

EVANGELIZATION : The Sociological dimension

1. The sociological dimension of evangelization is crucial because of our current insistence that it is the Christian community, rather than the lone individual, that ought to be the primary bearer of the Good News. It is, in fact, this dimension that helps us gain more insight on what goes on between "evangelizer" and "evangelized". Sociology is, after all, primarily interested in human interaction -which, of course, is itself an essential dimension of the evangelization process.
2. In considering interaction however the border between psychology (which considers the individual) and sociology (which considers the group) often becomes blurred. To avoid this, we here stress its social, rather than individual, side. We define it as that situation in which the "actor", before, in and after "acting" takes into account the expected reactions of other "actors" with whom he is related in the same situation. But we do not pause on the "action" which he then enacts but rather on the recurrent patterns of such action. Sociology, in fact, is interested in these recurrent patterns - that is, in what is common to the interaction situations we posited. Because it wants to learn more about the "laws" of such patterns. The sociological dimension of evangelization would then be those patterns which are common to the interaction produced by the evangelization relationship.

CONCLUSIONS OF RECENT RESEARCH

3. The main source for this brief note is a study recently received from the Federation of Institutes for Social and Socio-religions Research (FERES) based in Louvain (1) and which attempts to highlight the social constraints and functions of "evangelizing" action. 250 of its 354 pages are devoted to seven case studies (2). The conclusions derived, with the conceptual framework used, could provide fresh insights into our thinking about evangelization, and here we focus on them.
4. The main conclusion one makes as one navigates the highly technical language used, is simple but basic : every recurring "action" enacted by the religious group (understand Church, especially local church) is significant to evangelization. This is not just one type of activity generated by the Church. It is that type of activity which inevitably is conditioned by every other type of Church activity. It is "activity in interaction with other activity". In recent years we have rediscovered the strategic importance, for evangelization, of socio-political reality. But this should not make us forget the importance of other realities.
5. A direct corollary to this conclusion is the centrality of the total situation of the Church (including, above all, its historic relations to the world) in the evangelization process. The Church remains a fact of faith. But it remains no less a group of believers in contact and communication with other groups. As such, there can be no sound theology of the Church as the bearer of evangelization (which is but one side of this contact and communication stream) which is not familiar with sociology. "If sociological reflection plays, above all, a negative role, that is it reveals latent functions

(of our actions), it nevertheless can provide a highly "positive" base for action. In fact, such action through sociology, can be exercised with a certain mastery of the social mechanisms which it sets in motion. (3)

6. How and why does it happen? Given the state of sociology today, the study very wisely, does not attempt a definitive answer. But it does provide revealing insights. It notes that very little serious preparatory work has been done by the European and North American hierarchies on the theme of the 1974 Synod. A sociological interpretation of this fact is offered : this relative silence is due to the de-institutionalization process at work in their Churches, which now seek to respond to the often contrasting needs of the various social groups which constitute them. Silence is one way of not alienating any of these groups - and of the hierarchy holding its ground.
7. On the whole Synod preparations took off with descriptions and analyses of the local situations. The outcome was a sharper awareness of the differences, contradictions, and conflicts which mark the various groups which constitute the contemporary world. In this setting, the hierarchies of Africa, Asia and Latin America are vindicating their right to share in defining the objectives and methods of evangelization today. What is good for a diocese in Europe may not be good for one in Africa. The Western Church will thus be helped to realize that just as it had unwittingly followed the ways of colonialism, so it may risk following those of neo-colonialism "if it does not destroy at their roots its ties with the near colonial powers and the behaviour patterns which go with them" (p.343)
8. "Evangelization practices", on their part, follow in the paths of models for other "practices" of the Church. One illustration proposed by the FERES study, refers to the use of the mass media. This follows the logic of propaganda or "publicity" and its aim is to create a consensus around ideas or ideologies which are relatively dissociated from realities. When the Church follows its method, or logic, it risks creating a false kind of religious consensus, if not a "false conscience". The media approach, if applied without discernment, risks reducing evangelization activities to Church publicity stunts.
9. The study notes that it will be increasingly difficult to refer to "one" evangelization conducted by "the Church". Evangelization practice is now diversified by the criterion of the particular class to which it is beamed. The outcome, however, is that each class "perceives" a different Church. What would become of unity? Could it be the organization supporting the "specialists" of the religious field?
10. "Do we not face, with this consideration, one of the crucial dimensions of the life of the Catholic religious system? A twofold tension seems to lie at the base of this system and it becomes more acute in the highly differentiated societies, where social consensus is poor. On the one hand (first tension) the religious system follows the logic of its permanent specialists... (who try to conduct it) on the universalist model, i.e. as if it is equally in tune with each individual, with each social group. On the other hand (second tension) the religious system is "pushed" by its lay members... (to respo

to their particular situations. This dilemma of the universalist and the particularist is fundamental and is seen as tragic, above all, by the "full timers" of the religious system. In a highly differentiated society, in fact, they see in it a loss of legitimacy and credibility in their ideas. It is at this point that they formulate - and are simultaneously paralysed by - the problem of evangelization" (p. 347).

11. Dassetto and Basterier show the way to a possible solution, as this emerges from the FERES study. The laity would opt for differentiation and particularism. Social relations are often too polarized to allow universal standards of pastoral and evangelization practice - in content or in method. "The parliamentary instrument does not envisage the creation of consensus but resolutions, options on insoluble differences between a majority and a minority. It is an instrument designed to manage a society and not to achieve consensus around a core of values" (348).
12. The "full timers" could be tempted to deny these differences but the pitfalls are many. But they could also attempt to recognize the differences among the expectations of the various social groups and to accept their entry into the religious field. Like society, this field would then be divided. The very body of the "full timers" would then be broken up. Sects could also emerge. But a new kind of unity could be built on the level of symbols. The idea of conflict could then find a place inside this context of religious meaning. The utopic dimension could also be recovered. The outcome would be an ability to endure the present situation of conflict, without losing ^{hope} that it will all end in unity.
13. But a third way is also possible: a decision for one or other particular "religious field". The criterion behind it could be the present needs of the religious organization. Another could be a priority established by the Founder. At the beginning of this century this was the "small" middle class. Today it is the oppressed groups - as far as a growing body of theologians are concerned. Sociologically, however, it would bring a further strain on unity. Because it would tie the fate of the "religious field" with that of the social groups who respond to the proposal.
14. No coming together of the three ways seems at present possible among Catholics. The third way between particularism and universalism has not yet emerged.

CONCEPTS FOR DEEPER INSIGHTS

15. To arrive at such inconclusive conclusions, the study explores the areas of a) the sociology of mission theology and b) the sociology of the religious system (or institution). Between them, these two attempts provide Church leaders with another "conceptual" tool with which to measure and assess the implications of Church action, and, by force of sociological circumstances, of the evangelization derivatives of such action.

(A) THE SOCIOLOGY OF MISSION THEOLOGY

16. The sociology of mission theology is firmly placed in a historical context of the facts of global Christianization. Dassetto and Bastenier, following OHM, (4) detect three

types of missionary action, all of which are not only characterized by their content and purpose but also by the (often unconscious) situation of the religious system in global society.

17. The first type is described as global Christianization. It is very close to straightforward proselytism: one must persuade "infidels" to adopt the Christian "universe of meanings" and Church membership. Christianity is presented as superior to other religious systems and as valid for all. Historically this type first assumes the form of "to Christianize is to civilize" and this is a direct reflection of the particularly close relationship between the Church and the socio-political system. Missionaries are inextricably involved in bearing his civilization as well as his Gospel. When cracks appear in this relationship, missionaries begin to distinguish between the two: "to save souls and to civilize" becomes their basic motivation. The socio-political system, in this situation, is no longer dependent on the religious system for "legitimization" and the Church has to derive this missionary motivation, or theology from its own sources.
18. The religious field, at this point, begins to shrink: it becomes more private (less a "public" affair of the state) more particular (concentrating on its particular institutions). Doctrine and practice are affected; we do not colonize in order to evangelize, we no longer evangelize in order to colonize. As yet, however, the only entry for the missionary is the colonizer's path and so, in the eyes of the colonized/evangelized, they remain identified with the colonizers.
19. Another shift takes place when priority is given to the concept of "being sent", of "leaving for", in the whole idea of evangelization. This firmly makes evangelization a matter of the hierarchy. A positive consequence is that missionary Institutes are formed. But there is also an unintended consequence: the Christian people is cut off from missionary concern.
20. As regards relationships between the religious and political fields, a high degree of ambiguity prevails. The idea of evangelization evolves within the religious field, it limits its range to the spiritual and the individual. But simultaneously it finds itself in their tow, unwittingly providing them with more legitimacy and power.
21. We are still here in the "universalist" stance. But we move into the "particularist" view when we engage, like Nobili, with particular cultures and introduce differentiation in the "universe" to be evangelized. Besides new classes begin to emerge and they do it independently of the religious system. In its turn this reacts by consolidating its set up - the "plantatio ecclesiae" (CHARLES) or by "adaptation" (CONGAR). The first approach derives its theology from a link up of mission with ecclesiology. In fact it derives its strength from juridical props. Though it is today recognized as not fully adequate, many current practices depend on it. "Adaptation" derives its theology from the Incarnation. The Church accepts the world as it is but it does not renounce the right of initiative. What is relevant is that the idea of evangelization grows from and within the religious system. And it sees the world as something to be "conquered". And it "reproduces" itself - in relative isolation from this world.

22. At this point we move into the realm of global evangelization. The religious system might survive by "reproduction" and "adaptation". But only as far as novel social-facts do not force on it the contradictions of this kind of relationship to the world. Here are a few cases.
- i) "adaptation" becomes inadequate when the Western Church begins to decide when and how far to reduce the dependency of the younger Churches.
 - ii) the middle classes and the rural population once the two columns of the Church, change so radically that they cease to be so and the Church finds itself in "diaspora".
 - iii) It thus ceases to be a real alternative and, consequently, mission can no longer be seen in the simple terms of a "sending out", by a hierarchy, to the world. And she is led to go to this world from within -as "incarnation".
23. Incarnation means presence and dialogue. The idea of evangelization is cut loose from its ecclesiological links - at least as far as the institutional set up is concerned. Two missionary stances are revealed to be contradictory and an option is made for "de-institutionalization" and - in so far as they are the pole opposit to the hierarchy - for the laity. Another way of incarnating is to stress the "unevangelized", and relationships with them are established through local churches, in "communion", "concertation", "dialogue".
24. "De-colonization" is coming to an end. The Third World has more weight in the international situation. This novel set up of world society is reflected in the structure of the religious system. The failures of evangelization, the new stress on the unevangelized, lead to the formulation of the problem of the freedom of the latter. Those whom we meet are free and the dialogue we engage in with them must respect this liberty - a respect which, of course, is mutual. Immersion and dialogue in a world which begins to be perceived as no longer "another" and whose difference we begin to note; mission is now, above all, every "presence" in a pluralist world.
25. It is at this point, that the unity we are accustomed to - predominantly organizational unity - begins to crack. Theology can recover it by re-formulating it in eschatological terms (and conflict is accepted) or in a reconciliation frame (and conflict is mediated and resolved). It seems that the hierarchies are more inclined to adopt this second approach.
26. A third way out could be that offered by the New liberation movements. To activate the incarnation theology "Christian civilization has disappeared. The institutional and organizational dimension of the religious system does not go far enough to represent all those who consider themselves Christians and, of course, it has no social power to exclude or punish dissidents. Social forces of Christian origin thus redefine their action: neither a civilizing Christianity nor a mission. There is no "otherness". It is a question of expressing one's condition by going back to the sources". (p. 28)

(B) THE SOCIOLOGY OF MISSION AGENTS

27. Fr. Houtart, in offering the reader a frame of hypothesis, points to some of the "impersonal" mechanisms which, in spite of the personal motives of the missionaries, often give evangelization unexpected and unintended "turns". These come from the global society and from the Church itself. The global society can take five forms; clan, feudal, pre-capitalist, capitalist and socialist, depending on the methods of economic production, political control and religious values. He notes a gradual shrinking of the latter as one moves from the first to the fifth form: man becomes conscious that he is not that helpless. In the process, however, the religious sub-system acquires a certain autonomy vis-à-vis global society. And the relations between centre and periphery become very meaningful: the religious sub-system is "used" by the centre in diminishing degree as we move from the first to the fifth form.
28. The "turns" also originate from this sub-system, which operates through its symbolic and social elements. The process renders it visible and "the more it is directly involved in the socio-political fields, the more it becomes dependent on groups which are capable of imposing their meanings and their economic social and political practices on society" (p. 70).
29. Evangelization is then seen as a "system of action", geared to transmit meanings which in turn produce "expressions" or rites and ethical patterns, both inside and outside the religious groups. The transmission is conditioned by the whole social situation (see n.27 above): the meaning of our action is not given by merely our deeds or by our words. Other elements come in. "It is lack of reflection on this point which leads totally devoted Sisters to accept responsibility for hospitals in certain South African townships" (p. 76). Objective solidarities are created in contrast with subjective motivations. Only cold analysis of the "impersonal" could help us see the real message of our "impersonal" work.
30. In line with this thinking, the same work could acquire different meanings if it is undertaken in different societies. Perception of these meanings happens at two levels. At the down to earth level (micro-dimension) one sees the immediate significance of what the other does - and judges it accordingly. Most religious action happens here. At the structural level (macro-dimension) one sees, behind the immediate significance, other implications. This can happen only through social analysis. Houtart warns that even this is not fool proof. Indeed, most of the time it is partial, because, it is, in some way, limited by the values and experiences of the analyst.

WHERE TO WE GO FROM HERE

31. This kind of warning, of course, tends to upset us as we reluctantly ask sociologists to help us see our way in a particularly fluid era of evangelization activities. But it should not. If we expect a total answer from sociology, then we had better keep away from it. It can - and should - offer us partial insights. I am sure the FERRE study could do this to those who muster the courage to plunge into it. It does not matter if it will be less than the big book leads one to expect. A seminal idea could change a deeply ingrained attitude. And a change in attitude could sharpen decision making.

32. The big book itself is deliberately partial and it had to be so. It tackles evangelization from the point of view of the institutional Church. It could have done it from the point of view of the function of Religion - seen as the provision of ultimate meaning. Evangelization would then have been seen from the angle of its purpose - Salvation and Conversion. Those who are intrigued by the FERES study could follow up this path.
33. Another path could converge with the one which, it seems, the Synod could take: evangelization is less a problem of the Church institution than one of the Church-world relationship. The study touches on this at several points but never explores all the implications. How can we understand evangelization in such a way that it becomes, in fact, and sociologically what it is, in intention and theologically: the "specificity" of the Church-World relationship?

B. Toma

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EVANGELIZATION : WHAT IS IT ?

Evangelism according to the N.T.

1. "Evangelize" in the N.T. (54 times) is always "to announce a good news" ("evaggelion", 76 times). Without exception, it concerns always a verbal announcement, an oral proclamation, and consequently the "Gospel" is sometimes identified with Kerygma to proclaim orally and publicly.
We can therefore speak of the "word of the Gospel" (Acts, 15, 7).
2. The Gospel is not a book or a written statement, but rather "the good news", its proclamation or its content. This Gospel is unique; there cannot be a different or another Gospel (Ga. 1, 6-9; 2 Co. 11, 9).
3. The Gospel is the good news announced first by Jesus himself then by the apostles. It concerns Jesus, the Son of God made man, who died for our sins and then rose again from the dead. He has become the Lord and Savior of all men who believe in him.

Briefly, the Gospel is the happy message of the salvation of man undertaken by the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior and receives in him salvation: peace, joy, hope, promise of resurrection, revelation of the grace of God, his absolute love and his glory, the beauty proper to God - "the unfathomable riches of God" - what Christ called "the kingdom" and John "eternal life".

It would be a mistake therefore to limit the contents of evangelization only to the paschal mystery. It is the work of Jesus; what Jesus did, what is to happen, actual sanctification. Briefly it is the whole of the salvific work of God by Christ.

4. WHO IS TO EVANGELIZE ?

They are many: God (Act 10, 36 all passages about the gospel of God: this genitive can be both objective and subjective); the angels (Lc. 2,10), John the Baptist (Lc. 3,18), but above all Jesus himself (Lc 4, 18, 23). "I have been sent for this" he states. After him, the twelve (Lc 9,6), Timothy (Ph. 2, 22; 1 Th. 3, 2), and even some Christians without special mandate (Ac 8, 4). Two types of people, however, have as their proper mission the preaching of the gospel. First those who are called "evangelists" (Ac 21,8; Ep 4, 11; 2 Tim 4, 5) and then, and even more, the apostles. Paul is an apostle, "separated to announce the gospel of God" (Rm 1, 1). "To announce the gospel is not a matter of glory for me, it is a necessity (a must) which has been thrust on me: woe to me if I were not to announce the gospel!" (1 Co. 9, 16). Actually Jesus had told his Eleven: "Go into the whole world, proclaim the gospel to all creatures" (Mc 16, 15). To proclaim the gospel of God is the definition of the apostles.

5. TO WHOM IS THE GOSPEL TO BE ANNOUNCED ?

There are less references here. One thing is stated clearly: the gospel must be announced "to all nations" (Mc 13, 10; 16, 15), "to the whole world" (Mc 14, 9); to all "pagans" (Rm 1, 5; Ep. 3, 8), but also to the "circumcized" (the Jews) as well as to the uncircumcized (the non-Jews). (Ga 2, 7). Jesus had underlined that the sign of the coming of the kingdom is the evangelization of the poor (Lc 4, 18). But "not all obey the gospel" (Rm 10, 16).

Is the gospel to be announced also to the believers, to those who are already Christians, or those who were such? Apparently not, because the gospel is announced in order to provoke the conversion and the faith which Christians are already supposed to have. This notwithstanding, the apostle Paul does not make any difference among the recipients of the gospel, as between "already Christians" and those "not yet Christians". Writing to Christians he states: "I must give to all; I desire to announce the gospel to you who are in Rome". (Rm 1, 15). And if the gospel is "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rm 1, 16), this does not refer only to the first spark of faith. And he reminds the Corinthians of the gospel which they had received a long time before (1 Co 15, 1).

But it remains true that in most cases the evangelization of which the N.T. speaks, aims at the first preaching of the Kerygma to men who, so far, had not heard of it. (Rm 15, 20). Evangelization can be summed up as: the global announcement of the mystery of Christ in view of conversion, to spark off or to renew the faith.

6. HOW DO THEY EVANGELIZE ?

a) In our view, the only evangelization known to the N.T. is oral proclamation.

There are many such texts. One might object that certain texts speak of evangelization by action, with the witness of one's life.

St. Paul writes: "Our gospel was not among you only by word of mouth, but by power, in the Holy Spirit and in all plenty". The Ecumenic Translation of the Bible puts it: "The gospel which we announce was not proposed to you just as an ordinary tale but it proved abundantly its power by the action of the Holy Spirit". Divine power is at work in the very act of preaching the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the privileged instrument of this work.

This is an interpretation which we consider perfectly in agreement with all the passages taken together, and there are many, speaking of the gospel and of evangelization. This is done by preaching, which has a power of its own - "the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of every believer" (Rm 1, 16) - this power being that of the Holy Spirit at work, both in the preacher and in the believer."

Paul speaks of his ministry and how Christ, through him, drives pagans to the obedience of faith "through word and work, by the power of signs and wonders". One can see that the preaching of the Gospel is accompanied by exterior signs, without however being identified with them. The part played by the Christians (Ph 1, 5, 28-30) consists in their "fights" and their suffering for Christ. This participation, though, is not "evangelization", rather its acceptance or its consequence. Paul exhorts his disciple (Tm 1, 8) to suffer with him for the gospel, i.e. for its preaching.

The conclusion is clear. Evangelization is not the only activity of Jesus, of his apostles or other disciples. They accomplish also works of power, which are signs accompanying their preaching, in which God reveals himself as well as in the words. But what the N.T. calls evangelization is precisely the oral preaching of the gospel, the message of salvation by Christ. "Evangelize has a precise meaning. It does not mean doing anything in the Church. It means proclaiming the Good News of salvation... that one is called to conversion... and called to the Church in view of the Kingdom, in the name of Christ". The Ecumenic Translation of the Bible always renders "evangelize" as "to announce the gospel".

- b) This is a capital point. Let us add a few remarks about "how to evangelize". The gospel is to be preached "without shame" (Rm 1, 16), "with courage" (Ep. 6, 19; 1 Th 2, 2) bearing all suffering (Co 9, 12), and giving the whole of one's life (1 Th 2, 8-9). This is a priestly activity (Rm 15, 16) for which a preacher has the right to a reward, though Paul renounced it (1 Co 9, 12-18).

7. TO WHAT PURPOSE ?

One preaches to excite faith and to invite to believe in order to call to conversion, i.e. "to turn towards the living God" (Ac 14, 15) and the Lord Jesus (Ac 11, 20, 21); in view of salvation (1 Co. 15, 1; Ep. 1, 13); to start the life of God (1 Co. 4, 15); in order to make people walk according to the gospel (Ga 2, 14) and to live a life worthy of him (Ph 1, 27); so that believers may possess the glory of Our Lord J.C. (2 Th 2, 14); to enkindle life and immortality (2 Tm 1, 10). The apostle Paul thinks that the good of others is not the only result: he will find also his own. When he "makes himself all to all to save at least some one" he does it "for the gospel, in order to share in it" (1 Co. 9, 22-23), in order to reap the fruit himself.

CONCLUSIONS

One can sum up the above in these statements:

1. The gospel is the good news, announced at first by Jesus, then by the apostles and their helpers. It has as its object first of all the redeeming and paschal work of Christ, but also the whole life and the whole work of Christ, the salvation and the gifts of grace deriving from it, as well as the norms of moral conduct which believers are to follow. The contents of the gospel therefore cannot be restricted only to the "core" of the original kerygma.
2. Evangelization is just the oral preaching of this gospel. If one is to distinguish between the signs of power, which are being worked by the Holy Spirit and Christians, one should just as much insist on the necessity of their connection. As was the case with Jesus, the Church cannot limit herself to announce by evangelizing; it must also show in her actions that salvation is accorded to men by Christ.

3. Though all Christians can announce the gospel, evangelists and apostles have it as their proper mission. Evangelization is therefore the prime - though not the only role of the apostles.
4. Evangelization aims at calling to conversion and the Christian faith, in its fullest meaning. For this reason the gospel is not announced only to non-believers, but also to believers, in order that they may lead a life in conformity with their faith.

We are not therefore in agreement with those who:

- reduce evangelization only to the kerygma, or even only to the preparatory stage of his announcement;
- enlarge evangelization by stating that the example of Christians, and their actions, are a form of evangelization;
- reduce evangelization to the announcement of the kerygma only to non-Christians.

THE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

The above Group held a meeting at SEDOS Secretariat at 4pm. on 17 September 1974.

Present: Fr. S. McCarthy SMA, Sr. Lieve Sercu ICM, Fr. Ramon Aguilò SJ, Sr. A.M. Oosschot SCMM-M, Sr. Lufthildis Stoke SSPS, Sr. Regina Burrichter from U.I.S.G.

From SEDOS: Fr. B. Tonna and Fr. Skelly SMA.

Chairman: Sr. Annemarie Oosschot SCMM-M

1. After much discussion it was agreed that the Group should concentrate its attention during October on the Synod on Evangelization. Every effort should be made to communicate the SEDOS message to the Bishops and Generals taking part in the Synod. The following methods were suggested:
 - a) The Memo on "Evangelization Today as it emerges from the June Assembly" should be brought up to date and circulated to the bishops along with a covering note explaining what SEDOS is and whom it represents.
 - b) A list of the members of the Synod (with addresses where possible) should be sent to all regular members of the Group and others who might be helpful to us.
 - c) The observer-experts should be approached for background information.
 - d) The Press Officer of the ten Generals attending the Synod should also be approached for information.
 - e) Fr. McCarthy would establish contact with Fr. Corbishley SJ, who would be reporting on the Synod for Vatican Radio.
 - f) Inquires should be made as to whether SEDOS could be accredited formally by the Sala Stampa.
 - g) Every effort should be made to establish contact with the Secretariats of the various continental episcopal conferences.
 - h) The ten Generals would be meeting weekly to analyze the progress of the Synod. Fr. Tonna hoped to attend some at least of these meetings.
 - i) It was suggested that members of the Group should encourage as many Synod Fathers as possible to visit the Secretariat. To facilitate this it was further suggested that a simple card with the address and some idea as to the best way of reaching the office should be typed and made available for distribution.

- j) The weekly Bulletin should be used to the fullest to keep the SEDOS membership informed of all Synod developments.
 - k) The members agreed to remain in close contact with each other and exchanged telephone numbers.
 - l) Members of SEDOS Institutes, who were interested in the Group's work, should be encouraged to join it not just for the Synod period but for the later work of developing better inter-institute communications.
- 2) As regards Joint Venture the following decisions were reached:
- a) The Communications Group would act as the editorial board of which the Editor would be a member.
 - b) This board would determine the general policy lines for Joint Venture to ensure that it reflected the interests and activities of the SEDOS institutes and Groups. The Chairmen of all Working Groups should be invited to join.
 - c) The final J.V. of the year should include what was most interesting and relevant among the material contained in the Bulletins, concentrating in particular on the activities of the Working Groups.
 - d) The coming Joint Venture should analyse in depth the achievements and defects of the Synod.

The meeting came to an end at 6.10 pm after deciding to meet again at 4 pm - 5 Nov. '74 at the Secretariat.

L. Skelly, SMA.

THE ROLE OF THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY IN THE ASIAN CHURCH TODAY AND TOMORROW

An extract from a paper presented at the 44th Week of Missiology - Namur/1974 by Sister Nellie Murata Toshiko - Franciscan Missionary of Mary

1. Developments in the Universal Church

In the synodal period following the council we have seemed gradually to have attained a turning point in the history of the Church, a fact which becomes clearer if we consider very briefly some of the indications in the Working Paper for the Synod on Evangelization in the World Today. In number 13 of the document, the relation between the older and younger churches is mentioned, and the questions are asked about the continued relation between older and younger Churches. The relation between evangelization and development, as well as the question of the role of youth in the Third World in evangelization, and the situation of dialogue with non-Christian religions are noted - among other points - in terms of their existent realities, and the questions are asked within the framework of those realities. The fact that missionary societies are not explicitly mentioned among those carrying out the work of evangelization appears significant.

In writing of the local Church from an historical point of view, Dom Lanne notes that one of the first serious difficulties which confronted the principle of the local Church was monasticism in the west - a difficulty greatly reinforced by the principle of exemption. Drawing a parallel between missionary expansion in the west through the mediation of the monasteries, and missionary expansion in the east through the analogous activities of missionary societies, he remarks that while the different forms of centralisation which have been known in the Church have been far from negative (both the monasteries and missionary societies have been the effective agents of evangelization and the birth of new Churches), this effectiveness has been achieved at the cost of regionalization and a coherent theology of the local Church. The omission of specific mention of missionary societies in the working paper and the insistence in n. 29 of the same, of the primacy of place in evangelization accorded to the Apostles and their successors, could possibly indicate new orientations in relations between the bishops, as the leaders of the local Churches, and missionary societies, pending the developments which will take place in the Synod.

From the above remarks we begin to see that perhaps part of the problem in understanding the role of the foreign missionary attaches to a basic identification of missionary with a role that today would be situated more appropriately and more adequately in the planning of the local Church, and the relationship of that local Church to other local Churches. Therefore, if we make a distinction between missionary as one who functions to a greater or lesser degree independently of the local Church, and missionary as a member of the local Church within the setting of cooperative relations among the various local Churches relative to missionary activity, then the implications of the term "role of the foreign missionary" are situated in relation to the actual state of the local Churches, which are no longer mission territories.

The local Church, once established, has the obligation of evangelization, of mission towards those to whom the gospel has not been preached. For the Asian Churches in particular, those to whom the gospel has not been preached are often within their own countries, if not always within their own cultures. And it is at this point of the local Church's responsibility for evangelization that the present and future role of the missionary coming from another local Church, must be inserted. The question is not whether there will continue to be missions or missionaries, evangelization or evangelizers - the teaching of the Church is explicitly affirmative in this respect. Rather the question seems to be what kind of co-operative relations are needed and possible among the different local Churches. The response to this question must come from the local Churches in dialogue with one another and it must be expressed at the level of ministeries in terms of motivation.

2. The Situation of the Local Churches in Asia

In addition to the fruitful probing the Synod of 1971 produced, and continues to produce concerning justice in the world, it also led to a significant awareness of pluralism in the local Churches in terms of their cultures, their objectives, and their level of development. During the past year this development of the recognition and appreciation for pluralism has been firmly established by the various episcopal conferences as they focused on questions of evangelization in the world today in preparation for the Fourth Synod. Intimately bound to this assertion of pluralism on the part of the local Churches, is the assumption of responsibility on the part of these same Churches for their role in evangelization in the world today. And this responsibility is not seen as separate or isolated from association with non-Asian Churches, but even in a particular way in relationship with the Churches of the west.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India notes in its communiqué to the Synod Secretariat,

While striving to present an image that is more in harmony with her discipleship of Christ, the Church in India appeals to other Churches, particularly of the capitalist, christian west to realize that the image they project can be a powerful aid, yes, but it can also be often a crippling obstacle to evangelization in other countries.

And a little further in the same document, the western Church is challenged to meet those requirements imposed by christian presence in the world today and the mission of the Church at an international level.

In passing, it might be worth noting that the local Church in India has been forced to limit its dependence upon the local Churches of the west due to evolution within the nation. The example is worth recalling, because working within the constraint, the local Church has accepted the challenge of responsible growth, and thus the Nagpur Theological Conference could remark,

Deeply rooted in the land and with a clear conscience of its own identity, the Church in India has grown to a dynamic maturity. No longer an infant Church, it can and must proclaim the Good News and enter into dialogue and cooperation with all men of good will in seeking to confront the tremendous tasks of today.

This does not mean that all is accomplished, for as Amalagoss notes, the Church in India cannot dialogue nor be integrated within the world until it becomes specifically Indian

and sheds its foreign character. The theologians still speak in a language that is not their own and the foundations of the spiritual life are still specifically western. Yet, the recognition of identity and maturity are prerequisite to any exploration of new kinds of cooperative relations among the local Churches from the various continents. And it would seem that in the recognition of her identity and maturity, the Church of India has profoundly challenged the Churches of the west to enter upon this discovery.

Asking for acknowledgement of the "increased realization of diversity, of differentiations in historical situations, social and cultural development/underdevelopment among peoples", the bishops of the Philippines request that in the Synod discussions, ...locally-made theologies from e.g. central Europe and North America be not imposed on other local Churches, especially from the former mission countries, but that local Churches be encouraged instead (always within the larger framework of statements of the Second Vatican Council, the international Synod of Bishops and the Roman Pontiff) to formulate their own particular understandings, truly suited to the needs of their people and of the local Church in their country.

They then address themselves directly to the western Church,

We ask that certain forms of theology which stem from a secularized western culture be not imposed unthinkably and irresponsibly on our local Churches - we speak for our Church in the Philippines especially.

This thought is developed further in specific reference to missionaries from abroad, Again, it is our hope that the infection of certain undesirable forms of western secularism and...a creeping lack of nerve cannot be imported by theologians and missionaries from abroad who in this sense do a disservice to the Gospel whose joyous messengers they should be!

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference meeting recently in Taiwan, indicate in their report of their plenary assembly that they will still welcome "missionaries from other local Churches", adding,

We welcome them from other countries into ours, asking only that they make themselves truly part of the local Church and truly one with our peoples.

Before proceeding further, we should pause and reflect upon the terminology employed in these statements. The Federation of Asian Bishops speak of "missionaries from other local Churches" who come "from other countries into ours". In their report, the Indian Bishops refer to "other local Churches", while the Filipino Bishops seem to imply a relation among local Churches when they say "be not imposed on other local Churches". The choice of words reveals that the status of the local Church has been attained in these countries which were once referred to as missions by the western Church. The attainment of this status further implies - and this is very clear in the reports from the episcopal conferences - that the duties incumbent upon a local Church have been fully assumed. In this respect the wish of the Federation of Asian Bishops' assembly is enlightening,

More and more, we trust, our own local Churches can send some of its best sons and daughters to serve our sister Churches in Asia and even in the countries of other continents.

Returning once again to the thesis proposed by Lanne, it would not seem presumptuous to think that we have possibly reached the historical point where the centralization of missionary societies with their headquarters in non-Asian countries generally, must now give

way to a developing theology of the local Church. This is not to say that missionary societies must 1) disappear or 2) change their locations; but I would venture to suggest that the style of organization, especially in reference to the sending of missionaries is now at the point of change. And this change, if recognized and utilized as a launching pad for new endeavors, will lead to a new era in the building up of the local Church, but if ignored or refused, will only hinder that growth. From now on it would only seem just that mission sending must be planned in cooperation with the local Church according to its goals and objectives in evangelization, and not simply in agreement with a bishop or a society. As is very evident from the whole context of preparation for the Synod, the responsibility for evangelization and mission is primarily that of the local Church led by the successor of the Apostles. Likewise, the principle of collegiality in the Church would demand that the local Churches do not close in upon their own needs, but open, as indeed the Federation of Asian Bishops has expressed the desire of doing, to the needs of other local Churches.

This openness to the universal Church is indicated by the Japanese Bishops, who see the missionary from other countries as bringing a cosmic dimension to the local Church. For this reason, as well as for conditions peculiar to the country, the Bishops of Japan express a desire to have foreign missionaries continue to work in their local Church. Aware of the decreasing number of vocation in Europe and America, they ask for quality rather than quantity, stating that they desire persons who will be faithful to their vocation and fully consecrated to the work of evangelization. They also want those who are able to collaborate with bishops and superiors and who will make efforts to understand Japan and its culture, since otherwise the community life of the mission will never be established.

At first sight there is a somewhat different nuance in this report from Japan, and in part this difference can be related to the elevated socio-economic standard of life in Japan as well as the fact that Japan, almost alone among the Asian countries, was never colonized by a western power. In so many instances the coming of Christianity to the Asian countries was in some way or other associated with colonization. Thus, there is not the same reaction against the west among the Japanese, at least as concerns the question of missionaries coming from other Churches. Furthermore, the economic life of Japan has been largely influenced by the west since the Second World War and that influence has lent itself to a subsequent rapid growth of prosperity. Yet the culture of Japan is not western, and the bishops do recognize the need for a deep acculturation on the part of those who come from other places to work in the local Church of Japan. However, it is interesting to note that the bishops acknowledge a certain responsibility toward those who come from other countries, when they express their wish to do whatever is possible in order that missionaries from other countries can utilize their abilities to the fullest. And this desire is of particular importance in terms of cooperation with other local Churches, for even though persons coming from other local Churches should not assume nor expect positions of leadership in the local Church to which they are sent, they do, as persons, have the need to experience a sense of worth if they are to give of their best.

From these general indications, however brief they may appear, I believe we can deduce certain trends among the local Churches in Asia as these have been expressed in the various reports of the episcopal conferences in preparation for the Fourth Synod.

1. The local Churches in Asia have assumed responsibility for evangelization, and therefore the work of evangelization in Asia is primarily the concern of the local Church of Asia.
2. Reactions vary among the Asian Churches relative to western influence and evangelization by the Churches of the west, but there is a tendency on the part of some of the Asian Churches to reject what is a western vision of life, and a challenge on the part of all the Asian Churches that westerners who come into Asia assume the culture of the local Church.
3. The concept of mission is inherent to that of evangelization, and since the Bishops of Asia have assumed the responsibility for evangelization, all missionary activity must be planned according to the objectives and goals of the local Church.
4. The Bishops of the local Churches in Asia have indicated in various ways - whether directly or indirectly - that new kinds of cooperation in evangelization must be worked out with the Churches of the west both at the level of the universal and local Churches.
5. The kinds of centralization in the Church such as that represented by mission sending societies and which did so much to further evangelization and give birth to new Churches, must now give way, since the local Churches are established, to other forms of organization in terms of cooperation with the local Churches.

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NEWS FROM AND FOR THE GENERALATES

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS

Our heartiest congratulations to V. Rev. Father Jean-Marie Vasseur on his election as Superior General of the White Fathers. We should also like to take this occasion to thank the retiring General, Fr. Theo Van Asten for the invaluable services he has rendered to SEDOS, in particular during his years as President.

Sincere congratulations to V. Rev. Fr. Leon RONCIN on his election as Superior General of the Paris Foreign Missions. And our best wishes to Fr. M. Queguiner on his retirement.

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