries[96].

Third, the Church must invest in small Christian communities and base ecclesial communities that embody solidarity and mutual care. These localized communities allow the Gospel to be lived out in ordinary settings where relationships are authentic and compassion is practiced concretely. In such spaces, the kerygma becomes relational, dialogical, and transformative. It is through these communities that the Church can reclaim her vocation as "a field hospital," as Pope Francis frequently envisions[97].

Fourth, the liturgy should be rediscovered as a space for communal healing and prophetic memory. Liturgy must not escape the world's pain but bring it before God in lament, intercession, and hope. Inclusive language, contextual symbolism, and music that reflects the local culture can make liturgy a truly incarnational experience. The Eucharist, as the sacrament of compassion, should visibly reflect the Church's commitment to the poor: by who is welcomed, who serves, and who leads[98].

Fifth, pastoral care must extend beyond church walls to places of pain: hospitals, prisons, slums, refugee centers, digital spaces, and mental health clinics. The Church must be physically and spiritually present where people suffer. This requires a reallocation of resources—not just financial, but human and spiritual. A compassionate Church does not ask the wounded to come to her; she goes out to meet them. Mission, in this sense, is no longer expansion—it is proximity[99].

96 Stegemann, Jesus and The Hope of The Poor.

97 Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Francis: Church a 'Field Hospital for Vulnerable,'" Vaticannews (Vatican, May 2022).

98 Sacramentum Caritatis, Evangelii Nuntiandi, and Christifideles Laici, "Introducing Sacramentum Caritatis" (2007).

99 Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Francis: Church a 'Field Hospital for Vulnerable.'"

Sixth, the Church must cultivate a pedagogy of compassion in schools and catechetical programs. Religious education should not merely transmit doctrines but form compassionate disciples who can read the signs of the times. This requires integrating social analysis, environmental stewardship, and contemplative practice into curricula. Children and youth must be helped to experience the Gospel as good news for the poor and an invitation to serve, not merely to obey[100].

Seventh, interreligious and intercultural dialogue must become a priority in the Church's public witness. In a world fractured by religious violence and ethnocentric nationalism, the Church's ability to proclaim joy lies in her capacity to model dialogue, mutual respect, and cooperation across boundaries. Compassionate kerygma means affirming the dignity of others, learning from their wisdom, and walking together toward peace. The Church must be a "sacrament of unity," not uniformity[101].

Eighth, the Church must reform its institutional culture to reflect the Gospel of joy and mercy. Clericalism, authoritarianism, and exclusionary practices must be examined honestly. Structures of accountability, synodality, and co-responsibility must be strengthened. A joyful Church is not one without conflict, but one where power is shared, voices are heard, and wounds are tended. Compassion is not only a pastoral method—it must become an ecclesial culture[102].

In conclusion, the kerygma of joy cannot remain a theological ideal. It must become the soul of the Church's pastoral praxis in a suffering world. The Church is called not to be a fortress of purity but a sanctuary of mercy. Her mission is not to preserve power but to share life. In

100 Madrigal and Oracion, "Rethinking Catholic Education: Experiences of Teachers of a Catholic University."

101 Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and the Cape Town Commitment."

102 Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World.

rediscovering compassion as the heart of proclamation, the Church will not lose her identity—she will fulfill it. In proclaiming joy to the world's margins, the Church will find her center in Christ once again.

CONCLUSION

The journey through the theological roots of joy, the compassionate vision of J.B. Metz, and the lived realities of suffering in a fragmented world has led to a renewed understanding of kerygma—not as abstract proclamation, but as a lived, joyful, and compassionate witness. The Christian message of salvation can no longer be separated from the cries of the oppressed, the wounds of history, and the urgent needs of the marginalized. A kerygma that is credible in the 21st century must arise from the soil of suffering and blossom in the spirit of solidarity.

The concept of "kerygma of joy" is not a call to emotional positivity, but a radical theological affirmation that God is present amid chaos, and that Christ's resurrection offers meaning in the face of death and despair. Joy, when understood through this lens, becomes a form of resistance—a theological protest against all that dehumanizes. It is a joy born not of denial, but of compassion; not of escape, but of incarnation. Such joy is what Pope Francis calls for in *Evangelii Gaudium*, and what Metz demands through his theology of dangerous memory.

This article has argued that the Church must embody this compassionate kerygma through pastoral transformation: listening before preaching, walking before teaching, and accompanying before instructing. Evangelization is no longer credible if separated from acts of mercy, social justice, and cultural humility. To defend the minority is not a political stance—it is the very mission of the Gospel, which proclaims that the last

shall be first and that the poor are blessed. In proclaiming joy to the margins, the Church rediscovers her own soul.

The future of the Church's mission lies in a theology that sees suffering not as an obstacle to faith, but as its starting point. Compassion is the theological virtue that allows the Church to interpret the signs of the times, form communities of hope, and evangelize through presence more than persuasion. In this way, theology becomes pastoral, proclamation becomes incarnate, and joy becomes credible. The kerygma of joy must not retreat into dogma—it must risk relationship and embody mercy.

In a world wounded by exclusion, silence, and fear, the Church is invited to proclaim a Gospel of joy that is compassionate, contextual, and courageous. This is the kerygma the world needs: not an echo of empire or moralism, but a joyful testimony of Christ's presence among the crucified of today. To announce this kerygma is to walk with the oppressed, remember the forgotten, and rejoice with those the world rejects. In doing so, the Church becomes what she is called to be: the joyful servant of the suffering Christ.

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