

Changing Thinking

[Br Bernard Westcott](#)

In the 1990s Fr Patrick Purnell SJ wrote a book "Our Faith Story" based on the discussions of a small group of us who were concerned with a gap between the Roman Catholic Church and everyday life. It was a controversial book because it made a distinction between Faith and Belief. Faith being, "The Faith of the RC Church", that is what is taught by the Roman Magisterium in doctrines expressed in an incomprehensible language to most everyday persons. And Belief being the views of life directing every person revealed by their ways of relating and living.

It was I think a work well ahead of its time. Today, globally we are beginning to recognise that what others say is not heard or understood, or wanted to be listened to. We see this in politics, economics, trade, industry, world religions, cultures, education, and in all organisations and personal relationships.

There is a similar problem for us Lasallians. What we say and how we say it is frequently not heard or wanted to be heard. This is partly because we use an unfamiliar language which is not present in everyday use. And it is partly due to what we say being grasped only by others who have been formed and moulded by the culture and tradition.

The ideas, for example, of the presence of God, of everything being entrusted, of an educative mission to or for the poor, and of association appear to be strange terms to most people. We need to find ways of communicating with others that all are familiar with. I say this because these Lasallian concepts and principles are far more universal than we commonly think. In fact if we listen and observe carefully we hear in pubs, on the streets, read in newspapers and novels, see and hear on TV, or read in academic papers similar ideas to Lasallian ideas.

These two publications are vital for any educator today.

For example, Jeffrey Sachs, who is controversially and arguably, the most gifted macro economist today while being interviewed on BBC TV 7th November 2008 on Hard Talk described his early decision for studies in economics as his means of addressing and attempting to find solutions to war, poverty, the imbalances in water supplies, energy, food etc. The following recent books of his are vital

for all who educate because they inform and change our way of thinking. They are also important because they speak about global change: the need for dialogue, sharing, not owning or grasping and being together. In brief they speak of Lasallian principles but in a different language, and if we wish to communicate we may be helped by the language of Jeffrey Sachs.

Sachs, Jeffrey (2008). *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*, Penguin Press HC ISBN 978-1594201271

Sachs, Jeffrey (2005). *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, Penguin Press HC ISBN 1-59420-045-9

If you are unfamiliar with Jeffrey Sachs this outline from the web site Wikipedia may help you.

Jeffrey David Sachs (born November 5, 1954, in Detroit, Michigan) is an American economist and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. He is also the Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and a Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia's School of Public Health. Additionally, he is Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and the founder and co-President of the Millennium Promise Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending extreme poverty and hunger. From 2002 to 2006, he was the Director of the United Nations Millennium Project and today remains a leading advocate for the Millennium Development Goals, eight internationally endorsed objectives to reduce extreme poverty, hunger, and disease by the year 2015.

Academic career

Sachs was raised in Oak Park, a suburb of Detroit, Michigan, and graduated from Oak Park High School. He attended Harvard College, where he received his B.A. *summa cum laude* in 1976. He went on to receive his M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from Harvard, and was invited to join the Harvard Society of Fellows while still a Harvard graduate student. In 1980, he joined the Harvard faculty as an Assistant Professor and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1982. A year later, at the age of

29, Sachs became a Full Professor of economics with tenure at Harvard.

During the next 19 years at Harvard, he became the Galen L. Stone Professor of International Trade, the Director of the Harvard Institute for International Development at the Kennedy School of Government (1995-1999), and the Director of the Center for International Development (1999-2002).

After the Center for International Development failed to attract sustainable funding or broad scholarly involvement, Sachs resigned from Harvard in March 2002 to become the Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York City. He is currently the Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development, and he is also a professor for Columbia's Department of Economics and Department of Health Policy and Management. His classes are taught at the School of International and Public Affairs and the Mailman School of Public Health.

Work on Post-Communist Economies

Sachs is known for his work as an economic advisor to governments in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. A trained macroeconomist, he led many countries in the transition from communism to market economies.

In 1985, Bolivia was undergoing hyperinflation and was unable to pay back its debt to the International Monetary Fund. Sachs, an economic advisor to the Bolivian government at the time, drew up an extensive plan, later known as shock therapy, to drastically cut inflation by liberalizing the Bolivian market, ending government subsidies, eliminating quotas, and linking the Bolivian economy to the US Dollar. After Sachs' plan was implemented, inflation fell from 20,000% per year to 11%.

In 1990, the Polish government introduced shock therapy to break from communism. Sachs and ex-IMF economist David Lipton advised the rapid conversion of all property and assets from public to private ownership. After initial economic shortages and inflation, prices in Poland eventually stabilized.

In late 1991, the Russian government invited Harvard to give advice on reproducing the Polish success. Harvard economist Andrei Shleifer advised President Yeltsin on privatization and macroeconomic issues during the early stages of Russia's reforms. Sachs resigned shortly thereafter.