

# WHY FOXES DO NOT PLAY CHESS ANYMORE

## The Church in The World.

### Intent of the Fable.

- ✓ *The fable of the foxes is a satire to emphasize the dangers of "over-institutionalization" in any organization and caution us of its accompanying evils such as "authoritarianism",*
- ✓ *"Enforced uniformity", "lack of personal freedom", "stagnation", "immobilism" and the like.*
- ✓ *This fable applies equally to the state management, to political parties, to companies, clubs and all societies and groups – secular and religious – even to the Church.*
- ✓ *When they fall into the trap of overemphasizing their structural and organizational aspects, their downfall is close at hand.*
- ✓ *In these jottings we make the Church our main concern*

## 1. Starter

## The Fable.

Many years ago, foxes were very fond of playing chess: They used to remain in their holes, glued to their chess board for days on end.

One day a wise fox remarked: "I don't think it's in our interest to play chess with our immediate neighbors only. Why not to start a chess club? Surely we shall learn from one another. Besides, the interests of chess players will be better protected and promoted. Needless to say, many foxes liked the idea and they established a "Foxes' Chess Club".

In the beginning the club members were very devoted to the club. The club, so to say, was like an extended family. With all the fervor and enthusiasm generated by the club, its membership grew very fast. Soon it swelled into hundreds, then into thousands, and finally into tens of thousands! Soon a club, with such a large membership, became difficult to manage.

A few foxes who had flair for management called a general body meeting and said: "Dear brother and sister foxes: it is a wonderful sight to see so many of us in our club. However, in our strength lies our weakness! It is time we bring some uniformity and discipline into our club. We must adopt some system of law and order to reduce chaos to cosmos. Friends, I propose that we elect from among us office-bearers who will look after the interests of the club and safeguard our rights and privileges"

All the members agreed and went to the polls. They elected a formidable body of office-bearers: The Managing Director - The General Manager - Zonal Directors - Treasurers - Accountants - In vigilance personnel - Advisors - Law Enforcement agents. Counselors - Security officers - Judges - Referees - Arbitrators, Etc.

The Office-bearers began performing their duties in right earnest. The Managing Director assisted by the General Manager and other officers started issuing orders, rules and regulations on how to play chess, when to play, how long to play, when to begin, when to stop, what tactics to be used, which moves would be allowed and which not.

The advisers and counselors started writing learned treatises on the game of chess, its history, its symbolism, its ethical value, strategies, deviations, virtues, dangers, caveats and penalties. The Vigilance and Intelligence Personnel kept busy collecting all sorts of secret information and sending lengthy reports to higher authorities about the dubious and unorthodox ways of playing displayed by some of the members.

Law Enforcement Personnel took out prosecution proceedings against the deviant players and bound them over to the Judges and Referees who declared them guilty or non-guilty. It was the job of the Security Officers to carry out the punishments imposed on the guilty ones, and, in cases of expulsion to debar them from the club.

It was heartening to see a club functioning in such an orderly and disciplined fashion. There was absolute "uniformity", "regularity", "harmony", and even "synchronization" of movements, of speech and of opinion. From now on, the "orthodoxy" and "absolute purity" of the game of chess was the end-all and be-all of the foxes' club, understanding by these words the utmost degree of fidelity displayed by the foxes in playing chess in accordance with the thousand and one precise rules and regulations laid down by the authorities of the club.

No fox in his or her private capacity was allowed to speak about chess from his or her own experience, much less to experiment with new methods or tactics. Any innovation, any test or trial initiated by him or her was suspect and consequently forbidden. From now on also, whenever there were some public chess tournaments, no fox, that was not an office-bearer, was allowed to take part in them. Only the Office-bearer' in-charge could "lawfully" represent the interest of the club in such fixtures.

After many days, a strange change took place in the Foxes' Chess Club. A "Small Club" emerged within the "Original larger Club". The "Small Club" consisted of the office-bearers.

Those of the "Larger Club" – the rank and file members - had only to pay their fees, watch their "office-bearers" play, listen to them lecturing about chess and obey all their laws and commands.

It is no wonder that in the course of time, the foxes in the "Larger Club" lost interest in chess playing. In disappointment they said: "We cannot play as we like, we are lectured, brainwashed, penalized, reported and prosecuted. What's the use for us to remain in the 'Foxes Chess Club any more'?" And so, slowly, one by one, left the club.

When the "Small Club" members found themselves with no foxes to lecture to, to rule and boss over, they also lost interest in the "Foxes' Chess Club". They also, one by one, left the "Small Club" and scattered. **This explains why foxes do not play chess any longer!**

## **2. Personal Work. Questions for Reflection.**

Take some jottings on the following queries.

1. Are structures, laws, authority and offices in any organization or institution necessary? Why?
2. What are the dangers in framing rules, laws and constitutions to run any society?
3. Why did the rank-and-file foxes stop playing chess?
4. Why many good clubs, groups and associations end in failure?
5. What do we mean by "over-institutionalization"? How to avoid it?
6. What should be the relationship between individuals and institution?
7. What sort of rules and structures will preserve best the goals and purpose of any institution?
8. Can you point out some similarities between what happened to the foxes' club and what is happening to the Church today?
9. Is the Church, as an institution like any other institution of human origin? Explain the differences and similarities between the Church and other societies.
10. What do we mean by saying that the Church is divine, yet human?
11. Is the Gospel of human invention or of man's making? Explain.
12. Is "Canon Law" – the laws by which the Church is organized, ruled and maintained - of divine making? Why?
13. Why did Jesus give us the Gospel - The Good News?
14. What's the purpose the Church authorities have in mind by giving us rules, laws and regulations.?
15. What's the relationship between Gospel and Church Law? Which comes first?
16. Can the Gospel change in the passing of time? Why?
17. Can, ought Canon Law – the Church's regulations - change and adapt according to the changing circumstances of time and place? Why?
18. What are the dangers of "over-institutionalization" in the Church? What are their consequences? How to tackle them?
19. What's the difference between "unity of belief" and "uniformity of external practices"?
20. Is "uniformity" in external matters of discipline feasible in a universal Church? Why?
21. In the past, when there was such "uniformity" in the universal Church, where did it come from? From below? - *From the grass levels* - or from above? – *imposed, enforced by authority? Explain.*
22. Why large groups of people have fallen away from the "institutional Church" in the last two or three centuries? *For instance, the 'intellectuals, the working classes in Western countries, the youth in most places, women in many parts of the world*
23. Why Christian Churches are considered foreign and not welcome in many countries of the East?
24. Is the Gospel foreign to the human heart? Then, what is foreign?

25. What do we mean by "inculturation"?
26. Can "uniformity" in externals, coexist with inculturation? Why?
27. What can the Church do, as an Institution, to be relevant to different cultures on earth?

### **3. Group Work Sharing and Discussion.**

- ✓ The participants will share their reflections and jottings with the group
- ✓ The moderator will initiate a discussion on their sharing
- ✓ Interaction should be encouraged,

### **4. Teaching - Input Ideas Helpful for the Input.**

After the Group Sharing and Discussion, the Moderator may round the event with a short teaching or input

- Any organization needs structures, regimentation, authority and discipline. No person "physical" or "moral" can survive without an institutional frame or skeleton.
- Structures are necessary means to preserve and strengthen any organization.
- However, structures within an organization should be flexible, adaptable and functional. They are means, not ends.
- They should help, not hinder the aims of the organization!
- Yet, experience proves that sooner or later organizations tend to fall victims to "over institutionalism".
- With the passage of time, the structural part of many an organization tends to fossilize, to become sclerotic. Finally, the primary aim of the institution is lost sight of.
- Likewise, in the long run, many Institutions' spent most of their resources and personnel on preserving their structures and forgetting the primary purpose of their existence.
- The final outcome of "institutionalism" is that the organization loses relevance and unawares progressively, enters into a phase of decay, sort of "slow death".
- Many of the crises and the difficulties the Church encountered in the past and in today also are due to this problem of over "institutionalism".
- The Church, by her very nature being, a very large and complex institution, found it always very difficult to change and adapt her structures and legislation to the needs and demands of man, in the continuous process of cultural change, generation after generation.
- The socio-political and cultural situation of our world during the last two or three centuries has been changing faster than the church could cope with..
- The sad results of her inability to adapt to the fast tempo of the last four centuries are patent:
  - The alienation of the "intellectuals" in the XVIII and XIX centuries.
  - The loss of the working classes by the end of the XIX and XX centuries.
  - Now, the progressive estrangement of modern youth from an over institutionalized Church.

- The slow, but gradual alienation of women from the Church especially in Western countries.
- Obstacles we encounter today against evangelization in mission countries.