



THE URBAN MISSION: how the Church of Rome sees its mission in the city. 41

Synthesis report by Dot. Luciano TAVAZZA of the February 74 Convegno

I. A new hope

1. A shared, meditated, anguished hope emerges from the reports, documents, and contributions of this, our ecclesial meeting, and clearly characterizes it.
2. This is the hope that we have taken the road for the promotion of the human development of the citizens of Rome and of the Christian community (which desires to be part of this process), We are aware that, in the day to day, down to earth commitment to our brothers, there will be the test of its fidelity to the story and to the love of God. Very often, through this testimony, the hearts of men open again to listen to the Gospel proclamation. "Politics, in fact, are a tough way, even if not the only one of living up to our Christian commitment to others" (Octogesima Adveniens)
3. This is the hope that, in our faith, will take root a more mature formative process bearing on our political conscience and that this will happen in Rome, in communion with the Vicar of the Pope; this is the hope that something new will happen on this level of faith, in the search for God and of that salvation which only He can give to all men. This is the hope of a fact of conscience, through which men will begin to become better aware of what is happening to them, and more alerted to the responsibility of dedicating themselves, with all their powers to the development of "human living together" responding to the real needs of each one of us.
4. It is clear, on the other hand, that to get an increase in our awareness - of what is happening in the world- and consequently, in our capacity to collaborate in the unfolding process of history - we must turn to each one of us and ask all, not excluding simple souls and in particular those who suffer most, for a contribution of knowledge and action, overcoming the illusion that only a handful can understand and guide.

In fact, an initiative directed to, and operating on the cultural and organizational summits would have little impact in terms of religious and political maturity.

5. This was the hope which turned into gratitude as it welcomed the meeting convened by the Cardinal Vicar as a sign and an occasion of finding ourselves in a new event in local church tradition. This was an activation of the Council call, of the Synod of Bishops appeals, of the recent pressing pleas of Paul VI, for an authentic confrontation of the Christian Commitment with the expectations of charity and of justice of mankind.
6. This is the hope which became a composite but compact solidarity, in fraternal vigilance, as soon as the ecclesial community understood the meaning of the disturbances organized to provoke the faithful, who were preparing for or participating in the meeting, by a few dabblers in violence.

In this also, the Christian community is happy to unite itself with all those Roman citizens, especially the younger ones, victims of recent disturbances, by affirming again, just when it faces the Word of God in a spirit of penitence, its trust in the democratic state, and its institutions, its republican Constitution - the fruit of the Resistance movement.

7. Because this is and will remain the community which committed itself in its saddest moments, to defend the rights and the lives of all citizens, without distinction of faith, race or political creed. This community gave us Don Morosini with other laymen, priests and Religious, who united the sacrifice of their lives with that of the martyrs of the Fosse Ardeatine for the same ideals.

## II. Criticism of the preparation of the Convegno

8. The papers received by this Convegno - over 320 documents, a total of over 4000 pages, and 740 verbal interventions - which unfolded during the two days devoted to the debate, constitute food for thought that forces us to consider that today's meeting be considered not so much as a point of arrival as a point of departure-and this is exactly what participants stressed. In fact the validity of what we have achieved till now will be tested only if we continue to reflect and act - an enterprise all the ecclesial community desires to undertake, in unity, after the Convegno.
9. In order to define exactly this future work, we think it useful to put on record objectively, right at the beginning of this report, not only our gratitude to all those who generously have prepared the convegno during these two years, but also the criticism levelled at the documents and at the debate, Members of the community in fact, think that:
  - a) The information given and received about the aims, the phasing, the methods of work, has not been sufficiently fresh and close to the grass roots, especially as regards the parishes of the periphery; this also affects the dimensions and conditions of the sectors and prefectures in which the City is ecclesiastically divided;
  - b) the formulation of the topics and their debate and the preparation of the documents have not been conducted in fully collegial ways;
  - c) it was a mistake to change, because of the "austerity phase" the original program which included<sup>a</sup> holiday, thus reducing the pressure on workers.
  - d) the faithful of the parishes have not always been involved or committed through the right sermons and, about all, through patient listening to their pastoral councils, the institutional organs of the associations, the movements, especially those of the workers, and the assemblies of communities, which could have been opened up to a wider audience without giving up their ecclesial characteristics,

- e) the structures of participation have given little attention to religious families and to those groups and initiatives which, because of their specific institutional and environmental nature cannot operate on a parochial basis, but all the same constitute a visible presence of Christians in any area. In this last decade they have been rich in inspiration and have given exceptional witness.
10. The organizers of the Convegno express their gratitude for this preliminary criticism formulated to date and request that further comments on the various aspects of the meeting continue to be addressed to the organizing secretariat.
11. Many participants hope that the rich matter produced by this Assembly be offered, at least in synthesis, to the grass root communities. For obvious reasons its wealth does not allow this report to delve - as would be necessary at a second stage - deeply into each theme. It will just attempt to record a series of thrusts as these emerged from the transactions. And it will do this without making any attempt to do justice to all the stands provoked by the pluralism of disciplines, ideologies and praxis - a pluralism desired and encouraged. It offers an occasion for further reflection.
12. It is our wish that, in this way, the decisions to be taken shortly by the community will mature. These decisions will be translated into plans of action, as the urgency of the situation demands, according to well defined priorities within a frame of long range planning - which we hope (and as a number of participants suggested) will not come on us from on high but will emerge from the ongoing consultation of the faithful.

### III. Conditions for a credible policy of charity and justice

13. It seems necessary, in the spirit of truthfulness which we have demanded from, and imposed on, one another, to begin by highlighting the concerns, the fears and, at times, the hesitations which went with the preparation and the actual work of this Convegno. If, in fact, these concerns are not overcome, if these fears are not dispelled by the community adopting a new way of doing things, and if the hesitation is not removed by the clarity and honesty of our methods, formidable obstacles will arise and they will inhibit the emergence of those conditions which the Assembly thinks crucial for developing a common, credible, thrust towards charity and justice. By presenting these concerns, the Assembly offers a set of proposals for study and action for the consideration of the whole Christian community during the coming months.
14. There is concern lest the ecclesial community of the capital clude its own authentic "conversion", by limiting its contribution to an appeal (doubtlessly necessary and important) to accept and meditate on the Word of God. The aim would be the confrontation of the individual egotism of Christians with the Word. This appeal would appear to be evading the issue and might even alienate us if it did not insist on the simultaneous stimulation of its members to the acceptance of

a no less painful and hard task: that of passing - in the competent places civil, administrative, trade union, political - from the moralistic generalities to scientific categories. Only these latter will allow us to approach correctly the analysis of the structures and thus permit us, as is necessary and as is our duty, to conduct research and action shoulder to shoulder with those who, before, during and after this meeting, gave witness, and expressed the will to commit their forces to correct the current unbearable conditions. And this can happen only through conversion of the heart a conversion we can no longer delay. It can only happen through the use of all those instruments of justice, in a spirit of that Gospel charity which is the real deep animation of Christian action, and in the face of which our services can only be one (and certainly not the most authoritative) form of witness.

All this must happen in the light of a global witness of life in charity - as has been shown by the honest paper of Don Clemente Riva, which the Assembly makes it own. Charity is also a commitment to the transformation of the world, and thus implies the rejection of the use of its motivations as an instrument for the justification of what exists. The present situation must be discussed in view of a truer love, that love which accepts the search for a continuing transcendence of itself. Charity does not ratify but ever promotes growth and leads to freedom from sin - before God and before men.

15. There is then the concern that the diocesan community risks over simplifying its "conversion" by limiting itself to offering to the Father and to the brethren its gifts rather than its heart. This could really happen if it stops at:
- a) the isolated gestures of "charities"; this would look like patching up the Gospel robe, a robe it no longer wishes to carry;
  - b) the splendid witness of a few to cover the cowardice of the many;
  - c) the rationalization of the many and commendable social initiatives of Roman Catholics, instead of their reexamination in terms of a changed social reality. The principles, methods and techniques which inspire them and the human context in which they happen, must be evaluated. Our first act of love, according to the Assembly, remains that of recovering, through the personal risk of civil and political involvement in the democratic and constitutional framework, the maximum number of citizens from the assisted circuit, in order to insert or reinstate them in the productive one;
  - d) its own external face lifting and its readiness to adjust to the changing civil and political situations and thus accepting eventually a different set up for today's power politics, without adopting an innovative role as regards the democratic society in an effort to stimulate the direct presence in it of the faithful - laymen, priests and religious. And this to the end of collaborating loyally, as far as it is in our power, to the "human reformation" of the City of Rome, by involving ourselves day after day in the structures open to participation. Some of these of course, still have to be invented, perhaps in line with those of other capitals, and others need to be perfected.

We must use our talents wherever a real public need exists. From this emerges the absolute need for personal responsibility building. Only this can transform the old and animate the new structures.

16. There is also concern lest the local Church, understood as community, present itself and express itself to the city merely as an exhortative voice - calling for victory, through good works over the ills which for a long time have been affecting the middle classes. This is a traditional and, of course, valid appeal to those who, among the people of God, are economically able to help the brethren. But it may prevent the Church from becoming the prophetic voice of the poor, a voice which we would like to hear raised in future with greater authority in the defence of each Roman citizen who finds himself deprived of real freedom and of the possibility of his full development as a person.
17. Another concern is that the "reconciliation" (invoked by all who belong to the Father's house) may take place at the expense of the poor - and this not because of bad faith but because of a superficial understanding of the roots and causes of the phenomena which threaten us. In this case it would offer ideological motivation for their further, even if involuntary, abuse. In order to avoid this, we have to ensure effective responsibility accepted in a spirit of penance, faith and truthfulness. Meanwhile, the community in the liveliest and also the most painful phase of its debate, has taken note that:
  - a) full reconciliation, with all, will only become possible if, through our commitment, the Church-Institution, (which is the historical dimension in which we are gathered during our earthly voyage), stresses the commitment already made to its progressive liberation from all privilege and from every position of worldly prestige.
  - b) this means giving up those ties by which its visible forms, burdened by history, have at times knit it to human power structures especially on the political, economic and ideological levels.
18. If this is not done in credible terms of time and form it can happen that, notwithstanding the purity of its intentions, our community becomes a prop and cover for the maintenance of a system based on private profit. And this is exactly the support demanded from it by those who, under the hypocritical pretext of saving the values of a "Christian civilization" (which has already been betrayed anyway) in fact want to safeguard their privileged positions and to subvert, to the advantage of the powerful, the democratic framework. This would be the classical way of continuing the oppression of the poor.

19. And, finally, there is concern that because of false and dangerous modesty, we would not have the courage to express repentance for the faults of individuals or as a collectivity, as a hierarchy or as a people, - when this repentance is demanded by the confrontation of our acts with the demands of the word of God. To be credible, this repentance (as many stressed, warmly and, at times painfully) must be accompanied by those acts which must emerge from inside our ecclesial community (which, in St John Lateran, finds its base). In practice, we must go beyond:
- a) the painful misunderstandings and mutual divisions between brothers - for which we all declare ourselves responsible. Whatever the causes, Octogesima Adveniens warns us: "the same Christian faith can lead to varying commitments. From Christians, who apparently seem to be on opposite sides because they detect different options, the Church demands an effort at mutual understanding of the positions and the motives of the other side". "What links the faithful together, in fact, is stronger than what separates them" (Gaudium et Spes).
  - b) the wide ranging and sharp socio-economic differences between persons, bodies and institutions which all belong to the Church.
  - c) the forms of presence, initiative and substitute-function, which are not justified by evident preference for the service of the emarginated.
20. Who would be able to give credit to an Assembly of faithful which offers its collaboration and insights and, if it merits it, its critical conscience to the city if it is not capable of committing itself to solve, with decision worthy of its love, those problems and situations which more directly depend on its will and on its own, adequate, even if limited, resources ?
21. Who would believe in a diocesan church which is incapable of following in the footsteps of its Bishops who, during the Council, declared to the separated brethren: "If any blame falls on us for this separation, we humbly beg pardon of God and of those brethren who feel offended by us". And, again, to the Observers of the same Council, he humbly said: "We mutually pardon and beg pardon. Our hearts need this tranquil mood if they are to weave relationships of friendship and speak to each other with serenity."
22. The concerns, the fears, the doubts expressed above aim at bringing about a full conversion, and emerge from the correct, dialectic confrontation which took place in the Convegno which now draws to a close. . . . They are not and cannot be eliminated with a mere act of good will. They can be overcome, during the next days, only to the extent that, in a quest (conducted by the whole community, which must never leave its Pastor isolated,) for new conquests we achieve eventually a much needed conversion of behaviour, accompanied by personal witness in a spirit of authentic Christian faith and love. "There are decisions believed, on the word of those who make them, but the option for the poor comes through only through facts" (B. Sorge).

23. Other concerns gravitated around the fear that this reconciliation (which Christians celebrate in the Eucharist) and the hard and promising road taken by this Convegno could be, even if only temporarily, blocked by the coming Referendum (on the divorce law). It was to be hoped that this would not divide the Christian and civic community and that it takes the form of a democratic process. This seems both possible and opportune at this particular moment in the history of the nation.

It depends on our fraternal and firm vigilance and on our talents for constructive criticism in charity, to correct eventual errors which inevitably tend to repeat themselves in the fields mentioned above - given our inherent fragility. It depends on us to behave in such a way that, with the help of God, the Christian community (to which we have reaffirmed our belonging as faithful members), gains in credibility. And this can only happen if we are truthful. And thus the Christian community gains in effectiveness - that effectiveness promised by God to those who witness to the Father.

Only in this way can we lay foundations for realizing a series of basic shifts in direction, aimed at removing as far as humanly possible, that crust of history which has contaminated, (not without our fault), the Gospel message, and at restoring to this all its vitality in proclaiming liberation to all men.

It would in fact be "too facile to unload on others the responsibilities for injustice if we are not simultaneously convinced that each has his share and that personal conversion is necessary as a first step. This basic humility purifies our acts of harshness and sectarianism and prevents discouragement in the face of a task which sometimes seems impossible". (Octo. Adv.)

#### IV. The inhumanity of Rome

24. In the minds of the participants, a global judgement on the "inhumanity of Rome" is tantamount to a judgement on the basic inhumanity of the development mechanisms of the capitalist system. Thirty years ago, the prophet Mounier pointed an accusing finger at this: "no tyrant could accumulate in the silence of normality so much ruin and so much injustice". More recently, Paul VI, adding to the relevant papal teaching on the subject, defined it as "ill-fated and ill-omened, producing iniquity" (to UCID - 8.6.64).
25. However, the ecclesial community does not intend to identify and list enemies. There is no truer love towards those who erroneously feel at enmity with us, than to help them shed their privileges of caste and to introduce them to the human joy of a common, shared condition.
26. As regards the retention of the capitalist system, through a determined and radical reform, it was thought by some that it would be legitimate to study its possibility.



Others however thought that its contradictions were now beyond correction. It would be necessary to pave the way for a new human project, with a democratic, but radical, change of the present system through alternative structures which without being oppressive or separatist would be able to ensure a new form of - and not merely formal - participation.

27. All agree that to free man fully the heart and economic logic of the current slavery must be changed simultaneously. Christians know that the "new man" will never emerge from the simple overhaul of structures, because his problems go beyond the borders of economic and political power. He has to be freed from other and deeper inner forms of slavery.

28. All this, however, must not alienate us for a moment from our commitment to solidarity with those who, believers or not, struggle for a different humanity. We are convinced that a city without troubles and disputes could in fact be the city of "perfect violence". Wherever reason supported by faith refuses to be an agent of change, violence inevitably takes over - even if under other forms including the shedding of blood.

These others forms of domination claim to "civilize" us but in fact anaesthetize us and eventually reduce us to a polite but no less tyrannical form of slavery.

29. In this situation, the documents presented and the contributions to the debate insist that the sin of silence or, any eventual identification with structures which have been proved to lead to the slavery of men, could be the kiss of death to our community. This would be the farthest we could go from the essence of Christianity, understood as deliberate love of God perfected in the love of one's neighbour.

30. We want to defend ourselves from the "good" conscience of an ecclesial community (like ours) which would preach peace, justice, and charity without applying the consequent means. We do it in a spirit of vigilance because we acknowledge that to keep the world as it is constitutes illegitimate violence.

31. It is in this basic condemnation of the logic of individual profit and of the privatization of goods, in this global judgment of the speakers (which for lack of time cannot be documented here with the relevant specifics and cultural explanations) that one can find the key to delve further into the evils of Rome. The thinking already begun is developed in the analysis of the sociological paper of Dr. De Rita (a paper we are going to keep in mind).

32. How can we be silent about the land and building speculation which, with the imminent and feared "convenzioni" will further reduce, in the unanimous opinion of the assembly, green areas, living space, the urban set up, health and the very possibility of services such as transport, but will widen the investment of private consumption at the expense of the public sector? How can we do otherwise than declare our solidarity with the neighbourhood committees, with the grass root groups, with the units in

which Christian dynamism - along with that of others - is present and committed to the defence of the last green areas of Rome and to other similar battles ?

33. Leaving aside the strictly political conclusions to the competent people (involving an autonomy which this ecclesial community acknowledges and defends) Christian people feel they must speak out. And they do this because of the wider and deeper implications which involve the human dignity of hundreds of Roman citizens and of certain intolerable situations of life in the capital.
34. How can we keep silent about the rent levels, which make impossible access to a basic service like housing, and drive those in the "baracche" and in the lower income bracket generally to despair ?
35. How can we refuse to speak about the misuse of power in cases where it involves questions of influence - peddling and indirect corruption.
36. The participants in the meeting have declared their awareness that the problems of Rome are not unconnected with those of the Middle South, as they emerge from wider decisions taken in the investment, industrial, commercial, agricultural, and employment sectors. Nor do they underplay the difficulties, often of dramatic proportions, or the exceptional complexity of these problems. Avoiding judgements taken from an optimal but superficial stance, (and in any case, without the charity which we ask to be extended to our own faults), we wish to acknowledge and show our gratitude to those who, starting from different ideological backgrounds have offered, with dignity, their services to the Roman community and in particular to the South (the solution of whose problems, will provide the capital itself with new conditions of life). By this solidarity with those who merit the recognition of the citizens, we are ready to acknowledge that our egotism, individual and collective, often our inadequate personal commitment in the social and political fields, the corporative tendencies set up by the social classes to which we belong, could have helped create or perpetuate such abnormal conditions.

We declare this <sup>in</sup> honesty to truth and because an ecclesial community which does not confess its errors loses all moral authority and is rightly rejected.

37. After admitting our responsibilities, we feel we should not assume before the city just the duty of henceforth contributing to its future primarily through a plea for an already generous but elitist Christian volunteer service. We feel we must dedicate, with clear priorities, our forces and resources, for a global commitment to the civil and political dimensions of the Christian community, as witness and service.
38. The assembly summons everyone to add to political motives the specific ideals of the Gospel call to a renewed, coherent management of the common good, -and to a preference for those who are less well off. It addresses itself with the same seriousness to all those who take up or continue on the road of full commitment to the service of their city. May they always find structures which are democratic, decentralized and provided with effective decision making powers - at the level of the circumscriptions, neigh-

bourhoods, factories, zones, social services and public and private institutions. It holds that by so doing it offers, by the presence of its members, - men on the road with all men on the road - in no way distinct from others, a necessary and overdue collaboration towards the strengthening of the democratic way of life, to the greater efficiency of local bodies, and to the functioning of social forces, parties and trade unions.

38. At this point, the debate touched on the key theme of the workers movement or - to quote Pacem in Terris - the basic "sign of the times", the sign of the economic and social emancipation and advancement of the working classes. These last fifty years, the workers' movement, under various forms has been constantly challenging Christians and their Church. Many Christians, in fact and in various ways, have opted for participation, for opposition or for distrust as regards the movement, its proposals and its demands. For the ecclesial community of Rome it is a question of undertaking, as soon as possible, a deeper understanding of this fact, a fact which, it seems, is fast becoming a point of crisis for an ever wider circle of Christians.
39. The insight gained by the meeting is that we cannot stop at the individual worker or for that matter at the anonymous workers' world. We have to give our closest attention, to their organizations - whether trade unions, political, cultural or socio-educational - all the time respecting the field of each. Historically, the workers' movement has developed demands and values which are substantially and "naturally" Christian. In our society it represents an effective instrument for liberation and social progress. The presence in it of Christian workers (as individuals or in groups) is a witness which makes more credible the very Gospel Message and the social teaching of the Church.
40. As a whole, the workers movement offers us considerable experience. If we know to use it, a new understanding will emerge which will bring together the ecclesial community and, as they pursue their quest for emancipation, the working classes. The Church will be different because all Christians will be committed to being different. They will be less absent or indifferent, more authentically involved in that pluralism of efforts which converge on the affirmation of justice and charity.

A common Pastoral policy for the ecclesial community becomes ever more urgent in this area. We are not trying to "sanctify" the workers' movement but to acknowledge that in this modern world it is, with other forces, a major protagonist of social change and consequently merits attention, respect and dialogue.

#### V. Renewal of ecclesial communitarian life

41. Among the elements and the roots contributing to the evils of our city, identified in the papers submitted and during the debate, the absenteeism of Christians from public life - or, as more often, happens, their presence with no convincing Christian

inspiration merits special mention. This passive stance of believers often depends on patterns of belonging to the Church. In fact, a number of inquiries (a few of them in depth) on the religiosity of the Romans show that in the majority of cases they behave, as far as the Church is concerned, like clients, used to receiving rather than to giving as active and responsible members. In any case, hardly a third considers the Church as a "community of the faithful".

42. Romans are believers but theirs is a faith which seems more an automatic acceptance of things the culture teaches, a ritual rather than a personal quest, a faith considered more as an instrument than as a value. God does <sup>enter</sup> into their life but he is a God who seems to come in only in certain moments and who lives at the periphery of their consciences. The Christian way of life has become in Rome the heritage of a few. We must take note of this, remembering that this does not automatically remove the dangers of intolerance, and integralism, and that it cannot be an alibi for passing on to others our faults and failures.
43. Because the Cardinal Vicar has also proposed to the Convegno the objective of ecclesial renewal, the Assembly underlines the fact that, from the formative point of view, the two objectives are closely linked. In order that Christians may be present in a new way in society, they must live in a new way in the Church, aware that there they are treated as adults and that means for more effective participation are open to them.
44. The same Convegno provides a significant insight; in the preparatory current phase it showed how rich the Christian people can be in ideas and proposals once it is consulted and mobilized. This high participation is not spontaneous. It has often matured in Church experience where the sharing of ideas and the assumption of responsibilities are considered as basic criteria for the communitarian life of groups, associations, movements and parishes.
45. All this confirms the Church project outlined by Vatican II: the Church becomes communion only when the baptized are called to real participation. And, as the debate stressed, there are decisions which the diocese of Rome must make:
- a) in the stepping of the involvement of Priests, Religious and laymen at all levels and in each sector of activity. It is a question of formulating and constantly following a few criteria of pastoral action. We must, in other words, show faith in the active presence of the Spirit of the Lord in the life of each baptized person and in the community gathered to seek together concrete ways of obeying the Gospel;
  - b) in the strengthening of the will to give up structures of "power" in order to develop a model of authority of "service", and of animation.
  - c) the giving up of blind faith in the efficiency of immediate results based on organizational criteria only;
  - d) in the building up of confidence in the inherent potential of a communion of faith which seeks and explores new ways;

- e) in the participation with sympathy, in these experiences in order to enter into dialogue, to stimulate and to orientate.
  - f) in the acceptance with evangelical patience of the "long wait" for the fruit ;
  - g) in the courage to shoulder the enevitable risks connected with the life of a growing Church.
46. A number of contributions identified as essential to the environment in which we should try out an ecclesial way of life which was open to all involving the rediscovery of the present meaning of charity and justice in our city, the notion that the parish community should develop into a community of basic communities. This involves the decentralization of the Parish into several units and its articulation in ways which differ from the current ones.
47. The importance and priority of involvement in the civil sphere was reaffirmed. Proposals were made in this regard, all aimed at educating the faithful for a life richer in human relationships:
- a) that priests, religious, laymen, men and women, work together without diffidence or barriers;
  - b) that initiatives which permit deeper and more democratic associational life, in which each feels involved personally, be developed and promoted;
  - c) That existing differences between rich and poor churches be overcome through specific initiatives designed to face and correct situations through mutual Church interest;
  - d) that a life of solidarity with the emarginated and weak be activated. This means the giving up by each of what is superfluous - and this has to be defined by the needs of others :
  - e) that the rich, including the Institutes located in Rome, be moved to make available to the local community green areas, rooms, facilities, etc.
  - f) that the interest of all be aroused to the problems of the community: for example: the abandoned children, the care of the maladjusted, the aged, the handicapped, prisoners, the sick and drug addicts, all who are deprived of a basic minimum of socio-affective support;
  - g) that democratically elected parish councils be formed;
  - h) that the analysis and evaluation of the phenomena and facts of injustice be undertaken by the communities, without limiting it to charitable activities, - which remain necessary but today are no longer sufficient;

- i) that awareness be aroused that situations of injustice cannot be overcome without common corresponsibility and involvement with all the available forces inside and outside our environment in the struggle against a situation which can no longer be tolerated.

#### VI. Renewal of pastoral action

48. The invitation of the Cardinal Vicar to listen to others and think together on the responsibilities of Christians in the face of the people's expectations for charity and justice cannot but prod us on to rethink the whole issue of the renewal of pastoral action. This must somehow constitute a first instrument for the education and updating of the believer - at least as far as matters of faith are concerned. Participants, in fact, highlighted the need to undertake this renewal with urgency in both content and language. The aim is to help pastoral action to emerge as:
- a) built on the great biblical themes which throw light on the facts of the history of the people of God as it moves through the centuries;
  - b) a help to honest confrontation with the World of God;
  - c) concrete and valid progress on the level of the maturity of Christians who, moving on with others, must proceed by free options, by necessary refusals and by difficult alliances, to a programme of life. There must be a stimulus to live together in growing pluralism;
  - d) liberation from the various, personal and social, conditioning, fears, mistrust and prejudices;
  - e) a prod to individual and collective conversion so as to remove the causes and the effects of sin, so often incarnated in structures of injustice and oppression;
  - f) clear and firm opposition to all that makes man less free and therefore less of a son of God and less able to develop a critical stance;
  - g) solidarity and participation in the suffering of the exploited, weak, emarginated, (on local, national and international levels);
  - h) courage in its commitment to demand of private and public authorities just conditions for all;
  - i) honesty in demanding a new role for woman in the Church, the family and society.
  - j) a proclamation of the true peace of Christ and not of a formal, hypocritical peace which covers up injustice and egotism;

- k) a cry of truth against the apparent order and peace, against the timorous silence, to those who wield power but have no respect for man.

### VII. Communities and Community

49. A change in direction in the life of the Church of Rome will become a reality if the various Christian communities, groups and associations which form it, will merge in a wider network, in across the borders of grass root involvement, in the diocesan community. This means that groups, in their attempt to achieve their particular purposes do not become particularist ghettos but focus their work of formation and action on the creation of a determined will for integration with other groups, in the quest for ecclesial unity - in which each lives better his own identity. This stance, among other things, will render more effective the encounter of Christians with the world.
50. In the opinion of this meeting they will be found better equipped for analysis, for evaluation, for strategy in the pursuit of common purposes, if they overcome that individualism and fragmentation which often divides the Christian community and limits its capacity for intervening as an ecclesial body.

### VIII. Loyalty to local reality

51. Many of those present indicated participation at the local level as the first step for the immediate and concrete commitment of Christians in responding to the expectations of justice and charity in the city. Local reality - that is the family, the neighbourhood, the school, the situation in factory and workshop - is in fact, for each of them, that concrete portion of the world in which each can evolve a coherent process of evangelization. Participation in the local reality means mixing with others encounter, collaboration, struggle to the building up of a just society managed directly by each Christian. During the debate of the Assembly, many voices were raised to highlight the urgency that the burden be not left to a few. It is one of those "new duties" to which Christians must be called. In particular, there are two environments in which the participation of Christians today is demanded with insistence: the neighbourhood and the school.

#### i) Neighbourhood

52. The neighbourhood is a very real meeting place for persons and groups, as they go about to the task of satisfying their common needs by using the cultural, educational, health and spare time services. Here they experience the necessity to join with others, to work together in harmony with existing social forces. It is the social area where people of various backgrounds, ages and beliefs can actually meet, where each feels the need for that pluralism which allows each to live in friendship with the other and to put himself at the service of his neighbour, without conditioning this relationship with ideological overtones. In the neighbourhood, it is easier to work together without the spirit of sectarianism, to live together as different but none-

theless as committed to solidarity, bound together by a basic culture which builds up through common traditions of relationships - a secure alternative against the alienating anonymity of the city.

## ii) School

53. The Assembly repeatedly pointed an accusing finger at the grave situation of the city schools - which qualitatively and quantitatively are inadequate. It also noted the contradictions and limits of private and confessional schools which often become havens of privilege and an elite-orientated education, a model far removed from that of the classless, popular, democratic school, capable of leading pupils to live in real contact with the reality in which they must grow and prosper.
54. It was clearly pointed out by many that Christians ought to pay special attention to the schools. They must intervene by exerting pressure on the competent authorities, so that these without further delay, face the problems which are seriously threatening the efficiency of the educational system - from kindergarten to university. Given the present stage of the evolution of this system in our country, attention was given to the type of school Christians should promote. The school of the future, for which Christians should press, will not only be a school for "participation" but also one of "social management" by the families, the students and all the forces active in the local community. Only this type can help produce continuing, evolving creativity in the realms of cultural models and educational methods. Above all, we need a new profile of the teacher as animator of the community. Such a school becomes Christian when it is animated by Christians.
55. The neighbourhood would be the natural environment for new experiences for youth. Boys and girls, together, would find there the chance to manage their own free time. The problems of growth of the neighbourhood would become their problems. The demands for justice and charity would become their demands. The need for service to the emarginated and the poor would arouse their sense of responsibility. The neighbourhood would become an environment for self education, and would help them to find their rightful place by relating to the adult reality - from which the young would learn to distinguish themselves but with which they would simultaneously learn to collaborate in freedom.

## IX. Intervention in the social field

56. As regards education and welfare services conducted by the ecclesial community, it seems necessary to recall two Vatican Council texts (whose application participants have repeatedly invoked as one sure way of avoiding painful and unacceptable forms of counter witness by Christians). In facing this complex problem the Assembly did not forget, of course, the efforts already made (and as the documents unmistakably show these are many). It also thinks that the God who searches our hearts is the real reward of the just. But when, as on this occasion, brothers meet in order to open



their hearts to express their preoccupations, they do not make a show of their treasures or pretend to prepare a wedding - banquet. They speak with passion about what they would like to be but do not know how to be ! Consequently, during these three days we have, above all, discussed our weaknesses. The Assembly reached consensus on the fact that it is impossible to delegate the discussion of the social and welfare services to the private and charitable sector (which usually does not take the preventive approach but merely patches up situations of need).

57. Besides, every form of intervention, if not comprehensive, democratically managed and accessible to all, runs the serious risk of bearing no fruit. Many participants stressed the fact that the specific mission entrusted by Christ to His Church does not belong to the political, economic or social order but belongs to the religious order. "And yet, from this religious mission, there emerge certain tasks and talents which keep to build up and strengthen the community of men according to the mind of God. Wherever necessary and according to the local conditions of time and space it can and indeed it must inspire initiatives to serve all and especially those in greater need (as, for example, the works of mercy and parallel efforts)" (GS - 42 B).
58. It has also been stated that "the Church itself makes use of temporalities in pursuing its specific mission. But it gives up the use of legitimately acquired rights when it is clear that their use raises doubts about the sincerity of its witness, and it uses only those means which conform to the Gospel and the common good - as this takes shape in time and space" (GS - 76, 6 H).
59. In a situation like that of Rome, with serious gaps in the public services for the working classes it seems legitimate and indeed obligatory that the ecclesial community should promote initiatives intended to serve all and especially those in need. But public opinion considers that many of these are today only accessible to the better - off classes. This inevitably means compromise with the local authorities and with the mechanisms of private profit. Even if it were a case of unjust accusations, - which have to be proved - the doubts raised inevitably question the sincerity of our witness and compromise the credibility of our honest and sometimes heroic efforts.
60. In the Diocese there is no lack of initiative animated by Christians and even manned by non Christians - in poverty and for poverty situations - in a spirit of real service. In any case an institution can never be poor when its intentions are not poor ! It is necessary however that the initiatives we promote show by facts (publication of financial statements - a procedure we must become used to - priority given to those in need, statistically indiscriminating service, objective criteria for admission to our institutes) that they conform to the Gospel. They must endeavour to change decisively all those initiatives which by their structure or concept do not express clearly this priority. If this conformity with the Word of God makes the operation of certain forms of initiative impracticable, then the ecclesial community can, by giving them up, show its honesty. On the other hand the help of the Spirit and the commitment of the believers will certainly inspire new forms of presence which become unmistakeable

signs of its perennial and creative vitality in favour of the less fortunate classes

61. Just because all these initiatives are ultimately aimed at helping men in need, it is necessary that the welfare services of our community strengthen in their "users" an awareness of their rights and duties. Only in this way will "man in need" accept, or accept again, the invitation to "possess the land".

The groups stressed that "the Christian view of justice and charity invites us to activate that kind of participation which ensures that those assisted do not merely survive but return (as far as their strength allows) to a state of being (and feeling) active participants in promoting the common good. In this way they become aware of social corresponsibility and of their contribution to the common-wealth" (Riva).

62. In our institutions psychological pressure towards resigned or passive Christianity, towards the renunciation of one's rights and towards the watering down of political involvement for social justice must be condemned as an unfair price demanded by the power ful of this earth. Ideological manipulation of the inmates - even when those who serve them think that they are contributing to social peace and, perhaps, the Christian apostolate - is incompatible with what the Church teaches. For this Church, love is the overflow of justice - and "justice is the minimum grade of love" (Paul VI in Bogota).
63. According to this Assembly, the challenge of the Mission entrusted by Christ to our community implies that we can only be valid witnesses when we give preference to the poor and, when within civil society, we operate as honest collaborators and do not hinder or slow down progress. And we can only do this if our initiatives are in harmony with the objectives of public planning. These plans are usually geared to favour the emarginated classes, an objective promoted in particular by the trade-unions. In reality we can find peace with God and men only when we give up the inhuman logic of private profit, and paternalism - two defence mechanisms set up by specific interest groups and belonging to that "mafia mentality" vigorously exposed just recently.

We must consequently reject along with paternalism, certain forms of institutional assistance, and indeed, a whole pattern of conducting social action and certain concepts of service to others. Above all, we must give up that habit of neatly distinguishing between what is economic, (all that is based on money and profit, where we exercise our creative activity) and, what is social (where we bring men together in the name of brotherhood and generosity).

This habit is a consequence of that socio-economic system which simultaneously creates the poor and provides for their assistance. To quote Ozanam: "Society, not God, creates the poor."

64. Evangelical Christianity rejects all forms of hypocrisy. It rejects the idea of going to the poor as an alibi or as an escape from our major responsibilities - a subtle way of making peace with one's conscience.

65. Catholic initiatives and institutions, because of the aims they pursue and because of the practical aid they offer the community cannot continue to consider themselves as somehow private; rather, are they called to find their place in the context of the civic community. They can do this by effective and smooth integration in the civil system not by setting up systems parallel to public schemes.
66. The vision of the Church as a communion and a service must be the right and honest approach of Catholic relief services and must dominate the attitude of those responsible for them.  
Education to this attitude then probably becomes the most important and far reaching reform to be undertaken in this sector. It is certainly not less important than the legislative reform which we expect.
67. On the other hand, charity is not an end in itself. Its immediate objectives which doubtlessly exist and must be translated into concrete, temporal, historical, dimensions are instrumental and never definitive. They are valid only to the extent that they serve the growth of man and his community in a given context. Charity undertaken on account of the structural disorders of society must gradually give way to one of commitment to that active involvement in the civil sphere which not only responds to human needs but helps to remove their causes. This statement tends to provide a new dimension to the welfare sector and thus brings it back to its original destiny. We must, in fact, transform a shameful social order and not merely relieve its victims. If we learn to formulate and activate this different presence in the social field, we will no longer be a deterrent to social reform still less, a competitor to public structures. Normally the Church as an institution has no intention or mandate to take up the tasks which belong to civil society. And so the Assembly hopes that its social workers demonstrate their ability to find their place in the public sector, adding to their professional expertise that solid motivation and those ideals which are more in line with the demands of justice than a mere improvement in existing welfare procedures.

Rome - city of modern pilgrins

68. The Assembly, in its sector reports, focused on the conditions of those who live in Rome and require special and practical solidarity because of their status as guests -, rather, modern pilgrins. To help our memories: tens of thousands of daily commuters, mostly involved on the building industry, without points of reference or support in the city; 40,000 university students living outside the campus, from Central and South Italy; 50,000 domestic workers of whom 10,000 are foreigners; 10,000 refugees per year - victims for justice and freedom - often shining witnesses of love for the brethren; 20,000 young foreigners, of whom 10,000 are regular students; thousands who gravitate round the embassies; thousands of graduates, artists, travelling showmen and nomads.

69. All this happens because Rome, in spite of its defects, in contrast to other European cities, has remained, for those who thirst for freedom, a point of reference, and for many the last refuge of human hope.

70. This permanent phenomenon whose depth and complexity we have hardly explored is a challenge : what can we do about it? This does not mean institutionalizing our intervention or freeing the civic system from its responsibilities but the launching of experiments which - more than an answer to the important but temporary phenomenon of the "pilgrins of faith" of the Holy Year - could become forms of Christian presence in a permanent situation of deep human distress, a wide opportunity for human brotherhood. The topic was considered by many as one which should be approached systematically. Meanwhile the Assembly asks:

a) why do we not open our libraries, our institutes, our cultural centres, our faculties, our courses, our buildings, our foundations and our private schools to those who demand help in their search for support? We could thus save from the speculators (rooms, lodgings, dormitories) thousands of young students (and especially working-students).

b) why do we not offer the precious cultural and certainly welcome talents of Italian and foreign citizens by developing new relationships (compatible with their professions) between the ecclesial community, its institutions and the Roman citizenry? This would benefit the ecclesial community by providing it with a fruitful exchange of experiences and would thus help it live up to its ambition to be a "teacher of humanity".

c) why do we not ask the Romans (and especially the Catholic ones) with responsibilities and authority at the national level to give limited but regular time and attention to the community to which they often owe their social position ?

Rome is a mine of resources and opportunities for the ecclesial family. They are waiting to be explored, developed and mobilized.

d) why do we not start or help to develop new patterns (which go beyond the criteria of human conquests, parochialisms and jealousies) of initiatives which are not confined to specific categories (and, hence, not emarginating) which allow guests to find their place in the social texture of the city (thus activating a proposal of Octogesima Adveniens) ?

71. As a matter of urgency we must build up - on the levels of street, neighbourhood and city - that social texture in which man can respond to the demands of his personality. Centres of interest and of culture must be set up and expanded (on the levels of community, parish) in the framework of associations, recreation clubs, meeting places and community retreats - so that each emerges out of isolation into a world of brotherly relationships.

72. In this vision of hospitality and service, in the spirit of the Benedictine principle of "all guests who arrive are received like Christ", (and in which we have received, among other things, the document addressed to the Cardinal by 149 men and women religious) the Assembly thinks we must proceed with our research and action. It seemed to the participants that if the Church of Rome is to merit the role of "presiding over the charity of all the Churches", no problem of the sufferings of our world, (over and above those of its immediate citizens) can escape its attention. The Church of Rome cannot limit itself to offer its Bishops to the Catholic world. It must live with him his very mission by sharing in his universal service of pastoral charity. More than other churches, it is involved in the problems of peace, of freedom (which makes man new), of justice, of disarmament, of the overflowing aspirations of youth the world over, problems which pervade the work and teaching of Paul VI. The Church of Rome cannot live on its history and on its laurels. It has to merit them and to become a fully participating protagonist.

#### Beyond the Convegno

73. Today, as an Assembly, we think that we can already look beyond the Convegno so as to air a number of seed ideas about its meaning for the ecclesial community. This concerns a meeting which in spite of its limitations, all agree, has been a happening of freedom and participation which cannot fade out but must give birth to a new style of life, of relationships within the Church and in the pastoral government of the Church of Rome. It seems that it has marked the end of our habit of mutual emargination with a consequent emergence of the value of communion. We do not want to lose this. But to conserve and realize it, we must all commit ourselves to the on-going purification of our intentions and to a coherent follow up. Looking forward to the future of this commitment, in the light of the debate and the documents we received, we can distinguish the following guidelines:
- a) our encounter does not draw immediate conclusions because it has adopted the stance of initiating the reflection and the action of the community - determined as this is to delve systematically into the issues raised.
  - b) this study must permeate to the grass roots. In order to do this, we must find ways and means of ensuring a continuing circulation of the required data. Among these there must be a broad synthesis of the material generated by the present meeting, to help arouse the critical response of the communities, the groups, and all local initiatives.
  - c) the search and the commitment to work will not promote the overall growth of the faithful if the structures suggested by the Council are not established on all levels, or if these are not supported by other structures of participation (as experience will suggest) in an effort to ensure their effectiveness.

- d) the diocesan agency which is going to be formed must bear the service characteristics of i) a listening post, ii) a help for communication, for consultation, for research and for coordination of the experiences we intend to share and compare, iii) a point of reference and evaluation for the emergence of the forms of communitarian presence in the context of the demands formulated by the Roman people. We must naturally ensure for it a structure which, besides expert opinion, reflects the composite base. Its tasks would have to be gradually sharpened in an effort to go beyond the obvious.
- e) subsequent convocations of this Convegno seem opportune; meetings between the Bishops and his brother Presbyters and the various Christian communities present in Rome (inside and outside the parishes) are also considered opportune - as a further step towards the habit of consultation and ongoing conversion.

74. Beyond these thoughts and proposals, the meeting: we lived together irrevocably commits the Church which is in Rome to establish itself - inside and outside its walls - as a sign of freedom, poverty, reconciliation, justice and peace. This means that the Church does not recognise other sovereigns than its Lord. It must become his witness. To proclaim - and to work out in Him - truth and, salvation.

#### For the revolution of Man

75. It is of ecumenic and prophetic significance that Helder Camara, just declared "popular" Nobel peace prize winner by Protestant youth groups, last year told young Europeans anxious to commit themselves with him to the Third World: "Friends, stay where you are to help make your wealthy countries aware that they also need that cultural revolution which will bring us a new scale of values, a new vision of the world, a global strategy for development, and, above all, a revolution of man !" He is certainly not suspect of narrow nationalism. He asks us to act, with an open heart, anchored in the local reality in which we already are actors.
76. Instead of speaking of charity let us live in charity. Instead of discussing the poor, we must remain in communion with them. So that, after having denounced injustice, we become agents of solidarity.
77. This Convegno has not been an "orgy of words" or a group psychotherapy. It has been the experience of an awareness of an exceptional point of grace.

We do not want, we do not have, to "recover" any thing for anybody or to declare the conquerors and the conquered. We must rather accept that, together, we take up the road again, the richer by what we shared, witnesses once more of the mysterious plan of God for mankind - with whose destiny of justice and love we feel united in solidarity.

(Translated from the original  
by Fr. B. Tonna)