

EVANGELIZATION TODAYREPORT ON THE 1974 SYNOD - N° 1

1. The purpose of this report (and of those which will follow) is to offer our Generalates a bird's eye view of the content of what is being said during the 1974 Synod. This content, however, will be supported by attempts to disengage its main thrusts and convergence or divergence from our own thinking. We have formed a panel to help us achieve this purpose. We also intend, as we did this time, to listen carefully to what the Synodal Fathers are saying outside the Aula on questions of interest to us but (as yet) not on the Synod floor.

CONTENT

2. The first part of the reports will consist of our synthesis of the interventions of the Synodal Fathers. We will here follow the division in cultural areas already adopted by the Synod. It does not correspond to ours - but all divisions are, in a way, arbitrary and one is as good as another. The peculiarity of this division is that it throws Oceania (with Australia, New Zealand, the Fiji Islands etc.), with North America and the Carribean.
3. In this first report, the Synodal Fathers have been asked to share experiences about evangelization practices today. The content should be judged with this in mind: it is unequal simply because the experiences are conditioned by situations which vary considerably. This sharing will continue for some time and then the Synod will move on to the task of disentangling the main issues of evangelization today. On our part, however, we will make it a point, even at this stage, to bring out where possible the definition of evangelization which is being used by each speaker.
4. In the keynote address, Paul VI adopted a stance which reminded us of his reflections in Asia, especially when he was in Hong Kong. He seems to want to say that evangelization today is an impossible task. This is the fact of life - when life is seen within the parameter of human experience. But this is not the fact of our life of Faith - when life (in John's "darkness") transcends these parameters by accepting the Lord's coming into its history. Paul's address falls into two parts. The first, in the form of a prayer, is all about "who is the origin of evangelization" and the second is all about "who is the "destinataire" of evangelization". Both aspects reveal his conviction that evangelization is the fundamental issue of Christianity today, and that it can only be faced in Faith :
5. Evangelization in relationship with God
"O Lord, we must reach to the mystery of the Holy Trinity to discover the first source of the mandate which urges us forward and... to learn about the plan of love which embraces, models and supports our apostolic mission. But how can it be? Aren't we tiny beings lost in the ocean of history and the vast crowd of humanity? How can we be chosen for a mission of such nature and such import? Here, Lord, we sum up, in this moment of conscience and synthesis, our spiritual story... (like Mary) we have been chosen

certainly not because of our human competence or our human stature but perhaps because of our smallness, littleness... (so that) in our tinyness your work becomes more evident".

Paul finds support in his priesthood and in his intimacy with the Lord: "to accept His salvific Will and to join the current of Love He has for men" and which leads to that trust which can overcome the chasm between the Mandate and the reality of our world. We are here in the world because we have been sent by Him.

6. But Evangelization is also relationship among the disciples of Christ. The Synod is an expression of this "communio", in "conversatio".

"The theme "obliges us to study the real, socio-cultural condition of mankind. For whom, in whom the Church lives... because it puts us before the specific question of our "raison d'être" in this humanity. Who are we? What are we doing? What must we do? We are "small flock" (Lk 12, 32)... How can we presume to find an adequate answer to those crucial questions and carry out the mission of Salvation entrusted to us?" Evangelization is mandatory, comprehensive and strictly religious (see 74/618).

7. ASIA

Card. Cordeiro presented a general report of the Asian evangelization experience. Evangelization is here emerging as the preaching of the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ - a preaching which leads to salvation understood in the Bangkok sense as the total and integral activation of God's plan for humanity.

8. A major obstacle is the division which infects Asia and the impression that Christianity is an imported religion - often corroborated by a division between doctrine and practice in the life of Catholics.
9. In spite of radical change and incipient secularization, the Asian climate is still favourable to religion. Asian Bishops, therefore, like to stress the contemplative life, ask for more freedom to conduct liturgical experiments. They also feel ready for changes in the field of the mass media and of their witness in the medical, educational and welfare institutions. After Cordeiro's report, Asia came in through individual countries.
10. The Indian experience was presented by Card. Parecattil, who stressed the need to assimilate local cultures. The Church has been too loath to help itself of local cultural treasures of art, rite and thought. Taking up Cordeiro's hint, he stated that, theoretically, there would be no problem in introducing extracts from Hindu books into our Liturgy. Indeed, Christ could be presented as the response to Hindu expectations.
11. Mons. Picachy, of Calcutta: India.
Evangelization is the communication of Christian experience and, as such, the work of the Spirit, who renders Himself visible in the signs generated by such communication.

Contemporary India invites us to step up contemplation, to intensify the communication of the Spirit with us. Indians consider life as a success when the individual becomes vitally conscious of the indwelling, in him - or her, of the Supreme Spirit. This could be promoted by dialogue. Still, evangelization also implies proclamation and human development.

It is the local church which is the "particular" instrument of evangelization. Other Churches in communion with it should help it - also by educating their own members to the demands of justice.

12. JAPAN, according to Card. Taguchi, was recording positive experiences through the link up of evangelization with a) meditation b) ecumenism c) dialogue, d) helping the suffering and e) sending out of missionaries to L. America. A major obstacle was the modern intellectual climate.
13. LEBANON was introduced by Mgr Downith who referred to the two poles of Islam and secularization as the field of evangelization. He described this as loyalty to the Christian vocation, openness to the spirit, purification (through the secularization process) and the witness of charity.
Secularization penetrates Christianity more easily than Islam. And so we have to face an ambivalent experience: there are Christians who defend the tradition, clinging to the City, in order not to lose the Message. There are Christians who think adult and personal faith can only come through secularization and go in for dialogue and pluralism without the necessary preparation and discernment.
14. CHINA: Mons. Kuo asked for greater freedom in adapting the liturgy to the Chinese culture in order to make it a more effective vehicle for communicating the Gospel. He also made a plea for better Bible translation, more use of the mass media and more clarity about our involvement in the human development.
15. S. VIET NAM: Mons. Nguyen Kim Diem, recorded promising experiences in a) a national programme of missionary animation of the faithful b) the extension of the Pontifical Missionary Works and c) the foundation of a national missionary sending Institute, whose members live in small (less than 10) communities in the people's neighbourhoods and go out in two's as the local Bishops require.
16. The thrusts that emerge from these first interventions seem to go in the direction of
a) a clarification of the priority relationship of evangelization to human development.
b) a major commitment to embed Christian life and action in the local culture
c) a struggle to find one's way in the disarray produced by rapid change and secularization.
17. Already in these first interventions, one can note convergence with the thinking which has been going on in the SEDOS groups during the last months. The specific agent of evangelization is the local Christian community. The "destinataire" - at least for Africa and Asia - is primarily the person who belongs to another Faith.

18. The Synod is, of course, a group of people. We thought it useful to find out what some of these were thinking about our specific concerns - away from the formal atmosphere of the Aula.

Mgr Zoa, in a special meeting with missionaries on leave held on October 2, 1974, assured us that overseas missionaries and the Institutes which support them, will emerge from the oblivion reserved for them in the working paper: the Synod work will be done by the Bishops, not by the paper and these will ask for a statement on the need for overseas missionaries. The same assurance was given by the Bishops of Benares, Mgr. de Souza.

19. With Mgr. Helder Camara, also present at the meeting, these also affirmed that overseas missionaries are welcome in their countries. When asked about the attitudes required of such missionaries, they indicated:

- a) sensitivity to the local culture (H. Camara)
- b) response to their particular charisma (ZOA)
- c) acceptance of the policy that locals would be in charge (de Souza)
- d) exchange of ideas - perhaps more than of personnel and of funds (de Souza)
- e) the sense of belonging to a universal community (de Souza).

Mgr Zoa, also noted that, in future, closer, long term planning would have to be undertaken by the local Dioceses and the International Institutes. The authority will belong to the Diocese but the preparation of decisions will be undertaken through common studies of priorities and resources of both sides.

20. We would like to end this report with a summary of the panorama of the world pastoral situation attempted by Mgr. Lorscheider. The main trends of pastoral action during the last three years:

- a) towards more pastoral planning, b) towards more Priest's and Pastoral Councils, c) towards more effective Associations of Major Superiors (Religious), d) towards a keener conscience of the communitarian life of the Church - often expressed in small ecclesial communities and fired by Biblical meditation, e) towards wider assumption of responsibilities by the laity, f) towards more work for vocations, for priests who have left the ministry, for the promotion of women, for ongoing formation, for ecumenism, g) towards more missionary animation as the "younger churches begin sending their own missionaries, h) towards deeper liturgical life, and new spiritual vigour (prayer, retreats etc.), i) towards a keener appreciation of local cultures and j) towards more concern for social justice and human rights.

It also highlighted current problems: a) the novelty of Christianity, b) cultural adaptation (liturgy, dogma) c) pluralism and unity, d) decentralization, coordination of present structures, e) Church-State relations, f) involvement in social justice and liberation, g) the "3rd Churchman" - rejecting Church practice but not Faith, h) fresh study of Church World relationship, i) pastoral approach to the family, youth, workers city, sacraments, intellectuals, j) moral relativism, k) the population explosion.

CONCLUSIONS: a) Vatican II spirit is not yet diffuse, b) We need more creativity in communicating Salvation, c) Laity must move to more participation.

The Holy Father opens the Synod

On FRIDAY MORNING September 27, 1974 at the cancelation the Pope expressed himself in prayer thus: "Since we cannot express the topic of this Episcopal Synod in our own words, we turn them into a prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ

Lord, ~~you~~ are the source of evangelization. You are its historical and efficient cause. As the Father sent me so I send you. This is a personal call, for each one of us. This our service, our ministry. However unworthy we are ready to go and announce your gospel. Pray the Father to send us the Holy Spirit. Be with us, that we may be one, and give to the world your peace and your salvation.

That afternoon Pope Paul again addressed the Synod.

"Evangelization is an important and vast topic for us "the little flock"..... This morning we expressed the first aspect of evangelization: we are being sent, we are messengers, missionaries, apostles....

The second aspect is to whom are we sent? if

And first of all, this is a duty for us: "Woe to me I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9, 16). This is a permanent and constitutional undertaking of the Church. We cannot but speak of what we saw and heard" (Act. 4,20).

The message is for all men: evangelization is catholic, universal, excludes no one, includes everybody, other Christian communities and even non-Christian religions. Differences should not be obstacles but fields for reciprocal interest and future friendship. Even such geographical and cultural areas, where a place can hardly be found for religion, should not be excluded from our mission: "I will draw every thing to me!" (Jo. 12, 13) Our approach must be undertaken with Christian charity and due respect for persons and cultures.

The third element is the final aim of evangelization. There is the priority of the Christian Message of salvation, its specific religious significance: the kingdom of God is liberation of man from sin, without neglecting problems of justice, development and peace in the world. But the mission of the Church is neither political, social, nor economic: it is a religious mission (G.S.n.42). There is neither opposition nor separation between evangelization and Human development, rather they are complementary to each other, in order to save man. Means of communication (Mass Media) should be used **widely** with modern methods, (as you will now discuss), but never in opposition to the Gospel. Therefore, neither violence, revolution or any kind of colonialism can help the work of the Church, not even politics as such.

Christians, however, should take their share in public concerns.

Your choice of methods should take into consideration both past experience and the new trends now foreshadowed; without renouncing acquired values, keep an open mind to anything good and valid: nova et vetera.

Look hopefully to the future; to your own work; and above all trust in Christ, who is with you; and also in his Mother, the Queen of the Apostles.

AGENDA FOR SYNOD '74 by Fr. Joseph Connors, SVD.

As the 1974 international Synod of Bishops opens in Rome, observers with an interest either in the Synod as an institution or in its current theme of "Evangelization of the Modern World" are bound to speculate on the drama about to unfold.

A sound guess is that there will be little of the kind of drama that makes headlines. In the middle 1970's, after all, another world gathering of bishops with differing opinions no longer makes the news it did in the early 1960's. Then also, as Fr. Hubert Horan pointed out in the April 20 issue of America, evangelization as a theme does not, unfortunately, arouse as much general interest as would, say, family planning and population.

Moreover, the general treatment of the Synod preparations during the past year by the Vatican and by the Synod Secretariat itself has been decidedly low-key. The Holy Father's public addresses have been frequently devoted to the theme of reconciliation for the Holy Year 1975, but have seldom mentioned the theme of evangelization for the Synod. The same is true, except for an article or two, of the pages of Osservatore Romano. No wonder, then, that press coverage and public interest does not seem very great elsewhere.

Not that the word "evangelization" itself isn't in the air these days a bit more than it was. Picking up the Rome Daily American for August 30, for example, one can read a column about L'Eau Vive restaurant, run by a small community of religious sisters at 85 Via Norontera. The thought behind it, the columnist says, is that "the cause of evangelization can also be advanced in restaurants serving good food in dignified settings."

But if the bishops' Synod is going to do more than make "evangelization" an "in" word for the next few months, there may indeed be considerable drama ahead: first, for the theologians who are aware of the sensitive questions involved, then for those who are hoping for creative and effective pastoral action.

This Synod's work is sketched out in a 22-page Latin document mailed out last June 7 to the synodal participants. Called simply an instrumentum laboris or "working tool", it is an agenda proposal for the first two of the three phases through which the Synod is expected to move during the month from its opening on September 27 to its planned adjournment on October 26.

The first is to be a sharing of experiences concerning certain features of the world scene today as they affect the opportunities for evangelization. Out of the voluminous reports accumulated during the past year, the Synod Secretariat has selected a dozen headings under which this sharing might take place.

In many parts of the world, for example, there seem to be 1) a fresh interest in the interior life, marked by a hunger for prayer and contemplation and Scripture reading, as in the charismatic renewal, and 2) a widespread interest in the formation of small communities infused with the spirit of the gospel. And then there are the following phenomena to

be considered: 3) the diocesan pastoral councils established everywhere since Vatican II; 4) the emergence of the laity with a sense of its own responsibility; 5) the fact that the majority of the world population now consists of young people with their own sensitivities and values; 6) the great numbers of lapsed and alienated Catholics; 7) the ecumenical movement among Christians; 8) the new dialogue with non-Christian religions and atheistic ideologies ; 9) the need for renewal of missionary assistance to the younger Churches ; 10) the opportunities for regional cooperation in the use of mass media; 11) the urgency of work for development and liberation; and 12) the potential of a more thoroughly renewed and adapted liturgy.

The first phase of the Synod, then, will be a kind of group reflection. It is more than just a common-sense way to begin a good meeting. Rather, it is one more example of a new approach to church meetings and documents based upon the theological conviction that the best way to begin any pastoral planning is to reflect as objectively and prayerfully as possible on the actual facts of the contemporary scene, before getting into any reflection on doctrine, in an effort to discern any "signs of the times" through which the Holy Spirit, ever at work in history, may be revealing His will.

The second phase will be an effort to clarify the doctrinal concepts and principles that have a bearing on evangelization in the modern world. In the corresponding second part of the agenda, the Synod Secretariat has already indicated seven major points of doctrine that the bishops will surely want to discuss and clarify : 1) the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization; 2) the precise meaning of "evangelization"; 3) the central place of the preaching of the gospel; 4) the meaning of evangelical witness; 5) the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation; 6) the nature of conversion ; and 7) the full meaning of salvation.

Clarifying these concepts and their relationships is not as simple as it looks. Just take the word "evangelization." In the discussion outline that the Synod Secretariat sent out over a year ago, four possible definitions were mentioned, but everyone was asked to adopt the third as the working definition. It defined evangelization as "the activity whereby the gospel is proclaimed and explained, and whereby living faith is awakened in non-Christians and fostered in Christians", or, again, as "the activity whereby the Church proclaims the gospel so that faith may be aroused, may unfold and grow."

This may sound clear enough at first, but, in the course of discussion, it proves inadequate-not specific enough for some, not close enough to the New Testament use of the term for others. These ambivalences persist even now in the agenda, which point out, for example that preaching the gospel has a central place in evangelization. That is about as enlightening as if the Daily American's columnist had pointed out that the good food at L'eau Vive plays a central role in its excellent cuisine. Preaching the gospel is not only central to evangelization; it is evangelization.

Unless, that is, you want to define evangelization so broadly that it includes every aspect of the Church's activity. This is what many observers feel the Synod Secretariat was

doing last year in its discussion outline, not so much by its choice of definition, as by the great range of questions raised. After the reactions from the bishops' conferences and others, much has been done to limit the topic and deal only with those matters directly concerning evangelization. Pope Paul himself suggested as much last April 5 in his private allocution to the 15 cardinals and archbishops who make up the Synod Secretariat's Consilium, or steering committee.

Even so, some still see a danger in too broad a definition. The Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, for example, has much at stake in what happens to "its" word. Last March 29, therefore, the Congregation's Prefect, Cardinal Agnelo Rossi, wrote in *Osservatore Romano* that the SCEP would opt for the Synod Secretariat's fourth definition of evangelization as "the first proclamation of the gospel to those who have not as yet heard it."

Similar complexities surround the clarification of the other points of doctrine listed in the agenda. They are by no means mere theological pastimes. On the contrary, as Fr. Karl Rahner once wrote, such efforts to clarify concepts may at first look like scholarly quibbling, "but if we realize that these new insights enter the common consciousness and become the unquestioned suppositions which are the basis for our action, then we may begin to see that a great deal, sometimes everything, depends on them".

The third phase of the Synod will be the drafting of pastoral proposals for the Holy Father. For these, the agenda offers no suggestions, for they must grow out of the first and second phases. In a meeting of bishops from all parts of the world, formulating them is likely to be the hardest task of all, and the one for which the many documents sent in to the Synod Secretariat during the past year have offered the least help.

According to the tentative timetable, the sessions during the first week of October will be devoted to the first phase of the agenda, the sharing of experiences; the second week, to doctrinal clarifications. During the third week, it is hoped that a composite text of the pastoral proposals will be readied. While it is being compiled, the Synod will elect new members to the Consilium of the Secretariat, and will consider how often assemblies should take place. In the fourth week of October, there will be discussion of the proposals and amendments and the voting.

Whether the 1974 Synod will produce a summary declaration, as its predecessors did, will, of course, be up to the participants, but it seems a reasonable expectation. If one important purpose of this assembly is doctrinal clarification of concepts and principles affecting evangelization, one of the best means of promoting these would be such a publication. Unlike previous assemblies, however, this one does not have a head start on a final declaration by having a rough form of it already in hand as a full-text schema. In keeping with a firm policy of not setting forth a position paper of its own, the Consilium of the Synod Secretariat has insisted on adhering to a modified questionnaire format in last year's discussion outline and the present agenda guide. Dramatically enough, then, it's all up to the members of the Synod.

Joseph M. Connors, SVD.

THE SYNOD AND FIRST EVANGELISATION

Today, nearly two thousand years after Christ commanded His Church to bring His message to all nations, two-thirds of mankind has not yet heard that message.

Although the theme of the Synod of Bishops, which opens in Rome on 27 September, is "The Evangelisation of the Modern World" very little has been mentioned so far in its preparatory papers on bringing Christ's message to those who have not yet heard it. Most of the Working Document for the Synod and the Responses received from Episcopal Conferences around the world deal with pastoral problems. Much of the proposed agenda for the Synod itself concerns only deeper problems among those who are already Christian.

No one has yet given a satisfactory explanation why preparations for a Synod on Evangelisation are almost void in planning for the evangelisation of two - thirds of mankind.

One of the few Episcopal Conferences that even discussed the subject in their Response was the Tanzania Episcopal Conference, which stated:

"The Church in Tanzania should be more concerned with the outward proclamation of the Gospel to Non-Christians (pagans, Muslims, Hindus, etc.) living in Tanzania. The pastoral care of Christian communities does not excuse us from the duty to evangelise. In fact, any Christian Community which does not evangelise the people in its surroundings is a dead Christian Community. It is like a fire which does not give warmth."

Vatican II spoke of "evangelisation and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root:"

"Sent by Christ to reveal and to communicate the love of God to all men and nations, the Church is aware that there still remains a gigantic missionary task for it to accomplish. For the Gospel message has not yet been heard, or scarcely so, by two billion human beings. And their number is increasing daily." (Ad Gentes 6,11)

Since this "first" or "frontier" evangelisation is the responsibility of the whole Church, there is no apparent explanation why it is hardly mentioned in most of the Responses received to date for the Synod session on Evangelisation. It has been suggested that one reason for this is that many of those who prepared the Responses from Europe and America are not directly involved themselves in First Evangelisation. However, the only explanation given so far why it is also almost completely absent in the Responses received from the Episcopal Conferences in Africa is that their Responses were geared more towards answering specific questions presented in the first Document for the Synod than towards presenting their mind on Evangelisation.

Of the World's population of 3,645,829,000, only 669 million are Catholic. Many of these Catholics live in countries that are over 90% Catholic; e.g. Spain(98.9%), Italy (98.5%), Peru (97.9%); Colombia(97.1%), etc. However, nearly three billion people in other parts of the world are non-Catholic. Even when one adds Christians

Of all denominations together, over two-thirds of mankind still remain non-Christian. Two billion of these live in Asia, a good number in Eastern Europe, but most of the rest live in Africa.

Although Christianity is growing at a phenomenal rate in Africa, two-thirds of the people in Africa have not yet been effectively evangelised.....

In a number of areas these non-Christians live in regions that are partially evangelised. Some others live in areas that have not yet been evangelised, and others in areas where First Evangelisation is now taking place. In Kenya, for example, First Evangelisation is now taking place among such tribes as:

Masai	(nomad)	Ngong Prefecture
Pokot-Suk	(semi-nomad)	Eldoret Diocese
Turkana	(nomad)	Lowar Prefecture
Borana	(semi-nomad)	Marsabut Diocese
Molo	(settled)	Marsabit Diocese
Rendille	(nomad)	Marsabit Diocese
Samburn	(nomad)	Marsabit Diocese
Gabbra	(nomad)	Marsabit Diocese.

From AMECEA Documentation 9/74/1

Our comment:

Many of these areas of first evangelisation are the very places where missionaries from the local church cannot penetrate on account of tribal or cultural prejudices. The East Central State of Nigeria, to give but one example, has many local clergy but they are, for the most part unwelcome in other parts of that great Federation. The expatriate missionary with his supra-tribal, "neutral" stance can cross the barriers, be made welcome and spread the Gospel.

L. SKELLY.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF SEDOS

The 44th Assembly of Superiors General associated in SEDOS was held on Monday, 23 September 1974 at 4 pm in the SJ Generalate, Borgo S. Spirito n° 5.

<u>Present:</u> C.I.C.M.	Fr. W. Goossens	S.C.M.M-M.	Sr. G. Prové
C.M.M.	Fr. G. Lautenschlager	S.C.M.M-M.	Sr. A. de Sa
C.S.S.P.	Fr. Timmermans	S.C.M.M-M.	Sr. A. Oosschot
C.S.S.P.	Fr. J. Lecuyer	S.C.M.M-T.	Sr. M.T. Barnett
F.M.M.	Sr. M. Motte	S.D.B.	Fr. B. Tohill
F.S.C.	Bro. Ch. H. Buttimer	S.D.B.	Fr. A. Ma
F.S.C.	Bro. P. Adams	S.F.B.	Sr. B. Flanagan
I.C.M.	Sr. C. Rombouts	S.H.C.J.	Sr. A. Cornely
I.C.M.	Sr. A. Deseyn	S.J.	Fr. P. Arrupe
I.C.M.	Sr. R. Cicchitti	S.M.A.	Fr. J. Hardy
I.M.C.	Fr. M. Bianchi	S.N.D.N.	Sr. J. Burke
I.M.C.	Fr. F. Viotto	S.N.D.N.	Sr. T. Marie
M.E.P.	Fr. G. Cussac	S.P.S.	Fr. J. Meehan
M.M.	Fr. J. Lang	S.S.N.D.	Mo. G. Segner
M.S.F.	Fr. G. Peeters	S.S.N.D.	Sr. D. McGonagle
O.M.I.	Fr. W. Cagney	S.S.N.D.	Sr. M. de Julio
O.S.U.	Sr. I. Kerssemakers	S.S.N.D.	Sr. M. Tilgner
P.I.M.E.	Fr. F. Galbiati	S.S.N.D.	Sr. M. Schmidter
R.S.C.J.	Sr. M. Schellings	S.S.N.D.	Sr. M. Dei
R.S.C.M.	Sr. M.M. Gonçalves	S.S.N.D.	Sr. M.A. Schmid
R.S.C.M.	Sr. M. Keenan	S.S.N.D.	Sr. M.M. Johanning
S.A.	Sr. J. Dastous (Translator)	S.S.N.S.	Sr. M.L. Baldwin
S.A.	Sr. A. Gates	S.S.P.S.	Sr. E. Berning
S.A.	Sr. F. Avonts	S.V.D.	Fr. Rühling
		S.V.D.	Fr. J. Connors
		U.S.G.	Fr. H. Systemans

Moderator: Sr. C. Rombouts, ICM.

From SEDOS: Fr. B. Tonna, Fr. L. Skelly SMA, Miss C. Cilroy and Miss A. Fernandez.

1. After a short prayer Sr. Claire reminded the delegates of the topic to be discussed: Laymen in small communities as agents of dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers. Those present should do their best to provide the chairmen of the groups (all of whom would be attending the Synod) with their insights and experiences regarding this topic which was bound to be of prime importance on the Synodal agenda.

2. Fr. B. Tonna, Executive Secretary, then gave an account of the trends of thought and experience, which had emerged from the preparatory meetings on Islam, Black Africa, Latin America and Oriental Religions (see Appendix). The meetings on the Marxist Bloc and the Western Industrialized Areas had had to be cancelled as no one had turned up for them.

3. The Assembly then broke up into groups as follows:

Group 1 under the chairmanship of Fr. W. Goossens CICM.

Group 2 under the chairmanship of Fr. J. Lecuyer CSSP.

Group 3 under the chairmanship of Br. C.H. Buttimer FSC.

Group 4 under the chairmanship of Fr. P. Arrupe SJ.

(For the questions discussed by each group see SEDOS 74/578 and 579).

4. Group 1 : began with a consideration of concrete experiences of small communities in dialogue (1 B of their agenda). Examples were given from many parts of the world and among many different social backgrounds, and the following conclusions emerged:

- a) Wherever we are invited to take part in dialogue (as defined in the topic of the Assembly) we must accept, but use great prudence :
- b) the best way to bring about contact with our non-Christian neighbours is to identify with the people and their needs:
- c) we must be prepared to share and receive, and not be always on the "giving" end of things :
- d) we must of course give witness in our lives and works but always with great sensitivity for the feelings of those among whom we live :
- e) it is no good holding dialogue with those of another religion unless we have a thorough grasp of our own - and of that of the people with whom we talk :
- f) above all we must present our Christianity in a simple, non-Western, non-foreign dress.

The group then discussed the question of what Religious could contribute to the Community idea. It was agreed that in many areas Religious could have considerable impact by taking care of those, who are not sufficiently cared for by government agencies e.g. the elderly, the mentally retarded etc. The statement made by the U.S.C. on this question of small communities was endorsed.

As regards attempts at converting non-Christians it was pointed out that it is the Lord who gives the gift of faith, and we are merely witnesses by word and work. In some areas we can only preach the Gospel by our presence. Elsewhere we can preach the Word openly and this should be done well and only after thorough preparation. Non-Christians often come to our churches and they should be edified by what they hear.

The problem of catechists was also discussed. In most areas the local church could not pay the catechists well enough and hence they felt obliged to seek employment in other fields. Should organizations like Misereor be asked to help? The answer was in the negative : the local churches should no longer continue to depend on outside sources for such aid.

5. Group 2 :

- i) Le groupe commence par discuter le "DIALOGUE AVEC LES NON-CHRETIENS", ce thème correspondant mieux aux préoccupations des participants.

Ce dialogue prend une coloration et parfois une nature différente selon qu'il s'agit: a) des "religions du Livre" (Islam, Confucianisme, Bouddhisme, Indouisme, Shintoïsme), b) ou des "religions de la Tradition" (Chamanisme, Animisme).

- ii) Le dialogue avec "les religions de la Tradition" consistera dans le respect et parfois la préservation d'une culture qui fait corps avec le groupe social. On note qu'un travail a été accompli dans ce sens dans le Chamanisme pour la résurrection d'une tradition agonisante.

En Afrique on constate l'éclatement des traditions socio-religieuses sous l'influence de leur contact avec la colonisateur et le monde technique, même si elles sont encore souvent sous-jacentes à la vie du groupe. L'apport de l'Evangile devrait renforcer la vie religieuse de la communauté humaine si le Christianisme africain sait trouver les voies d'une véritable acculturation (cf. Ad Gentes. 8). On souligne par contre les difficultés du dialogue avec les sectes pagano-chrétiennes dont le syncrétisme est très large.

- iii) En ce qui concerne les "religions du Livre" on note une certaine revivification de nombre d'entre elles, parfois liée à un réveil nationaliste. Mais elles sont toutes affrontées au phénomène d'urbanisation et d'industrialisation qui entraîne la dégradation des croyances et des traditions.

- a) Le dialogue avec l'Islam revêt de larges différences selon les situations locales. Là où il est largement majoritaire et religion d'Etat ou bien c'est l'intolérance agressive (Libye, Pakistan) ou bien le dialogue y est paradoxalement plus facile : approche chrétienne respectueuse, influence de l'école catholique, témoignage de charité dans le service social, appréciation mutuelle sans prosélytisme. Le dialogue est cantonné dans le domaine

des attitudes pratiques et quotidiennes. Sur le plan doctrinal on mentionne une certaine crainte de l'analyse exégétique du Coran, menée sur des bases scientifiques.

Là où l'Islam n'est pas majoritaire et ne jouit pas d'un statut privilégié, spécialement en Afrique Noire, il y a souvent ignorance mutuelle quand il n'y a pas opposition. Mais des efforts de recherche et de conversion sont faits un peu partout de la part des missionnaires catholiques.

- b) On note que cette volonté de garder les distances se retrouve souvent en face de l'Induisme (sauf notables exceptions). Ce n'est pas le cas vis-à-vis du Bouddhisme : des liens se sont créés avec les Bonzes, avec les monastères (cf. Réunion des mouvements monastiques à Bangkok), avec tous les mouvements religieux non Chrétiens (Laos, Corée, Vietnam, Cambodge, Thaïlande).

iv) Difficultés du "donner" et du "recevoir"

- a) Il est difficile pour le prédicateur de la Parole de se convaincre de certaines vérités fondamentales :

- les "semences du Verbe" et l'action du St Esprit précèdent son action (Ad Gentes 4); respect des situations diverses et des étapes nécessaires (A.G. 6) ;
- "toute religion est une aube de foi" (Paul VI), "eux aussi ils ont leurs prophètes" (Paul VI revenant des Indes) cf. Nostra Aetate 2, A.G. 11-12;

- b) Certaines difficultés doctrinales telles que:

- si les non-chrétiens sont sauvés dans (certains disent même par) leur religion, pourquoi faudrait-il encore des prédicateurs de l'Évangile ?
- et pourtant il y a l'ordre du Christ de révéler Dieu Père à tous les hommes et d'annoncer le Salut en Jésus-Christ.

- c) Difficulté de l'art d'évangéliser :

- témoignage de l'Amour du Dieu de Jésus-Christ qui passe à travers la vie du "prédicateur sans parole";
- témoignage existentiel qui, comme on l'a souvent noté, donne "une autre dimension" à celui qui le reçoit. Par exemple, en pays d'Islam des femmes s'ouvrent sous l'influence d'une éducation sanitaire ou ménagère très simple; au Japon 2 millions d'habitants se disent "chrétiens", certains d'entre eux demandant même une cérémonie "chrétienne" pour leur mariage.

d) Difficultés du "recevoir", d'apprendre de l'autre, dans le plein respect de sa foi et de sa culture. Par exemple le sens de l'adoration en pays d'Islam, du respect de Dieu aussi : certains groupes restreints de chrétiens et de musulmans se réunissent pour prier Dieu ensemble (Afrique du Nord). Par exemple le sens du partage et de la pauvreté en Afrique Noire, le sens de la contemplation en Asie... On cite l'exemple de Monchanin et de nombreux missionnaires d'aujourd'hui.

v) On dit très peu de choses sur le "DIALOGUE AVEC LES NON-CROYANTS". On constate que toutes les religions, toutes les croyances sont affrontées au problème de l'athéisme pratique : influences de l'argent, de certaines philosophies marxistes, du sécularisme. Seul l'engagement et la solidarité dans le combat pour la justice, la paix, la libération peut amener au dialogue concret avec les non-croyants : on cite l'exemple des prêtres au travail; on insiste sur le rôle du laïc en ce domaine...

6. Group 3 in considering the initiative of the laity in dialogue agreed that in many areas clergy and Religious tended to discourage it, mostly from fear of criticism. Lay people who spoke out were often called hypercritical or even Communists ! So the laity either remained quiet and apathetic or else drifted away from the Church.

In other areas, fortunately, the clergy were making a real effort to help genuine, natural leaders to emerge. These were distinguished from the catechists. We must recognize that the lay initiative in the Church is something that should be there as of right it is not merely a question of making up for the present shortage of priests.

The argument is often put forward (especially by older clergy) that the people are not yet ready to take responsibility. But very often, when we say "ready", we mean "ready to do things as we think they ought to be done". Standards will, of course, be different but not necessarily lower. After all, in many of the areas we are speaking of, these same lay people have taken on great responsibilities in State and business. True, they were trained to take on these tasks. This only indicates that we must also be prepared to put time, money, and effort into training lay leaders for the Church.

Every effort must be made to convince the Synodal Fathers (specifically the bishops) of the urgency of this task. Leaders must be sought in all walks of life. The schools have a large part to play in training future leaders but other ways must also be explored. Perhaps the young churches could show the way to the older churches in tackling this problem.

As regards new ministries it was felt that new "institutionalized" ministries were not needed. The permanent diaconate could scarcely, for example, be said to have got off the ground yet. If people had particular gifts then they should be encouraged to exercise them for the benefit of all. In this way they would "minister" to the whole Church.

The group then asked itself in which communities the laymen could exercise an evangelizing influence most effectively. It was agreed that community living was basic to man and also that the Church is a community of believers. But it is a community which embraced many other types of community e.g. the nuclear family, the extended family, the clan, the tribe etc. The school, the factory, the geographical neighbourhood or compound - all of these are communities in which the work of evangelization and dialogue can be carried on. The Church must recognize the sociological facts and seek to use them. Again the question of leaders came to the fore. Even natural leaders e.g. parents, needed some training. Religious communities could, of course, set an example to Christians living other forms of communal life.

The next question was the role of women in planning and decision-making within the Church. There was general agreement that women were not playing a sufficiently active role, but there were differing explanations within the group as to why this was so. Some held that male influence prevented or delayed women from taking their rightful place on the plea that they (Religious and lay women) were "not yet ready". Others accused the womenfolk of having conditioned themselves into taking a subordinate role.

There was agreement that the situation was improving and women were beginning to play a more active role - but frequently the role was given to them by the men. Women, Religious and lay simply had to become aware of their own potentialities and dare to exercise their leadership qualities. Frequently when they did so e.g. as Vicars of Religious in certain dioceses, they were pleasantly surprised at the extent and cordiality of male cooperation. It was pointed out that in the very nature of things a woman could have a tremendous influence in the home as wife, mother and first education of her children. Our church administration should not lag behind nature. If it did, it lost the enormous contribution that women could make to evangelization through dialogue.

Finally the matter of the younger generation was considered. Many young people felt that the Church was not interested in them and was even suspicious of them. They were seldom encouraged to express themselves openly; if they did so and in a critical fashion, they were treated as troublemakers. Yet their criticism usually arose from a genuine idealism - or, as one speaker put it, from a very realistic stance regarding Christian values. Young people were maturing at an earlier age these days and expected to be treated as responsible persons who could - if allowed - make their own unique contribution. Who was more suited to hold dialogue with youth than youth itself?

7. Group 4 agreed that, i) in principle, the laity could take over from Priests all ministries except those directly connected with Holy Orders (Eucharist, Penance, Jurisdiction etc.). This leaves a vast field for Religious (men and women) and for others. In practice the "exploitation" of this field would involve a redistribution of ministries, with the question faced by the group formulated in another way: how far should Priests engage in ministries not directly connected with ordination? This would help face the main issue: the reluctance of the "clericals" to hand over (and of the "laity" to take over!). The question would probably have to be answered individually: each Priest would have to discover his other charismas, besides that of Holy Orders. It was suggested that such charismas could fall into the category of the "animation" ministries and would help Priests move out of the "clerical" stance. It was also pointed out that this was not a tactical move (to make up for the shortage of Priests) but a return to the original concept of the Church.

ii) There was disagreement about the implication of the question that small groups are "by nature" inward looking. It was resolved by the understanding that a small group of Christians, as it moves closer to the Lord and exposes itself to his grace, feels the need "to go out" and share its joy with others. A tension develops between its two poles - Christ (centripetic), the World (centrifugal)-in a sort of "unity of dispersionem" (unity for dispersal). It seems, however, that we should stress the centrifugal aspect of small communities (and this includes our Religious communities)

iii) The group identified fear as a major obstacle for dialogue with men and women of other Faiths (and of no faith). This could infect the laity as well as the hierarchy. And yet our Faith should help us find full security in the Lord and lead us to shed our defensive attitude vis-à-vis the "destinataires" of evangelization. It is Faith, not Law, (on the Institution) which is our real security. The way to surmount this obstacle seems to be further emphasis on formation - that is education at all levels based on sound theology and Church experiences open to cultural confrontation. The meeting of cultures could give us new insights about our identity as disciples of Christ. In practice this could take the form of teaching the laity more about other Faiths.

iv) The group faced the question of the aftermath of secularization. Could it open the way to a new presentation of Christianity? The answer could be positive in Bangladesh, for example. It is more problematic for Islam, as the Arab world exposes itself, through its new wealth, to secularization. Theoretically the pieces could be picked up in a Christian synthesis but we are only at the stage of hypotheses. Strategy studies could help us more out of the idealistic stance. The example of a number of Latin American areas could inspire us in our search: these are options for the masses, for the Mass Media, and engaging in adult education.

v) It was finally pointed out that no substantial treatment of the function of the missionary sending Institutes was attempted in the Synod working paper. And yet cross-cultural evangelization is more urgent than ever, and it can only happen if cross-cultural evangelizers are supported by such Institutes, and the universal vision they provide. A positive thing, however, could happen: a return to the sources, with the local churches taking back their evangelization responsibilities. Stress on the Institutes at this stage could provide the local churches with an alibi and slow down this process.

(see over)

8. After the coffee break the meeting reassembled in plenary session to hear the impressions of the four chairmen-Generals of the Groups.
- i) Fr. Goossens laid stress on the points already mentioned in the report of the Group I meeting,^{a)} laying particular emphasis on the need for great sensitivity on our part when engaging in dialogue. b) We must also recognize that we were merely God's instruments in evangelization, since the gift of faith comes only from God. c) But as instruments we must all, lay people, priests and religious, be witnesses to the Gospel not only in word but in our attitudes and our actions.
 - ii) Fr. Lecuyer, speaking in English, underlined the point that a) in dealing with traditional religions we must show both knowledge and respect. In areas, where Shamarism and Animism were strong, we must endeavour to ensure that real acculturation of Christianity takes place, while avoiding any type of syncretism. b) In dealing with religions "of the Book" e.g. Islam, Buddhism, etc., we must realize that they are undergoing a revival. As regards Islam, the chances of dialogue vary from place to place. We must show great respect for the Koran; Muslims object to our criticism based on scientific exegesis. Our schools and our charitable works can open the way to dialogue. There have been many fruitful contacts with Buddhists in various parts of Asia but few with Hindus. c) We must respect these religions as Paul VI has urged us to do, since they contain so many truly religious insights. But we are obliged, nonetheless, to witness to Jesus Christ and his Mediatorship. Witness can more often be effective if it is existential-truly charitable in action rather than vocal. d) As regards non-believers, we can only enter into dialogue with them, if we join with them in honestly seeking true Justice, peace and liberation.
 - iii) Bro. Buttmer repeated the main themes of his Group. a) The initiative of the laity must be encouraged because this is the right thing to do and not merely because we are short of priests. But selection and training were important in choosing leaders. As regards standards let us remember that "different" is not the same as "lower". If the laity were encouraged (especially by the Bishops) to give of their best then the need for new ministries scarcely arose. b) As regards communities: we must make use of all types of community from the family to the factory. In seeking genuine community leaders we must look to all classes and not limit ourselves to "good" but possibly quiescent Christians. c) Women should be encouraged to exercise their leadership qualities - laywomen and women Religious - in all areas of Church life. d) We must seek genuine dialogue with youth and really listen to what they have to say. If they are the hope of the future then let us act as if we really believe that.
 - iv) Fr Arrupe declared a) The laity could do a lot more (theoretically, everything not directly connected with Holy Orders) if it is trained to its responsibilities. Such training includes a redistribution of ministries, adapted to the local situation.

- b) Introversion is necessary to make a small community "tick". But an effort at extroversion is necessary to help it discover the missionary tension "to go".
 - c) Training the laity means trusting them, "de facto", by entrusting them with responsibilities. This means that we shed our fear that things may go wrong, and this happens only if we have faith. It is better to build on values (Faith) than on our present set up (Law).
 - d) The missionary Institutes could contribute their sense of universality to the Synod debate - on condition, however, that they do not create alibis for the local churches.
9. The Moderator then referred to the fact that Fr. Frank Moody PA was resigning as editor of Joint Venture in order to return to Africa. The Assembly passed a unanimous and enthusiastic vote of thanks to Fr. Moody for the excellent work he had done and wished him well in his new assignment.
10. After it had been agreed to accept the Minutes of the 43rd Assembly as read, the meeting came to an end at 7.p.m. with the singing of the "Salve Regina".

L. Skelly, SMA.

TRENDS EMERGING FROM THE PREPARATORY MEETINGS

1. To one who took part in all the preparatory meetings of this Assembly, there could be no doubt that all the participants were firmly convinced that evangelization today had to happen through laymen who, gathered in small communities, could and would engage in dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers. There was, indeed, firm conviction, round, on this and on the urgency putting it into practice as an essential element of evangelization today.
2. With that consensus as their base, the groups devoted most of their time to sharing experiences on how the specifics of each of the four concepts it contained could become a reality.
3. The first concept, laymen, was carefully scrutinized. There was agreement that we - the professional missionaries and religious - have not yet accepted laymen as fully capable and, indeed squarely responsible for evangelization. Many reasons for this hang up were given. But the groups were more interested in showing the way out: continue with the hand over of responsibilities, as fast as we can.
4. The groups also worked on specifying the various categories of laymen who could merit priorities. The Black Africa group focused on women. The Latin American meeting pointed to youth especially students. The Islam group suggested members of school staffs. The Oriental Religions team highlighted the role of the mass media operators.
5. In all cases, the responsibilities of the members of our Institutes, vis-à-vis these and other categories of laymen clustered around the demands of their formation. There was agreement that the members of our Institutes have ample opportunity to develop this crucial field.
6. The second concept, small communities, was at times seen as an irreplaceable dimension of this formation thrust. In their Faith-life laymen had to go beyond national assent to commitment. And the small community, at this point, becomes an indispensable ally.
7. But the groups had to grapple with the specifics of community. What is it? To the Africa meeting, it emerged as the extended family. To the Islam team, it appeared to be the school. The Latin American group showed that, besides the comunidad de base, traditional movements like the Legion of Mary could generate valid small communities. The feeling was that we should not confine our search for the small community to the new forms of community. It could happen within the old forms.
8. An important point, perhaps latent in the other three, emerged in the Africa group: a natural small community, if left to its own instincts, tends to become inward looking. Its members will be extremely community minded - but only to the other members of their community. Only the faith can make them look beyond the borders of their community.

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Natural small communities, therefore, should themselves be evangelized - in the process of attempting to make them agents of evangelization.

9. New forms of ministries would probably be necessary as laymen assume their responsibilities in these communities. Two groups took this for granted but did not go into details. One point, however, emerged: ministries should not turn laymen into clericals, or worse, "small fathers".
10. The third concept, dialogue, proved to be difficult to specify. The groups, therefore, restricted themselves to : a) renewing the plea that people try it, showing that it is not the monopoly of experts and, b) specifying some of the basic attitudes essential to those who engage in it.
11. The attitudes listed were:
 - a desire to learn from the other party
 - service, (that is not proselytism) to the other party
 - on-going personal conversion, as God's plan unfolds
 - a sharing of all one has (from welfare to liturgy)
 - an ecumenical stance;
 - an honest effort to de-Westernize one's concepts of Christianity.
12. The Africa, Islam and Oriental groups reported deep reluctance, on the part of laymen, to promote contacts with non-Christians. Its roots were traced to ignorance about them and to unwillingness to compromise one's Faith. They agreed the members of our Institute could do much to help laymen overcome this reluctance.
13. The fourth concept, non Christians and non believers was not difficult to develop, except in the case of Latin America, where the group agreed to consider as such all those who had drifted away from Christian life and practice and especially the Marxists. A careful distinction was made by the Oriental Religions meeting: many Japanese consider themselves as Christians but do not ask for baptism. The Islam group briefly reviewed the situation in the various countries and made the crucial (and connected) point that not all those who are considered as Muslim by Muslims are, in fact, Muslims. Race and religion often mesh - but not always.
14. Besides the 4 mentioned above, we had planned for two other groups, one for Western Industrialized areas and another for Marxist areas. No one turned up. I read this sign as a desire of the SEDOS membership to concentrate on the traditional mission areas - Africa, Latin America, Asia, at least for the time being - as the "destinataires" of the kind of evangelization the SEDOS Group is interested in.
15. But it could also be an expression of a search for a concept to distinguish the "evangelization" we would like to talk about from that which everybody seems to be thinking about now. That concept could be the one of cross cultural evangelization or, as the

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Lausanne Congress called it, EA. It ties up with the definition we once gave of our Charisma: the missionary is that person who is willing and able to live in a culture other than his own for the sake of the Gospel. The whole idea is to introduce "cultural distance" as a criterion for distinguishing various types of evangelization. If we go to our own fellow baptized in a Western culture, then the cultural distance is minimal - E.1. If we move on to the Marxists, around us, it increases - E2. But if we go to Black Africa, then it is E3 - or cross cultural.

16. E3 is, of course the most difficult of the three and I wonder whether we should not keep it to a minimum, restricting it to those areas which can never be reached by local churches. In that case, the whole discussion of laymen as the bearers of evangelization would be thrown into another light. I think we were assuming all the time, in the group that laymen would be involved in E1 and E2 and that here they could do a better job than overseas missionaries. Does this mean that the members of our Institutes should be concentrating on cross cultural evangelization? The "expatriate" liability would evaporate cross cultural has to be expatriate! It could imply an enlargement of the area hitherto reserved for laymen and a consequent shrinking of that reserved for the "traditional" missionary. This, in turn, would imply a sharpening of the profile of the cross cultural missionaries - a profile of immediate interest to our Institutes, responsible for their training and support. In managerial jargon, they would be assigned the toughest job - but they would also be provided with a better job description! It is perhaps at this point that the preparatory meetings could be plugged in to today's study groups.