

ASSEMBLY OF GENERALS

A meeting of the 35th Assembly of Generals was held on Tuesday 13th June, 1972, at 4.00 p.m. at the OMI Scholasticate.

The following Reverend Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters were present:

Fr. Agostoni fscj	Sr. M. Goncalves rscm	Sr. Danita McGonagle ssnd
Sr. Avonts sa	Bro. V. Gottwald fsc	Fr. Mertens sj
Sr. Baldwin ssnd	Fr. Houdijk cssp	Fr. Mondé sma
Fr. Bano fscj	Sr. Ines rscm	Sr. X. Rowntree osu
Sr. Bless osu	Fr. Ibba sx	Sr. Rembouts icm
Bro. Buttimer fsc	Sr. M. Keenan rscm	Sr. G. Samson sa
Sr. J. Burke sndn	Fr. Lazzarotto pime	Sr. E. Salazar rsc
Sr. A. Cornely shcj	Sr. M.A. Loughlin fmm	Bro. Schnepp sm
Fr. Denis ofm-cap	Fr. Maertens cicm	Mo. G. Segner ssnd
Sr. B. Flanagan sfb	Sr. J. Maglioni fmm	Sr. G. de Thélin rsc
Sr. J. Gates scmm-m		Fr. S. Tutas sm
		Mo. M.J. Van Dun osu

In the Chair: Fr. Th. Van Asten pa, President
Secretary : Fr. B. Tonna

1. The President, Fr. Van Asten, welcomed the Assembly and opened the meeting with a request for prayers for Burundi.
2. The minutes of the 34th Assembly of Generals (Sedos 72/186 ff) were taken as read and approved.
3. "Role of the Overseas Missionary in the local Church" - report on the study groups. The President then gave a brief progress report on the study:
 - As a result of suggestions made during the December General Assembly, the Executive Committee decided to focus the studies of Sedos for 1972 on two themes: the Role of the Overseas Missionary in the local Church and the Urban Mission.
 - The ideas and suggestions resulting from a Brainstorming Session (Feb 11th to which Superiors or their representatives were invited) were summarised by the secretariate and submitted to the Executive Committee. The latter, meeting Feb. 21, studied them and proposed the main topics and methodology of the study.

- These were discussed by the February Assembly which also heard a report by Fr. Bundervoet, member of the USG Commission VI, on his paper on 'The Theology of the Particular Church' (French Sedos 72/191, Eng. 196). Comments and suggestions were made and it was agreed that an Agenda Committee be formed.
- The Agenda Committee met and drafted a short statement and a few leading questions for discussion by four study groups.
- The study groups (2 Eng. 2 Fr.) held their first round of meetings in April and reports on the sessions appeared in Sedos weekly bulletins.
- The four chairmen met on May 8th to redraft for the Executive Committee a synthesis of the four reports prepared at the secretariate.
- The Executive Committee met May 10th to discuss the synthesis. A second draft was then issued to the study groups for their endorsement and comments.
- The second rounds of study were held in May and early June.

A paper (in both English and French) with the conclusions of these meetings was distributed to all participants at the Assembly (Sedos 72/431 ff Eng. 435 ff Fr.). The President invited comments from the floor on the four questions offered for further study at the end of the paper.

1) The roots of missionary discouragement

- Fr. Mertens, sj, remarked that this topic was not directly relevant to the study and that now was not the moment to discuss it.
- Fr. Houdijk, cssp, on the other hand, considered the topic very relevant since the missionaries in the field who receive our study paper have many psychological problems and difficulties.

2) The roles of the local Church: our expectations (and its expectations vis à vis the missionaries)

- Fr. Mertens made the observation that, given the renewed image of the local Church proposed by Vatican II, it was no less important to make clear our expectations vis à vis the local Church, which has responsibilities towards the missionaries just as they have responsibilities towards it.

3) Service to the local Church - financial side

As Fr. Mertens commented, this is fundamental and not to be overlooked.

4) Which 'specialization', if any, is (or will be) open to the overseas missionaries?

- Sr. Alma Cornely, shcj, pointed out that it will require a great effort on our part to seek to know from the local Church what expertise we can bring to the local Church.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the study should continue along the lines already established, and that the Executive Committee or the Four Chairmen will take note of the above suggestions.

4. The Urban Mission Study - report by Sr. Danita, ssnd, vice-Chairman of the Sedos Development Working Group.

"The Development Working Group in May 1971 under the chairmanship of Father Vincent Fecher initiated a study on the topic of Urbanization aimed at bringing this world problem with its pastoral implications before the Superiors of religious congregations and Bishops. It was hoped that the group, after careful study and contact with people in the field, could make possible suggestions for future lines of action for religious personnel involved in humanizing the urban environment. Previously, in the SEDOS BULLETIN through a series of articles, entitled "Spotlights on Dark Corners", the attention of the readers had been focused on the rapid growth of major S.E. Asian cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore and on the 15-point document of the Bishops of Colombia which stressed the need for urban reform in order to give all a decent house.

The Working Development Group asked Father Tonna to prepare a working paper on Urbanization and Mission - Mission to the Cities of the **Third** World. This paper was discussed by the members of the working group under the chairmanship of Father John Schotte. The paper with its sociological approach to the theme of urbanization in which life is seen as a web of patterned inter-personal relationships and the individual as a creature and a creator of the social systems formed by these relationships provided a frame of reference and a number of conceptual tools (groups, roles, values, systems) to approach the complex urban question. Father stressed that the Humanization of Man is a current challenge and the focus of interest selected by the group was the development of authentic human relations - people to people relationships.

This urban community is mission world - which tends to "produce" a new kind of 'unevangelized man'. It is a vast mission field: there are now 128 cities which have already reached the one million mark. It is estimated that this urban population is now doubling every 20 years, while the world population doubles every 30 years. The outcome is clear: the rural/urban equilibrium is being upset. Cities force man to adopt a new way of life by depriving him of the support of a community. Urbanization mostly affects the young, the female sex, and the more intelligent. The rates of illegitimacy, divorce, suicide, criminal and deviant behaviour are higher and it is Community Development which is precisely the process of setting up the missing intermediary between the individual and the city. The poor must be liberated to Be more, not just to Do or to Have more.

The next step in the study of the Urban Mission was the contact made by each member of the Working Group with the members of his/her General Council to determine: 1. their awareness of the problem of the Urban Industrial Mission; 2. the policies adopted in the light of this problem; and 3. the current action taken with regard to this policy.

These reports were synthesized by the Secretariate and studied by the Working Group. Then, this synthesis was sent to all the Generalates with a request for a reaction to it. Half of the Generalates responded.

Meanwhile, the Working Group was fortunate in being able to contact several people in the field:

1. Cardinal Malula of Kinshasa - who confirmed the orientation of our study - that the key to improving urban life is the small group "approach."
2. Sister Ines Braun, FMM, stationed in Indonesia with previous experience in the Philippines and Hong Kong, drew a general picture of the Catholic Activities for the urban mission in Asia in which she is engaged - with its recruitment and training of competent community organizers.
3. Miss Dorothy Lee, an ex- government official now working as a volunteer with Church and other agencies in Hong Kong, briefly outlined the urban situation in her city and her ideas about its future prospects. She saw the chief role of the Church as that of a catalyzing agent - creating awareness of the problems and making the people aware of their own potential. Miss Lee pointed out that strong leadership is needed because the young people represent half of the population of Hong Kong and they have great possibilities, but since money is the measuring stick there must be a reassessment of values.
4. A Visit of the Working Group to the Indian Sisters of Mother Teresa, who are working in the slums on Via Prenestina here in Rome, led the group to appreciate the value of the Sisters' charism - witnessing the Gospel through service to persons. As a dynamic group performing a specific function, they are achieving their objective although obviously they cannot meet all the needs nor yet solve all the problems of the "baraccati". The Sisters' charism acts on persons: other charisms are needed to act on structures.
5. Father Tonna gave the Working Group a résumé of an analysis of "How over a Century Rome has increased its population tenfold." One of the insights was that the only main industry in Rome is latent and represented by the masses of "baraccati" engaged in the building industry. Poverty is a hidden force and part of a system. The key to solving urban problems and injustices is the

Conscientization of the People. It is the task of the Church to help towards this Conscientization.

Another project undertaken was the drawing up of an up-to-date Bibliography on the Urban Mission Study by Father Moody. In March of this year a copy of the Bibliography was given to each member of the Working Group and in September of this year it will be finalized.

The Outcome:

1. The Generalates have a general awareness of the challenge and opportunity offered for mission by the urbanization process in the Third World.
2. The problems inherent in urban situations for missionary and pastoral work are:
 - a) Relationships with the local hierarchy and with the local clergy;
 - b) The attitudes of missionaries to change;
 - c) The decentralization of the Institutes;
 - d) The relationship between humanization and evangelization.
3. The following elements for policy making were mentioned:
 - a) Train a responsible laity;
 - b) Promote the mass media;
 - c) Develop the 'ecumenic' dimension;
 - d) Seek the poorer categories or areas of the city;
 - e) Mobilize the school System (Form Leaders)
 - f) Promote the idea of a 'Pastorale d'ensemble';
 - g) Establish a service to immigrants;
 - h) In all cases adopt the 'support' role.

Two other points mentioned were:

1. To avoid the transfer of mission and pastoral methods developed in Europe and North America to the mission field.
 2. Not to establish policy on urbanization at the generalate level.
4. There was broad consensus on the desirability of adopting the small group approach to face the urban challenge.
 5. Another consensus was noted as regards the urgency to develop new forms of ministry:
 - a) Supra-parish specialists - ministers to work with special groups, Youth, Factory Workers, the Educated Elite, Office Workers, etc.
 - b) Teamwork - groups of priests, sisters, brothers, laity - working for Community development.

6. The urgent need to retrain apostolate personnel deployed in the cities was generally stressed.

The Situation now is:

1. The Rev. Harry Daniels of the World Council of Churches - the Commission of the Urban and Industrial Mission - has agreed to keep in contact with the Sedos Development Working Group and to review with us all the material gleaned in our Study.
2. The Secretariate of Sedos will make a new Synthesis of the Study incorporating additional points found in the reactions from the Generalates (which have arrived recently).
3. Various members of the Working Group will develop one aspect of the Study:
 - a) The Situation of Women - S. Geneviève S.A.
 - b) Theological Aspects - Father Bundervoet, M.S.C.
 - c) Pastoral Experiences - Father Houdijk, C.S.Sp.
 - d) Education - S. Danita, SSND
 - e) Health - Sedos Health Task Force
 - f) Socio-economic development - Father Tonna
4. Presentation of the Study to the Generalates, perhaps at a General Assembly sometime next year."

The President thanked Sr. Danita for her report and, in the name of the Assembly encouraged the DWG to continue its study and if possible present the Assembly with its findings early next year.

5. Financial statement

Bro. Schnepf, treasurer of Sedos, made a few comments on the half-yearly statement regarding Sedos finances.

- Five Institutes have still not paid their contributions for the year 1972.
- Expenditure for the first 1972 issue of Joint Venture is more than budgeted. However, Fr. Moody, the editor, has assured us that by economising on the format, we shall not exceed the year's total.
- One member of the secretariate staff left in April - hence the separation fund.
- Expenditure under the heading 'Adveniat Project' refers to the expenses already incurred for the publication of the Latin American 'Who's Who'. These were covered by a grant from Adveniat.

The President thanked Bro. Schnepf and the statement was approved.

6. Promotion of the Laity in Africa.

Bro. Charles Henry Buttimer, fsc, introduced the main topic for study by the Assembly.

"In the summer of 1970 the first PanAfrican-Malagasy Episcopal Conference was convened and the USG was invited to send three observers from its membership. Father Arrupe, SJ, President of the USG, Father Van Asten, PA, President of SEDOS, and Father McCormack of Maryknoll were the three delegates nominated by the Union.

In the summer of 1971 the first Pan African Malagasy Lay Conference was held at Accra, and present for the sessions were Sister Alma Cornely, shcj, for the UISG and Father Agostoni, fscj, for the USG, while Brother David Leo, fsc, was there to enable the Francophone and Anglophone delegates to understand one another. In the SEDOS Assembly of September 28, 1971, Sister Alma reported on the Conference, while Father Agostoni shared with us his impressions, comparing the climate of change he noted since the Uganda conference of 1953. In the most recent SEDOS Bulletin we received documentation of the actual discussions and resolutions.

This summer, in August, the Pan-African-Malagasy Symposium of Episcopal Conferences, at first scheduled for Bujumbura, Burundi, will be held in Kampala, and again three USG representatives have been invited; the designees are Father Arrupe, President, Father Agostoni who will be a link between the two conferences lay and episcopal, and yours truly. This episcopal conference will take up the theme which the lay conference extended to it: THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE AFRICAN LAITY IN THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH AND IN THE TOTAL DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA. It is hoped that the Bishops will find ways to activate the desires and resolutions of the laity.

Since the three USG delegates are all active members of SEDOS we have no hesitation in asking your assistance to prepare ourselves to make some positive contributions to the August conference. It is not yet known what form the Conference will take, but it is likely that the recent SYNOD of BISHOPS in Rome may provide a model; the Bishops will make interventions in general assemblies, the three of us may have an opportunity to suggest ideas during group discussions; certainly we will have an opportunity to sow a few seeds during informal conversations.

It is you, who have experience of many kinds in the various mission fields of Africa and Madagascar, who can share with us your insights, your experiences, your projects, your vision for the future, in view of making the African laity a force for growth and development. You have read in the Bulletin some of the questions that the members of the laity conference posed last year in Accra. We are confident that from your discussions in groups some vital points of view will emerge that will enable the three delegates from Rome to better represent you and promote such projects as

your experience and your foresight indicate as important for realizing the aim of both the laity and episcopal conferences.

On page one of the Bulletin of June 2nd, we pose the question: What line do the members of your Institute prefer to adopt in promoting the laity in Africa in the six areas designated by the Accra Laity Congress: Formation, Schools and non-school education; social communications; Justice; and Ecumenism, considering each of these six areas as they affect first, the local community; second, the family; third, women; fourth, the young people.

On Sedos page 425 in English and 426 in French, I have phrased the desires of the laity in the form of ten questions. Five deal with the Formation of the Laity: the sixth is concerned with movements, adult and youth, and their adaptation to the realities of Africa; the seventh deals with mass media; the eighth with the role of the woman in the future of Africa; the ninth with creating a sense of responsibility; ecumenical action in two areas is the subject of the tenth question.

During the last Synod of Bishops, one of the Cardinal participants remarked that the Superiors General showed a wider knowledge of the questions under discussion than the diocesan Bishops did; the Bishops were more inclined to view the questions from their own diocesan or at best regional experience, while the Superiors General had a far vaster view and appreciation of the questions. I attribute this to the fact that, of necessity, we have a much more international experience, given the world wide expansion of our mission apostolate; but also because every week during the Synod, the Superiors General who were Synod Fathers and those invited as expert observers, met with other Superiors for a briefing; and for months prior to the Synod a committee of Women and Men Religious helped prepare background information that aided the Superiors-in-Synod to make the extraordinary contribution that they made. Well, we hope to contribute something at Kampala, thanks to the help you will give us today by pooling your experience, your insights and your vision of future possibilities and we are particularly anxious to have the help of the Sisters, for you have intuitions that we do not have, and insights that are special to the wisdom that is yours, and also a vision of future needs and possibilities. That vision of the future is of great importance because it is not only the facts of experience, but the new vision that that experience gives you, that has vital import for the Growth of the Church in Africa and the Development of that Continent through the involvement of its laity."

The participants were thus invited to study the ten questions and offer possible answers, differences of opinion being welcome.

At this point, before the Assembly adjourned for coffee, Fr. Van Asten thanked the speakers and the members present.

7. After coffee, the Assembly broke into four groups, led by Fathers Van Asten, Mondé, Agostoni and Bro. Charles Henry with Sr. Alma, to pool experiences and ideas about the promotion of the laity in Africa. The following is a brief summary of this exchange.

FORMATION

- 1) Dissatisfaction with exclusively Western modes of Church growth and national development is steadily mounting among African lay Christians. Their quest for authenticity is gaining momentum.
- 2) It is useful to assure them that, as missionaries, we are convinced that Africans are no better or worse than Christians in other continents: the same Spirit that builds the Church is in all, and what really counts is obedience in faith to the Lord.
- 3) It is no less useful to remind ourselves that 'life' and - in our case, African life - is as important as ideas. Our Western background often leads us to overstress ideas, doctrine and concepts, to the detriment of sentiment, affection and life.
- 4) This is particularly true of our Roman liturgy. Its concern with precise formulations often leaves little scope for celebration - African style. The Africans like the liturgy to become more expressive.
- 5) Another major area where authenticity becomes a real issue is the concern of Africans for the community. We often tend to underestimate it because of our priorities with the individual.
- 6) The right balance between the community and the individual could become a common quest, in which Africans and Westerners would mutually enrich one another.
- 7) Our concern with efficiency often becomes a serious stumbling block for the promotion of the African laity. We often overpower them with the equipment we can muster and the techniques we can deploy.
- 8) Without necessarily having to start all over again from scratch, it is probably more rewarding to work shoulder to shoulder with them, using their own methods, in order to help them build up their own Church and community, their own way.

- 9) This would avoid the negative experience of silent competition between local and overseas operators. The latter are ascribed higher status and thus unwittingly become a source of tension in the local Church and community.
- 10) As regards the formal means of formation, due prominence must be given to "training through action". Trade Unions, cooperatives and similar "do it yourself" initiatives never fail to produce good, lay leaders.
- 11) The process, however, could be stepped up by assigning to African laymen more roles and responsibilities in running the local Church and community. Of special importance in this context are pastoral roles and responsibilities - particularly as these are expressed in Pastoral Councils.
- 12) African Priests and overseas lay missionaries have a special role to play in this process. No effort should be spared - in the actual training of these Priests and lay missionaries - to make them aware of the potential of the African laity, familiar with the skills of education for leadership, and willing to hand over responsibilities to African lay leaders.
- 13) A minimum of physical facilities for training the laity should be ensured - eventually with the help of external aid. These should include the buildings required by training colleges, means of transport, translations, recordings, etc.
- 14) When this is assured, however, priority should be given to the provision of scholarships, internships etc. in Africa itself, rather than overseas. This policy would offset the current, negative, experience of the frustration of "westernized" Africans who cannot adjust to their community of origin after their period of training overseas.
- 15) Another priority is the promotion of African lay women. The latter often occupy an underprivileged position in the local community. The confrontation of African with Western values could show the way to giving the African woman her due. In this context of special importance - and difficulty - is the whole question of African marriage (and family) patterns.

EDUCATION

- 16) Our schools have tended to cut off African children and youth from their community. By so doing, they become a source of serious tension and even sow the seeds of the decay of such communities.

- 17) A greater effort could be made to make our schools community (rather than pupil) oriented. This would increase their contribution to the promotion of local lay leaders as well as offset the danger mentioned under 16.
- 18) In spite of one concern for the child, pupils in our schools often lament that they are not individually cared for. This could be a result of the heavy work load of the missionaries who man these schools, a work load which itself is often the outcome of the demands of the education ministries.
- 19) The new educational systems introduced in a number of African countries (Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia) often constitute a positive experience and could provide us with new ideas in this respect.
- 20) It seems a common experience that not enough African lay teachers of religion can be found for State and Church schools. This is a negative experience and calls for an urgent remedy. Missionaries could give more priority to the recruitment, training, "laundring" and support of such teachers.
- 21) Extra curricular activities in our Church schools provide several positive experiences. Under whichever form they emerge, they always tend to offset the danger listed under 18 above. They also mobilize our school structures more effectively in the quest of the promotion of the laity. They inevitably become irreplaceable bases for the lay movements and organizations (Legion of Mary, Xaverians etc.)
- 22) When directly concerned with the apostolate and with pastoral work, they activate the principle that there can be no integral Christian education without commitment to work for the spreading of the Kingdom.
- 23) Finally, it has been found that this "out of school" education makes the contribution of missionaries to the promotion of the local laity more direct and effective. The experiment of the Rwanda Sisters, who set up as many as 150 small groups for "after school" education, not only saved the young women from frustration (due to unemployment etc.) after their school term but also laid solid foundations for a really "localized" Church.

SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

- 24) Radio has been found to be a relatively cheap means of promoting the maturity of the laity in Africa. Audio-visual aids is another channel which could be exploited more fully. What is vital, however, is that the production of radio and other programmes should be authentically African. As in other areas, the importation of foreign programmes could create more problems than it solves.

Que faisons-nous en ce pays ?

Faisant un "tour d'horizon" à l'occasion de la réunion sacerdotale de 1972, Mgr M. BERNARD donne une vue d'ensemble de la situation présente du diocèse de Nouakchott. Puis, il s'interroge sur la qualité de notre présence en Mauritanie.

Nous sommes présents, bon ! mais quelle sorte de présence, quelle qualité de présence ?... Quant à moi, je n'hésiterai pas à qualifier cette présence de missionnaire. D'autres, ailleurs peut-être, pousseront les hauts cris. Parce que j'ai employé le mot "missionnaire", ils me taxeraient de vouloir prêcher directement et inconsidérément le Christ, vraiment à contre-temps et en employant des méthodes qui pourraient tout juste avoir cours dans les milieux animistes. Telle n'est pas ma pensée. Mais je crois qu'il faut se garder en même temps d'une attitude qui, en fait, à force de se vouloir libérale, en vient à mettre sur le même pied tous les comportements religieux quels qu'ils soient, toutes les pratiques et toutes les fois. On s'installe alors dans une sorte d'indifférence supérieure, risquant de ne plus s'intéresser qu'à la progression purement humaine de ceux qui nous entourent. Entendons-nous bien, je ne dis pas qu'il faut négliger une telle progression. Je dis qu'il ne faut jamais abandonner le désir, un jour, par nous ou par d'autres, de faire connaître la voie du Christ, parce qu'elle est la voie normale du salut, parce que, en fait, les hommes, consciemment ou non, ne se sauvent que par le Christ. Je dis que nous devons sans cesse poursuivre le but, fût-il très éloigné, de pouvoir un jour faire part de notre foi au Christ ressuscité, Celui qui est la Voie, la Vérité et la Vie.

Je précise bien que je n'entends pas par là limiter le salut à ceux qui, explicitement, visiblement suivent Jésus, Fils de Dieu, et se déclarent chrétiens. J'ai la conviction, au contraire, que la grâce de Dieu est à l'oeuvre dans la masse de nos frères musulmans et qu'en conséquence ils ne sont pas tenus à l'écart du salut. Mais je suis sûr aussi que le chemin privilégié nous est tracé par la Vérité de l'Évangile et par ces relais merveilleux de vie divine que sont les Sacrements.

Sachant cela, étant sûr de cela, je ne puis renoncer en mon coeur à l'annoncer, je ne puis prendre mon parti devant l'impossibilité présente dans laquelle je me trouve; de cette impossibilité je souffre et je dois souffrir. Si je n'en souffre pas à certaines heures, je pense que j'ai à m'inquiéter, je ne suis pas au diapason.

Je ne prétends pas du tout qu'il faut prêcher à tout prix, un peu comme les premiers missionnaires franciscains en terre d'Islam, au risque de rendre toute présence chrétienne, surtout toute présence sacerdotale, impossible. Nullement. Mais je demeure missionnaire par le désir ardent et entretenu (même s'il n'est pas actuellement réalisable) d'annoncer le Maître de VIE, le Ressuscité, Celui qui illumine toute ma destinée et qui en est le sens et le fondement.

Et je crois qu'il n'est pas indifférent, en outre, que, dans ce pays, des offrandes spirituelles soient présentées au Père par son Fils, ce qui doit être l'oeuvre de tout baptisé.

Il n'est pas non plus indifférent que des âmes s'efforcent de vivre leur totale consécration au Seigneur pour être avec Jésus une "éternelle offrande au Père". Je pense aussi qu'il est très important que des prêtres, ici, en ces terres, continuent à offrir l'unique sacrifice qui sauve le monde. A ces titres divers, l'Eglise si modestement présente en ce pays est missionnaire, elle est "sacrement du salut". Certes, il appartient au Père de révéler son Fils, et au Fils de conduire au Père dans le secret des coeurs, mais notre propre participation à la vie du Christ et à son sacrifice, vécue ici parmi ces hommes, n'est-elle pas un constant appel au Père de toutes miséricordes, une actualisation, une localisation du sacrifice de son Fils ?...

En nous disant missionnaires de Jésus, nous n'entendons donc nullement anticiper sur les vues du Seigneur et brûler les mystérieuses étapes du temps. La réflexion nous invite à une grande humilité dans cette considération du temps, de ces siècles innombrables depuis l'émergence de l'homme, des siècles encore depuis l'appel d'Abraham jusqu'à la venue du Sauveur, et du temps indéfini devant nous sans doute jusqu'à ce que son Message coure à travers le monde et l'illumine. C'est la mystérieuse patience de Dieu, ce doit être aussi la nôtre..."

(CSSP - Informations - N° 27 - Avril 72)

LA CONSECRATION RELIGIEUSE, L'ENGAGEMENT DEFINITIF A LA MISSION DU CHRIST ONT-ILS ENCORE
UN SENS AUJOURD'HUI ?

Monsieur l'Abbé David Traoré a répondu à cette question dans son homélie prononcée à BAMAKO, (Mali), le 13 février 1972, à l'occasion de l'engagement définitif de Sr Colette VANDERSANDEN Réponse qui pourrait aider notre réflexion ...

Ma soeur,

Vous allez prendre un engagement définitif à l'heure où bon nombre de chrétiens ne comprennent pas la signification totale et même la nécessité de la consécration religieuse. Vous allez prendre un engagement définitif à l'heure où l'activité missionnaire continue d'être toujours critiquée, décriée et même parfois condamnée. On dit que l'Eglise se construit par la vie, la conjugaison des différents charismes individuels et collectifs, mais nous voyons dans l'histoire de l'Eglise qu'il arrive à certaines époques que certains charismes dans l'Eglise doivent être vécus dans la foi pure, dans l'espérance pure, sans aucun adjuvant humain, pour la bonne raison que les hommes de ces époques là ne saisissent pas toute la signification spirituelle de ces charismes alors qu'ils en ont le plus besoin. Je pense qu'actuellement, c'est le cas de la consécration religieuse, à telle enseigne que même nous, chrétiens, nous en sommes arrivés à être choqués par certaines expressions traditionnelles, certains mots traditionnels, comme le mot voeu, surtout le mot voeu perpétuel, et que, tout simplement, nous l'avons banni de notre langage ecclésiastique.

Au nom donc de toute la communauté ici présente, merci de vous engager à vivre un charisme alors que nous n'en comprenons pas toute la signification, toute la portée, parce qu'actuellement nous vivons dans une ambiance matérialiste. Par votre voeu d'obéissance, merci de nous rappeler que l'orgueil humain, la suffisance humaine, restent encore l'obstacle essentiel pour la vraie rencontre avec le Seigneur. Rappel d'autant plus nécessaire qu'actuellement l'homme, par ses succès scientifiques, ses succès techniques, se prend pour un Dieu, ne veut écouter que lui-même, quitte d'ailleurs à se casser la figure, nous en avons l'expérience tous les jours.

Par votre voeu de pauvreté, merci de nous rappeler l'extrême fragilité de la créature, de toute créature, qu'elle s'appelle argent, qu'elle s'appelle voiture, qu'elle s'appelle villa, qu'elle s'appelle confort, qu'elle s'appelle place, qu'elle s'appelle promotion, qu'elle s'appelle popularité ou renommée. Leur extrême fragilité et surtout leur incapacité totale à sauver l'homme.

Par votre voeu de chasteté, merci de nous rappeler que Dieu nous appelle à une vie où il n'y a pas de mort. La vie du sexe n'est pas, comme le pensent certains, le symbole de la vie ou le symbole du renouveau. C'est tout simplement le rappel constant de la mort, car seuls les êtres qui meurent procréent. Nous discuterons peut être longtemps encore de la nécessité ou même de la place de l'avenir du célibat ecclésiastique dans l'Eglise, mais nous ne pouvons pas discuter de la nécessité de la consécration religieuse dans l'Eglise qui date du Christ, parce qu'elle est essentielle à la vie de l'Eglise. C'est comme le symbole permanent et vivant du Royaume que l'Eglise est destinée à construire actuellement.

L'expression changera peut-être, mais la réalité restera toujours et si, par impossible, nous ne devons plus trouver dans l'Eglise une fille qui imite votre geste de ce matin, alors c'est alors que nous devons cesser de croire en l'Eglise et secouer la poussière de nos pieds.

Donc, merci ce matin, d'être pour nous l'occasion de faire un acte de foi en la vitalité de l'Eglise.

Mais, je suis Africain ma Soeur, et vous allez prendre l'engagement de vous consacrer à l'action missionnaire, malgré l'ingratitude des temps, Nous admirons les premiers missionnaires, et je crois que nous avons parfaitement raison, ne serait-ce que sur le plan de la vie matérielle dure, extrêmement dure qu'ils ont menée. Mais je pense qu'il n'ya rien de pire pour un homme, qu'il n'y a rien d'éprouvant pour un homme que de douter de l'utilité de son action, que de se battre, de se dévouer pour une cause qui est sans cesse décriée à côté de lui, sans cesse critiquée, quelquefois même condamnée par ceux-là qui en sont les bénéficiaires.

Et malgré ce vent de doute, de méfiance généralisée, vous prenez l'engagement de vous consacrer à l'Afrique et spécialement au Mali. Je vous félicite, je vous remercie, je remercie votre famille à travers votre maman qui est ici présente et je vous y encourage. En effet, je pense qu'actuellement l'action missionnaire ne se traduit pas, ne se justifie pas en terme d'assistance technique pour une insuffisance de personne, pour une insuffisance de moyens techniques, pour une insuffisance de ressources, Bien que ce problème de personnel existe - nous en savons quelquechose dans ce diocèse - ce problème reste quand même épidermique. On ne construit pas une Eglise comme on construit un pays; ce n'est pas tout à fait la même chose.

On dit qu'une Eglise malienne naîtra dans la mesure où le Malien lui-même, recevant le message évangélique, l'exprimera, le vivra à la malienne. C'est vrai, ce n'est pas encore fait, mais il est sûr et certain que ce sera le Malien seul qui peut le faire.

Encore faut-il éviter une naissance difforme. Encore faut-il éviter les déficiences, les insuffisances congénitales au départ, et je pense que c'est là que se situe l'action missionnaire.

Ma Soeur, vous êtes Belge, vous vivez votre message évangélique à travers une sensibilité belge, à travers une culture belge. C'est déjà une richesse pour moi; vous vivez à côté de moi. Mais ce qui est mieux encore, vous vivez le message évangélique dans une mentalité, dans une culture, dans une sensibilité belges, à travers des réalités maliennes. Je pense que vous enrichissez encore davantage votre message. S'il est vrai que les Eglises sont complémentaires, s'il est vrai que les Eglises s'enrichissent mutuellement par leur aspect spirituel spécifique, je crois que vous pouvez voir l'apport spécifique que vous apportez à la naissance de l'Eglise Malienne. Ce n'est pas du sentimentalisme, je ne pense pas que ce soit mon genre, mais je crois que sans être théologien spécialiste, je pense que nous sommes alors en plein dans la doctrine missionnaire où l'action missionnaire, depuis le début de l'Eglise, est conçue pratiquement comme un courant bilatéral. Et c'est dommage que les siècles précédents l'aient ignoré; heureusement que le siècle présent commence à le vivre. Mais cela suppose, de votre côté et du mien, que nous puissions vivre ces exigences dans la foi.

De votre côté d'abord, vous êtes Belge, que vous restiez Belge, sans aucun complexe ni sentiment de supériorité. Cela suppose aussi que vous refusiez de rester dans les cadres d'une assistance technique, en bras et en cerveau, en ressource, en technique, jugeant les choses de l'extérieur. Cela est imposé à l'assistance technique civile qui ne peut pas faire autrement. Il lui est interdit d'entrer dans la vie du pays. Il est obligé, de l'extérieur, d'apporter le concours qu'on lui demande et, s'il est chrétien, avec une note chrétienne. Mais le missionnaire doit entrer, doit vivre l'expérience, doit être partie prenante de l'intérieur. Cela suppose aussi de ma part, d'abord que je vous accepte, pas comme une simple assistante technique, avec une note d'amitié ou de reconnaissance. Cela suppose de ma part également que je reconnaisse la richesse de l'apport que vous m'apportez. Et même que je vous aide à embellir votre pierre, à l'enrichir.

Vous avez voulu qu'un Africain soit le témoin officiel de votre engagement. C'est dans cette optique que vous l'avez voulu et moi également, je l'ai accepté dans cette vision, représentant ici tous mes frères maliens. Puissions-nous tous, religieuses, prêtres maliens et étrangers, laïcs, chrétiens maliens et étrangers, parce que c'est la même doctrine, ce sont les mêmes exigences, puissions-nous vivre dans la foi, dans la charité, cette volonté, je dirai d'osmose, cette volonté de communion intime, pour que se réalise petit à petit ce caractère universel de l'Eglise et également ce caractère de catholicité.

Mr. l'Abbé David Traoré

(Allo Frascati - n° 5 - Mai 1972)

Vitality of an African Church

The Ibo Church in the East-Central State, is going through a particularly prosperous period just now. It is true that the departure en masse of the Irish Holy Ghost missionaries, who were sent away by the Federal Government as soon as peace came to the Nigerian states, could have seriously compromised the future of the Church there. But in addition to doctors and engineers, this tribe had provided 150 priests of whom 3 were bishops, and 163 sisters. Having been for some time actively associated with the direction of the works in parishes, these priests were now able to take charge immediately of the 156 parishes and the 65 schools, including secondary, technical and commercial.

Undoubtedly, the joy of newfound peace largely contributed to the spectacular development of the Church here, where christians are showing a particular interest in the life of the parish and frequent the sacraments in great numbers. The shortage of priests had already made itself felt, only to be overcome by a superb effort on behalf of the clergy to make up for the many deficiencies. In fact, many priests say three masses a day in neighbouring churches which would otherwise be neglected because of the shortage of priests. Their main inspiration for all this activity, according to Bishop MURRAY C.S.Sp., is their supernatural spirit. "We see a healthy, dynamic church, which does not suffer from doubt, or lack of motivation. The faith is simple and strong, the christians have one single ideal. I think that, in the years to come, the Church in Nigeria will give a lead to the churches in other countries."

It may be so. However, in this Church, so full of vitality where seminaries and houses for religious training can scarcely meet the demands of so many candidates on their doorstep, already many questions are being formulated regarding the most profound aspects of faith in daily life and its concrete realisation. It is a matter of discovering what particular form christianity will adopt in the African culture, as being specifically, characteristically its own. This research, of the utmost importance, which has already been undertaken by a number of African countries is also being given much thought and concern by the Nigerian priests, be they theologians or sociologists.

In the report which he presented in Rome (Oct. 3, 1971) on the situation of priestly and religious vocations in the East-Central State, Most Rev. F. ARINZE, archbishop of Onitsha, wrote: "The diocese of Enugu and Owerri have each 400 seminarians. Onitsha has 340 and Umuahia approximately 300. The regional senior seminary of Enugu had 240 students during 1970-71. In October 1971, 140 students are due to enrol for the first year of Philosophy." The number of promising young students aspiring to the religious life has beaten all records. One particular question arises from all this: How is it possible to meet all these demands? For there is a serious financial problem involved which will not be at all easy to solve.

In any case, we are already in the presence of a completely African Church. (France Cath. 7-IV-72).

LISTS OF BOOKS RECEIVED DURING MAY compiled by Sister Agnetta, S.Sp.S.
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I. INTERNAL

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Institute</u>	<u>Title of Book</u>
3.41	OSU	E Fate Vita Nuova.
3.42	SSND	You are Sent.
3.43	SJ	Directory of Jesuit Educational Association of India, 1969-1970.

II. EXTERNAL

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Author or Publisher</u>	<u>Title of Book</u>
6.188	Pie Madri della Nigrizia, Rome	Cent'anni di vita missionaria.
6.189	Aubier, Paris	De la Savane à la Ville, by Raymond Deniel.
6.190	FAO/WHO	Examen de l'efficacité technologique de quelques antioxygènes et synergistes.
6.191	CISRS, India	Political Prospects in India.
6.192	Universe Books, U.S.A.	The Limits of Growth.
6.193	Christian Mission Books, USA	Evangelical Missions Quarterly, Volumes 1-3.
6.194	Ibid.	Evangelical Missions Quarterly, Volumes 4-6.
6.195	Ibid.	Missions in Creative Tension.
6.196	Secrétariat de l'Episcopat, Ivory Coast	Annuaire du Clerge, des Religieux et Religieuses de Côte d'Ivoire, 1972.
6.197	UN	Report on the World Social Situation 1970.
6.198	Educators' Social Action Workshop(ESAW)	Educators' Social Action Workshop 1971.
6.199	Boris de Rachewiltz	Arte Africana.

<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Author or Publisher</u>	<u>Title of Book</u>
6.200	Jesuit Educa- tional Assoc. of India.	Training for achievement motivation and leadership.
6.201	Ibid.	Education and Social Concern.
6.202	Abbé A. Nobou Ivory Coast	Vers la vie nouvelle...
6.203	Piero Gheddo	Dove va la Cina?
6.204	National Board of Christian Higher Educa- tion in India	Challenges and Opportunities in Indian Higher Education.
6.205	Gerardo Escu- dero, CMF	Il nuovo diritto dei religiosi.

SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

THE NEW TASK FORCE

for

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

will meet on

TUESDAY 27th JUNE 1972

at 16.00 at SEDOS

A G E N D A

PROGRAMME FOR AUGUST-DECEMBER