

SOCIAL RENEWAL IN THE CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

A straight-from-the shoulder talk by Rev. Finbar Smyth, OP, at a Congress for the Religious Women in South Africa, December 1974.

I have never been a Mother General or Provincial, but since what I have to say may increase some problems for you I wish you to know that I realise the strains upon you: shortage of sisters, having to close disreputable and loved institutions, problems of having many aging sisters and conflict of ideas between older and younger, sisters disturbed and leaving, and so on. On this generation of higher superiors has fallen what even like a demolition of the work of your predecessors, and the demand upon you of taking the religious life out of the framework of a passing religious and cultural and social set-up, and renewing it in a totally different human life style. As that friend of nuns, Cardinal Suenens remarked, we pass through a century every five years now. The chief consolation, for you who preside over the period of change and chaos, is that it will probably be over in twenty-five years. There will probably be only 10% of the churchgoers there were in 1950, and only 10% of the nuns, but both will have had to work themselves out in the new world and will be a new thing.

If it is any consolation to you, my job, as secretary to the Bishops' Conference Commission for Justice and Peace, seems to have an outlook much the same. There is no sign of the blind social forces that govern social and racial problems listening to the witness of the Church. The only thing that one can hope for with any surety is that a sufficient number of Christians will have listened, and so changed their lives, as to make it clear to the age that is to come, here or in India or China or South America, when Christianity seemed to be aligned with the harshest forces of selfishness and oppression this was not the real meaning of Christ. I am not for China and India here because, since the colonial period, the white man, the Christian world has been in much the same relation to the black man as white to black in South Africa, appropriating the land and the much wealth and land per person as the others, having a monopoly of economic strength and power. They might be good men, for identifying the name of Christianity and Christian culture with that for money and power. The poor of the world may yet, as a world body, rise against it. This is part of the reason for Popes writing social encyclicals.

I make no excuse for speaking to you in crisis language. If I may be so blunt, the last people to believe that the extraordinary is coming are able and competent people who are able to manage and ride situations. The rulers of the last age did not see Communism and Nazism coming, just as the present rulers of the Church did not see the Reformation, nor the loss of faith in the present generation, coming. This is why there are necessary commentator or stimulator jobs such as mine in the Church, in my case to ask questions such as these: Should we be concentrating so much on building churches and halls, and not rather sharing the money of the Church with the poor and the seriously ill? Should we be preserving institutions at the expense of paying unemployment wages? Should we be so careful to keep in with public authorities and ruling castes in order to continue our pastoral work? Or should we be risking more unpopularity and perhaps even social proscription in order to clear the name of Christ, for this generation and the next, of any compromise and conformity with unjust social systems?

There is an interesting thought for those who think the Church is long experienced, and that we cannot be so far wrong in anything we do, which came to me in ten years of teaching history of world cultures and of the Church to Seminary students. The human race has existed for two million years. From Christ back to Abraham and the beginning of the revelation of faith is only two thousand. From Christ to now is only two thousand and the human race may be destined to last another two million. The whole of Church history up to date may occupy only two or three pages in a Church history to be written two hundred thousand years from now, a spit on a hot iron. We may be only in the infancy of Christianity yet, only in the infancy of forms of the religious life, only in the infancy of getting the full meaning of the Gospels.

In my particular line, of social love and justice, there is an additional interesting thought. Now for the first time the Church exists in the western world as a free missionary association. For three hundred years it was persecuted by the Roman Emperors, then established by them and later European rulers and the official religion of states. This has given us a sense (for which there is no foundation in the Gospels) of duty to control the conduct of nations, of educational and welfare systems, and of social movements. From the middle ages to the nineteenth century the Church was so bound to the state that it was the minister of education and social welfare, Popes claimed the right to depose kings, and Emperors had a veto on Papal elections, the Church and later the Churches claimed the right to control education, even up to the university level. Even now the Church wishes to control divorce laws or public modesty laws for unbelievers.

The whole of this position of public authority and control, and the great educational and welfare institutions that went with it, is now changing. Not only is it swept away in Russia or China, but some new townships being built in Europe are not even allowing for Church sites. If little flocks wish to meet for religion, any religion, they must meet in houses or build halls on their residential sites. This immense change, which of course lies as a sort of social instinct in the new youth behind the dearth of vocations for orders which have large institutions, is far from being tragedy. It relieves us of the sense of duty to control public life, enables us to examine the whole meaning of the Gospel anew, and of vocation under the evangelical Councils anew. We are escaped from a thousand years when kings rather than Church communities chose Bishops, and chose the men who would be tolerant of their corrupt social systems.

I dwell upon this, our infancy and the pedagogic state the Church has existed in as linked with national and social cultures and systems, because it has obscured certain parts of the Gospels we are now free to realise. I wish to take a few examples.

The first is that you need never do evil, the smallest evil, in order that good may come. In fact you must not. We have always said this, but in practice the bond with state systems and sense of obligation to assert public influence and have great institutions has obscured it. It has obscured it even in saints. It is not that there has been a lack of sanctity, total dedication and love and will to do the will of God, but even saints did not see what we can now see. The Church accepted slavery, and there is even a case on record of a Pope, canonized, giving a slave to a friend as a Christmas present. St. Bernard organised crusades which ended in

scandalous treachery and left tens of thousands of people homeless. Armed force and torture were used by Popes and Bishops to impose faith, and laws approved by the Church deprived Jews or unbelievers of ordinary human rights. In the past age Church institutions were endowed by profiteers with money made by grinding the faces of the poor. In our own times I have known cases, which I am prepared to itemise without names or places, where the best of clergy and religious, far better people than me, out of a sense of duty to maintain these institutional forms and public authority, have got money by dubious or positively dishonest means for the propagation of the Gospel; have been guilty of deception in evading taxes or customs duties; have used public money accounts to buy for the convent or church; have overcharged or underpaid in buying and selling; have paid bad wages and imposed unjust conditions of work; have cheated in public examinations to maintain the honour of church institutions; have falsified election results or used wrongful pressures in them; and in this country have conformed with a myriad of social injustices in order to maintain public influence.

I have made many or most of these mistakes myself, except some such as giving friends slaves for Christmas, and in a way thank God for it. If I dwell on more now it is because I see an immense liberation of spirit ahead of us. We can shake free of any form of statecraft or competition with the world in a new and free Church.

All this evasion of natural justice has been done for a supernatural end, and in innocence. Unconsciously the end was made to justify the means. I wish to take one or two very obvious examples.

The first and most obvious is in the wages we have paid and are paying to blacks in this country. I recently said to Archbishop Fitzgerald that we should give up preaching the Gospel and pay good wages, and he mildly told me I was exaggerating. But if a priest decides he must build a new church, or a superior that he or she must build a new classroom or laboratory, and neither is paying just wages, what are they doing? They are using money already owed for services, as direct a debt as is that to one's grocer, money belonging by right to the worker, for an ecclesiastical purpose. Moreover, while appearing to propagate the Gospel, they are scandalising the whole inarticulate underworld of the black poor. A case of a convent institution paying wages and giving conditions of work worse than the surrounding whites, truly shocking, (and all done in innocence), was recently reported to me a thousand miles from where it happened, and with established facts from a survey done by an expert among its employees. It is becoming a matter of cynical comment among blacks that we, in spite of all our fine sayings, pay whites and blacks differently for the same work and competence. I know most orders and institutions are now trying to clear up this matter. I do not want to suggest that we cripple existing institutions and parish organisations by over sudden change. I only want to take this as an example of where we have subconsciously, made the end justify the means, and where, as our scale of schools and institutions decreases, we have a perfect opportunity of getting our priorities right; that we plan nothing and do nothing unless we have first of all got our budget of the money we already owe in wages cleared up; that we cease to make the end justify the means, to subject the order of natural justice made by God to supernatural ends. Here is something of an infancy of the Church, and its involvement with public institutions, that we can now out-grow.

We got into such ruts by being identified with what Jesus called the world, unredeemed social systems, and competing with them on their own ground, most particularly where money was needed for building and institutions.

You do not need me to tell you the false positions in which you were placed. Without grants you had to build schools and run them for whites as efficient as those with unlimited public money behind them. They had to take the children of Catholics who could or would not pay along with those of the better off and give them the same high standards and status, using the fees paid by better-off Protestants to cover the gap. However little the Sisters used on themselves they had to cut down every expense. I hope it possible for you to realise that I am not criticising. I am only showing the trap in which we were all caught, the clergy who asked for the institutions, the Sisters who ran them.

And what were the wider results. In South Africa we were led by the colonial white public opinion into having separate institutions for white and black, even before the law required it, in many cases. Blacks are quick now to remind us of this, just as they say no Government can force us to have separate institutions, because the choice as to whether we have institutions at all is ours only.

Then again we had and have parallel institutions in many places giving the same service to white and black, for instance senior schools, in which the value of buildings for the whites is ten to twenty times that of those provided for the black, a bigger disproportion than the common South African pattern of white incomes twelve times those of black and giving the appearance of valuing persons accordingly. Whites could demand, by their status and by paying, so in many places we placed more and more nuns and brothers at their disposal. It was not uncommon to find fifteen or twenty religious serving the white school, two or three the black. This imbalance in our institutions is one of the questions I know you are all paying most serious attention to now. It is also one of the questions asked by blacks to which the Bishops directed our attention for the Holy Year and Reconciliation in their Plenary Session this year.

If one replies to the modern sophisticated black that the whites pay for their institutions, he has a ready answer: they pay largely with black money. Since black labour is unprotected by a parliamentary vote or by trade unions, in all wage paying the white receives far more than his share, money actually owed to blacks; and since they cannot compete for better jobs, the whites always get the better ones, even if less qualified. If you want to know the value of black labour there is only one simple and infallible test: get the same work done by whites, as it is in Germany or France or England, and see what it costs you. I am sorry to have to introduce such an undermining thought into this address, but it is better for us to know now what Christianity and its institutions may appear like to the socially conscious blacks than to find out later, to our unhappiness and the detriment of the Church.

A second heart principle of Christianity that has been obscured I quote simply from a great theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas. He says benevolence, wishing to help others, is not sufficient to constitute Christian charity. Charity must be friendship, wishing to be with others in the give and take manner of friendship. This is the very heart principle of the Incarnation. God did not redeem us from above, but from alongside. Our Lord took His

body and food and support and even His cultural habits from those whom He came to redeem. As Man He needed the companionship support of Lazarus and Martha and Mary and of the apostles. He sat and ate and was at home with the outcasts of the society of His time, people who were ritually unclean to the Jew and despised by the rich Roman-Greek colonists and elite of Palestine. He called the grubby crowds His brothers, and it was not only words, He loved them, made Himself part of them, cultured or uncultured.

Coming to mission countries from our home countries, which regarded their cultures as necessarily superior in every way to those of the people to whom we came, and coming as part of the establishment and colonial social system, this caused us to make many mistakes. I would not even call them mistakes, rather a part of our infancy in the Gospel. You can not say it is a mistake if a Sub A child fails to do decimals.

First we mistook benevolence for charity. We felt called to do things to people and for them rather than be with them. We offered education, Hygiene skills, medical aid. But, in spite of the Holy See hammering at missionaries, if I may use the phrase, for four hundred years, to find indigenous vocations and adapt our social customs, all was done as from above, even keeping the people evangelised at a social distance, imposing the cultural forms of our own people.

What we should have done first is to make friends, to sit in peoples' houses and learn their ways and be with them, and where convenient give as much as possible of technical aid in education or medicine, which are only indirectly connected with faith and love. We even let the people demand the wrong things from us, ask us for progress instead of companionship in Christ.

We made no attempt to sound and absorb the depths of their feeling and culture. We did not notice that India had a contemplative spirit from which we could learn until the hippies turned east for mysticism; nor that the African tribe had a mutuality and social justice such that no one in it could be an orphan, or unprotected widow, nor starve while others had food, nor anyone be without property and dignity--while people could lack all these in London or Paris--until the anthropologists pointed it out to us. We imposed our art and musical forms, without trying to develop theirs. Friendship love means that both must give and both receive. We gave, benevolence, not seeing where we could receive, be formed. Yet it is a simple incarnational axiom that anyone who would convert Africa should become part Africanised. (Most West Africans, at least, would reject this. "Be yourself and let us be ourselves" is their motto. ED.)

We brought with us the European complex about work, developing with the industrial revolution which made what a man produced more important than what he was. This caused us to be over cautious about giving responsibility to the locals, who had not our technical efficiencies, and also about fostering local vocations, or giving local high positions in the Church. It caused us to justify living at a far higher standard than the local people, in housing, clothes, food, transport facilities, all sorts of amenities. It was for the sake of the work. The idea that we might have gone deeper by just being like them and with them did not come up.

Religious might have known better--again I do not say should, we were infants learning by hard experience--because of their vow of Poverty. But first of all we had the tight form of cloister, and customs formed entirely

upon later European psychology. It was difficult to introduce people of very different cultural habits into these, and for the white religious, under their enormous and incessant pressure of work, to make the adjustment to new community relations and social habits.

The common interpretations of the Vow of Poverty failed to help. They stressed a limited form of ascetical poverty and self-denial, and sharing in the community of the religious. But they did not stress sharing with the whole social community around, the whole body of the faithful, except via education and welfare work and occasional alms, all of which were private preserves, administered solely by the religious community.

All this, cloister and the form of interpretation of Poverty, caused us to miss an essential point. Again to quote St. Thomas, he gives three reasons for the Poverty of Christ: so that no one should say he preached for gain; so that he should be free of property anxieties; and finally, so that he should be just like anybody else, and no one, not even the poorest, should fear to approach him as brother. This element in poverty, making it the other side of Charity understood as friendship and unity with all men, we sadly missed. We were a people apart.

You may wonder why I speak less about what you should teach of social justice in your schools. I am taking for granted, I hope not wrongly, that you are all seeing that what the Popes and our Bishops have taught is taught in your schools, even at the risk of criticism and unpopularity.

But my reason is much deeper. It is that I am convinced that people have all heard what Christianity has to say. They are now waiting and watching to see what we will do. Will we compromise, or make the clear fulfilment of justice where we control it as in wages, our first commitment? Will we compromise, or insist that in Christian communities, however many may refuse to take it, we will tolerate no difference on grounds of race? Will we see that some sort of sharing, a total sharing, not only among ourselves but with the whole community, is the necessary condition of true charity seen as friendship and brotherhood? Will we be willing to be born again of the people among whom we work, or remain in our separate cultural stronghold?

This is not only the question for religious, but for all whites, and for the same reason for better-off black Christians. Voluntary poverty, the will to have less in money, power and privilege, to be willing for their status to be reduced so that the others' may increase, the will to be friendly in social love and not hold themselves apart, the will to do absolute justice wherever they control it as in wage paying, is becoming their last hope of making friends for Christ in Africa and with Africa.

At many times in Church history people have thought the end of the world was coming. They regarded the Church as old, fully experienced, and complete in knowledge. Now our perspectives are very different. Under the older order, in a way right for its time, your congregations have achieved much: taught the faith, been in the roots of the growth of a new people by education, by the lesson of selfless dedication and work, and most by love. But I still think we have a long way to go to plumb the full meaning of social love and justice as taught in the Gospel, and I thank God we can realise our mistakes were those we should have made, and there may be tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years ahead of us to go deeper. When I think how much we may have yet to learn from the Gospel, and how much time ahead to do it in, it makes me feel quite young again.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES - GOVERNMENT BY TERROR

What have Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Uganda the Philippines and South Korea in common? All countries of the Third World, all so called "developing" countries (though South Korea has reached the point of industrial takeoff), all former colonies, you might reply. But they have one other common characteristic. They are all countries where the population lives not simply under dictatorship, or even authoritarianism, but under terror. In Uganda estimates of those who have been murdered - on who have "disappeared", to use the local euphemism - range from 50,000 to 250,000. No one knows or is allowed to know the exact figure. When the Chief Justice attempted to uphold the rule of law he was "kidnapped" by soldiers and has not been heard of since. Several Cabinet ministers, fearing not just for their positions but their lives, have fled the country. The army has been purged of "subversive elements" i.e. soldiers not tribally connected with General Amin. There is no persecution of the Churches as such and indeed the General has made several gestures of friendship towards individual indigenous and expatriate clergy. But no one can say where the axe will fall next and a wary discretion characterizes the attitude of the churches towards the regime.

In Chad, which has been plagued by civil war for years, President Tombalbaye in an attempt to unify his multi-tribal country has launched a Chadian authenticity Campaign, insisting that adult citizens (beginning with government ministers and civil servants) submit to the "Yondo" initiation rite, under pain of losing all civil rights. This rite involves an oath of loyalty to the President; to break it is to merit death according to ancestral tradition. Tombalbaye, who was once a Baptist Catechist, claims that this return to customary initiation rites is neither anti-Christian nor anti-Islam, but both Islamic and Christian religious leaders have condemned the practice. Many Protestant missionaries have been expelled from the country, and reports reaching France say that several Chadian Protestant pastors have been brutally tortured before being killed for refusing to submit to the initiation rites. Some Christians have been buried alive according to these reports. Catholics number about 175,000 in a population of about 4 millions and there has been no official declaration by the Church authorities concerning either the rites or the terror tactics of the government. They may be biding their time, since many ethnic groups within Chad have never accepted Yondo customs - the latter belong to Tombalbaye's native area - and may nullify the effects of the government campaign by determined opposition. But meanwhile terror stalks this war-torn country.

But perhaps the most appalling reign of terror exists in Equatorial Guinea which has a population of only 400,000 people (probably less), 90% of whom are Christian. President Macias, who was educated in Catholic schools but later espoused a brand of Marxism, has given himself the title of "Unique Miracle of Equatorial Guinea". He claims (like General Amin) to have prophetic visions and has given the national youth movement the slogan "Apart from Macias, no God". Since 1969 the President has crushed all opposition and abolished the judicial and legislative bodies. Thousands have been imprisoned and tortured and some estimates say that a quarter of the population has fled to neighbouring countries, chiefly the Cameroon. Lately it was reliably reported that Vice President Eyegue had been murdered by Macias's agents; his predecessor in the office, Mr Bosio, is said to have committed suicide. In June 1974, 118 dissidents were executed in the presence of their families. It is even said (but not possible to confirm) that all professional people who

have not already fled abroad have been killed. It all seems too incredible to be true - but then so was Belsen. The Churches have been accused of being "subversive agents of neo-colonialism and imperialism", and the ruling party has demanded that all Catholic Churches be converted into storehouses for agricultural produce ! One Church has already been converted into an arms depot.

The situations in the Philippines and South Korea have received wide coverage in the world press and less needs to be said about them. In South Korea the Churches have been prominent in the opposition to President Park's attempts to institutionalize his authoritarian rule on the grounds that the Korean people are fully capable of operating democratic institutions. Many opponents of the President (Churchmen, trade-unionists, student former politicians) including Bishop Iji have been imprisoned. However Park seems to be retreating from his earlier extreme position. Since his victory in a government-managed referendum last week he has declared an amnesty for certain categories of political prisoners. Archbishop Sin of Manila, who has his own troubles at home, has sent a letter to President Park urging him to free the Bishop and other political prisoners ; more significantly he has also written to President Ford urging him to use American influence to persuade its client-regime in Seoul to respect human rights.

President Marcos of the Philippines exercises despotic powers through martial law decrees though his opponents claim that constitutionally he ceased to be President in Dec. 1973. There can be no denying that democracy (a carbon-copy of the American system) simply was not working in the Philippines. I suppose one could say that the system had never really taken root in the Philippine reality (or to use the current jargon had not been "contextualized"!). Party strife had spilled over into violence, corruption of the grossest sort was accepted as normal and gangsterism made the streets of the cities unsafe by night or day. Firm government was needed, but it is doubtful if Marcos, a typical product of the existing system, was the man to give it. He imposed martial-law by decree and the level of violence throughout the country has undoubtedly sharply declined as a consequence. But all civil and constitutional liberties have been restricted and thousands of "dissidents" (as all opponents of the regime are called) have been imprisoned and in many verifiable cases tortured. There are also many cases on record of vicious murders by the military - especially the military police - of people said to have resisted arrest. Several prisoners have been shot "while attempting to escape". Many clergy of all denominations have been placed in detention for "fomenting dissension".

Opposition to Marcos's policies has been gathering strength. Naturally the former politicians are in the forefront, but Church leaders have also made it clear that not only do they oppose the excesses of the martial-law regime but the very system itself, since it violates human rights. Time and again Archbishop Sin has written to the President and his officials urging that violations of the martial law regulations themselves be investigated and offenders punished. The Archbishop wields a clever pen and his deceptively mild but sharply pointed letters - to which he gives maximum publicity - have undoubtedly embarrassed the regime. Criticism has also been growing in the U.S. Congress and Marcos is very dependent on the U.S. for aid and military supplies (for he has also a civil war with Moslem dissidents in the Southern islands on his hands). He has therefore decided to hold a referendum in which the people will be asked whether or not the state of martial law, which accords full powers to the President, should be continued. He hopes to

gain a big majority in a carefully "handled" vote and thus confound his critics at home and abroad. And since the existing martial law regulations curb freedom of speech, the press and assembly there is little opportunity for the opposition to put its point of view. The Association of Major Religious Superiors has urged a boycott of the referendum which is bound to be a farce, and at an ecumenical meeting on 5 Feb. 1975 several Protestant and Catholic religious leaders including one bishop have given the same advice - even though abstainers will incur a sentence of six months imprisonment. In a "Declaration of Conscience" the Christian leaders state their unwillingness to be a party to "forging chains" for the Philippine people. Perhaps the most pungent-and characteristically witty - judgment on the value of a Marcos sponsored referendum is that made by Archbishop Sin, who commented that in just such a vote Barabbas received more votes than Christ !

To read of such repression and viciousness used as instruments of government can, and should horrify us. For human nature is degraded and human dignity spurned - and the perpetrators are more degraded than the persecuted. This is no diatribe against strong government or even against dictatorship as such : these may restrict freedom but we all must sacrifice something for the common good and special cases often demand special remedies. But we as Christians are often accused of either closing our eyes to non-Communist repression, or (which is perhaps becoming increasingly true) making blanket condemnations of all forms of government which do not conform to modern democratic usages - despite the glaring evidence that such usages have failed, or been misused, time and time again. No, we must be realistic. There are many military regimes, dictatorships and one-party states which rule with reasonable efficiency, tolerance, honesty and for the common good e.g. Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania (or at least the Tanganyikan part), Kenya, Iran, and Indonesia. When one sees the dangers that confront Portugal right now one can be more understanding of those who advocate "gradualism" in Spain. Even Solzhenitsyn admits that if Russia abandoned the Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat (so called), a strong authoritarian form of government would be necessary for a considerable period. While he and we condemn totalitarianism in all its forms as degrading to human nature we must recognize that what works in a particular set of circumstances, and at the same time guarantees basic human rights, may have to be settled for. But on the other hand when we see evil - terror, repression and tyranny - used as methods of government then we should not hesitate to condemn it. Can we do more ? Yes ! In many cases such vicious Governments are propped up in one way or another - usually for short sighted military or economic reasons-by governments of which we are citizens e.g. the Philippines and S. Korea by the U.S.A, Chad by France, Equatorial Guinea, to some extent, by Spain. We can use our influence to spread the truth and influence our governments to use their influence in turn to remedy matters.

But spreading the truth implies that we first seek it out honestly and without partisan bias. Too often in the past we have accepted the versions of the truth or the assurances given by those whom we would like to believe. Unfortunately some of the documentation services on which we should be able to rely for objective evidence - including church-associated ones - make no pretence at being objective - they lean either Right or Left.

But once we are convinced of the truth, the Institutes working in the country or the general area where atrocities are happening should approach the appropriate Vatican Secretariat (usually of State) and urge that the whole weight of Church influence be used to defend the weak and powerless. If the Church cannot be a prophetic voice in this sphere then where can she be effective? Remember Christ's choice of quotation when he spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Is. 61/1-2).

--L. Skelly, SMA

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*I was hungry
and you formed a humanitarian club
and discussed my hunger.
Thank you*

*I was imprisoned
and you crept off quietly
to your chapel in the cellar
and prayed for my release.
Thank you*

*I was naked
and in your mind
you debated the morality of my appearance.*

*I was sick
and you knelt and thanked God
for your health.*

*I was homeless
and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter
of the love of God.*

*I was lonely
and you left me alone
to pray for me.*

*You seem so holy
so very close to God.
But I'm still very hungry
and lonely
and cold.*

And I thank you.

TASK FORCE ON PRIMARY EVANGELIZATION - PROJECT 1

The Task Force met at 4 pm on February 5th. 1975 at the Sedos Secretariat.

Present: Fr. D. Colombo PIME, Fr. F. Kapusciak CM, Fr. J. Meehan SPS, Sr. F. Webster SCMM-M, Fr. M. Zago OMI.

Secretary: Fr. L. Skelly SMA

Suggested Form of the Project

1. Preliminary Assumptions

Recognize that the term "Primary Evangelization" has several meanings and applications. It can be applied (1) to people who have never heard the Gospel but are likely to be receptive to it, (2) it may mean merely witnessing to Gospel values among people of strong religious convictions, and (3) it may mean preaching or witnessing to the Gospel within the post-Christian societies of the Western and Communist Worlds.

2. Study

- a) Is Primary Evangelization a matter of urgency since the Holy Spirit is at work in all religious dispensations?
- b) If we wish to evangelize the "unreached" in the sense of (1) above, then we must decide what sort of Church presence we wish to create: need it be along traditional "missionary" lines or should it be on much simpler lines organizationally and materially (as in New Testament model)?
- c) Is Primary Evangelization the proper task of the local Churches (despite the tribal, cultural and historical obstacles that exist between one "people" and another)? Or is the expatriate missionary still needed and not just "useful"?
- d) If the Institutes still have a role in Primary Evangelization - and originally this was their special charism - what should be done (in cooperation with the Episcopal Conferences) to make a coordinated effort to avail of the time that is left to us, before many of the areas where unreached peoples live are closed to us for one reason or another?

3. Documentation and Experiences

- a) Seek lists of unreached peoples: AACC for Africa, ICWE and SCEP (per USG - Commission VI) for other places.
- b) Then with the help of the Generalates and Episcopal Conferences decide on categories of such people i.e. the completely untouched, those marginally evangelized, those likely to be receptive/unreceptive, those among whom only witness and dialogue are possible, the problem of the urban apostolate.

- c) Find out from Generalates and our own Documentation Section the forms and methods of Evangelization best suited to different categories. Field and case studies should be sought. What has worked in, for example, the last ten years? What is working now?
- d) Try to find out from the Generalates what they are doing in their formation and on-going formation courses to stress the necessity, even yet, for primary evangelization in its various forms.
- e) Consult with Dr. David Barrett (an expert on Frontier Evangelization) who will be in Rome in early April.

4. Action

This should logically follow from 2 (d). Meeting for African Collaboration (MAC/RCA) could be of great assistance as regards projects for that Continent.

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= HEALTH MEETING

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= It was decided at the gathering of Jan. 23 (SEDOS 75/74) that a follow up meeting should

= be held later at which some of the topics mentioned in the Group Reports could be gone

= into in greater detail. All those interested in continuing the discussion are invited

= to a meeting to be held at 4 pm on 6 March at the SCMM-M Generalate, Via di Villa Troili 3

= Among the topics to be discussed :

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= 1. The communication gap between "health workers" properly so called and others concer-

= ned in the healing ministry e.g. priests, social workers.

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= 2. What do we mean by "development" in the phrase "the development of the local Church ?

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= If you are coming bring along for reference Bulletins 75 n° 4, 74 n° 20 (G. Simmons's

= talk) and 74 n° 37 (G. Prové's talk).

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PROJECT 2: SIGNS OF THE TIMES

This project would place primary and other forms of evangelization and mission in the right context: God's salvific plan as it is revealed in "signs" of its "activation" in contemporary history. It would represent an effort to disentangle these signs and interpret them in terms of our mission. It would also provide the necessary link with other groups within the Church. The same signs, in fact, are progressively "sensitizing" all such groups, leaving to each the response which best suits its identity.

1. PURPOSE

- (a) List and up-date long term trends in the life of the contemporary World and Church.
- (b) Formulate criteria for discerning the trends which are Signs of God's action (from those which are not).
- (c) Apply such criteria to interpret the meaning of the Signs (of God's action) which emanate from the trends.
- (d) Formulate guidelines to help missionaries -
 - i) analyse local situation
 - ii) detect Signs of God's action in it
 - iii) discern the meaning of these Signs

2. METHOD

- (a) Documentation
 - synthesize documents on current signs
 - step up "trend report" feature in weekly bulletin
 - locate literature on discernment criteria
- (b) Study
 - form a group to formulate criteria for analysis and discernment for use
 - 1) on an international level
 - 2) on local levels
 - invite Development Working Group to "read" current human development and liberation trends in missionary terms
 - invite ad hoc groups to do the same for Youth, Popular Religiosity, Theology in context and other selected signs, as the Project itself requires.
- (c) Action
 - exchange with WCC-CWME and other agencies interested in the topic of Signs and Evangelization
 - communication of the results of our studies to missionaries.

PROJECT 3: SMALL COMMUNITIES

This project responds to what seems to be a common sign in evangelization patterns not covered by the primary one (project 1). It also provides continuity with the priority established by the Assembly before the Synod: laymen in small communities... its links with the Religious life and obvious. Small communities are here taken as groups of Christians in some communion with the organized Church.

1. PURPOSE

- (a) Identify major **types** of small communities
- (b) Identify constants in small community practice
- (c) Identify ministries which emerge from small communities
- (d) Identify the essential links of small communities with the local Church
- (e) Explore ways in which Men and Women Religious situate themselves in the emerging picture (i.e. which results from 1 - 4 above).

2. METHOD(a) Documentation

- link up with Pro Mundi Vita project on small communities and connected ministries
- collect small community experiences from missionaries
- prepare selected bibliographies on emerging trends in small community thought and practice
- synthesize and regularly update above

(b) Study

- check and develop conditions indicated by Synod for the small community pattern
- exchange and evaluate Institute experience - especially as regards Youth, Women, Poor (and other categories of "laity")

(c) Action

- Find out how action can be taken by Generalates on the conclusions of the above studies.

REPORT OF TASK FORCE ON ONGOING FORMATION - PROJECT 4

The Task Force met at 4 pm on February 6th. 1975 at the Sedos Secretariat.

Present: C. Bonivento PIME, J. Bouchard SJ, L. Chiesa PIME, F. George OMI, J. Gross CSSP,
A. Oosschot SCMM-M, E. Ryan SND-N, M.J. Tresch SSND, F. Viotto IMC.

Secretary: L. Skelly SMA

The Task Force recommended that the Study Group should:

1. STUDY

- (a) Find out from the Sedos Institutes what exactly they were doing about ongoing formation, renewal, updating, aggiornamento - whatever the process might be called.
- (b) Was the programme drawn up from "above" or after a lot of consultation from "below"?
- (c) How is it working? - Or if it is not working, why not?
- (d) How was the programme organized? Centralized in e.g. Rome? In provinces? In local Church? How was it financed?
- (e) If the programme came from Rome, how did Regional Superiors react?
- (f) Could such programmes be implemented in cooperation with other Institutes?
- (g) How much of the other three Projects i.e. Primary Evangelization, Small Communities, Signs of the Times, is included in such courses?
- (h) From all this data identify "constants" as far as possible.

2. DOCUMENTATION

- (a) Develop a list of facilities, detect useful courses and especially resource persons, and practitioners.
- (b) Use weekly Bulletin to describe results of the study.
- (c) Use weekly Bulletin to give trend reports on new methodology and experiences.

3. Action should be long range and emerge from the studies mentioned above. A long range view should be taken. A pertinent question raised was:

Why do we not make more use of the facilities and staff of the new Missionary Animation Centre at St. Peter's College?

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of SEDOS was held on Monday, February 17, 1975, at 16.15 at the Secretariat.

Present: Sr. M. Danita McGonagle SSND, Sr. M. Motte FMM, Fr. Ary Roest Croellius, SJ
Sr. C. Rombouts ICM, Fr. H. Van Hoof SMA, Sr. F. Webster SCMI-M

In the Chair: Br. Ch. Buttmer FSC - Secretary: Fr. B. Tonna.

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and approved (75/23)
2. Assembly: It was agreed that the Assembly would be asked to approve the four Projects, each formulated by a Task Force. Between them, the Projects would constitute the SEDOS programme - intended to translate priorities indicated by the December Assembly into practical cooperation in documentation, study and, eventually, action.
A speaker familiar with SEDOS and with the last Synod would be asked to offer motivation for the programme. Representatives from the four Task Forces would then join him in a panel. The Assembly would then ask the panel for clarifications about the objectives and methods of the Programme and its 4 Projects. To save time no presentations would be made but a one page specification of each Project, on the model prepared by the Task Force on Formation, would be circulated before the Assembly. About two hours would be dedicated to the Programme. After coffee-break, the Assembly would receive a report on the February meeting of the CWME in Figueira da Foz. After that, elections would be held to fill the post of Councillor (Woman), vacant after the resignation, because of heavy travel schedules, of Sr. J. Fanego FM
3. Executive: It was agreed to postpone the self evaluation of the Executive as a core group (item 3 on Agenda) for the next meeting. During this meeting plans would be drawn up for a special meeting of SEDOS Superiors General to assess current and possible objectives. Resources were becoming scarcer and we must be sure that such objectives were worthwhile.
4. Staff: The Executive Secretary reported that the post of Documentation Study Secretary would be vacant after June, 1975. A call for applications would be made. Persons belonging to member Institutes would be preferred. There could be other vacancies before August 75. The Staff situation could therefore usefully be reviewed.
The Treasurer informed the Committee that she had revised the contract forms in order to bring them closer to present reality. None of the Staff can benefit from the local insurance schemes and local contract formulas had to be readjusted accordingly, especially as regards pension schemes and sick leave. She suggested that full records should henceforth be kept of this and other kinds of leave.
5. The Executive Secretary reported briefly on his presence at the CWME meeting in Figueira de Foz, Portugal (75/106).
6. The Executive Committee will meet again on March 13 at 16.00 at the SSND Generalate

RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE SEDOS SECRETARIAT

A. GENERAL

The Executive Secretary is responsible to the President and to the Executive Committee and ensures that the policies laid down by the latter are executed.

The Office Manager is responsible to the Executive Secretary and sees to the execution of current projects by exercising general supervision over all departments of the Secretariat i.e. Documentation, Editorial and Secretarial.

Each member of the Secretariat has his/her specific duties as outlined under "Work Titles and Areas of Responsibility", but all are accountable to the Office Manager.

It is anticipated that the staff will work as a team under the leadership of the Executive Secretary and that, where necessary, each member will be willing to undertake tasks beyond his direct area of responsibility.

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B. WORK TITLES AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. The Executive Secretary:

- a) Directs the Secretariat through the Office Manager.
- b) Prepares projects for submission to the Assembly at the request of the President.
- c) Presents Quarterly Reports on Sedos activities to the Executive Committee.
- d) Assists at the meeting of the Assembly and Executive Committee and is responsible for their Minutes.
- e) Keeps in personal contact with the Generalates.
- f) Conducts liaison with other organizations.
- g) Responds to current concerns of membership through ad hoc research.

2. The Office Manager is responsible for:

- a) General direction and supervision of all Departments of the Secretariat.
- b) Correspondence.
- c) Appointments, including necessary follow-up.
- d) Organization of meetings i.e. Assembly of Generals, Executive Committee, Working Groups and Ad hoc Groups.
- e) Acting as secretary to all English language groups.
- f) Archives and files.
- g) Ad hoc research as required.

3. Receptionist and Secretary to French Groups is responsible for:

- a) Reception and telephone.
- b) Internal bookkeeping for Secretarial Department.
- c) Typing, duplication and dispatch of Bulletin.
- d) Dispatch of 'Joint Venture'.
- e) Ordering of office supplies and care of office equipment.
- f) Dealing with all French language correspondence and translation.
- g) Acting as Secretary to all French language groups.
- h) Dispatch of mail.
- i) Catering.

NEWS FROM AND FOR THE GENERALATES

1. MSC: Fr. E. Cuskelly left Rome for the Dominican Republic for a workshop on MSC spirituality (February 17-20). He will later be attending a Conference at MSC Renewal Centre, Shelby, Ohio, USA (February 24 - March 8), returning to Rome for Easter.

2. Some Coming Events

In addition to pilgrimages, the Holy Year in Rome will be the occasion of many missionary and international events, a few of which we are mentioning here:

- April 8 - 11: Assembly of the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences for the missions.
- April 13- 19: Assembly of the Rectors of seminaries for the missions, and in mission countries.
- April 18: XXth. General Assembly of Pax Romana.
- May 8: General Assdmbly of the Conferences of International Catholic Organizations.
- May 9 - 17: Meeting of the National Directors of the Pontifical Missionary Works.
- May 11- 18: World Symposium on Social Communications.
- May 12: General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis.
- May 12- 21: International Congress of Mariology.

The Charismatic Movement - World Congress, Rome, Pentecost, May 16 - 19, 1975

About 10.000 persons from all Continents will spend the Pentecost week-end in Rome, awaiting the coming of the Spirit.

The Congress will open at a general assembly on Friday, May 16, at 4 pm. The programme for Saturday, Pentecost Sunday and Monday contains meetings for all participants and also for 15 to 20 groups divided according to language. There will be conferences, prayer and liturgical celebrations.

Upon the request of the Pope, all speakers are Catholics. Among the guests, Cardinal Suenens and Cardinal Willibrands, Ralph Martin and Kevin Ranaghan will address the participants.

Pentecost, of course, will be the climax. The Eucharist will be celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica. A special audience with the Pope has been promised for Monday, May 19. On that day, the Congress will close with a Eucharistic celebration.

3. Renewal Course for Missionaries on Leave

An aggiornamento course for missionaries on leave is being arranged by the four Italian Missionary Institutes (PIME, Consolata, Xaverian, Verona Fathers), to be held at the International Centre for Missionary Promotion, Viale Mura Aurelie 4, for 5 weeks (May 18-June 21). The course is in Italian, for priests, brothers and sisters who already had a previous mission experience and are to return to the missions. Further information available from the director of the course, Fr. F. Colombo, Missionari

4. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 5TH WCC ASSEMBLY

The 5th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the central theme "Jesus Christ frees and unites" will be held in Nairobi, capital of Kenya, from the 20th November to the 10th December 1975.

Both at the headquarters in Geneva and in Nairobi there is intense activity in preparation for these sittings, which will be attended by 2,500 delegates, representatives of the 271 members churches spread over 90 countries, as well as by the administrative personnel and various guests.

The papers for discussion which will be presented to the study of six working sections have been finalised. They deal with the following themes:

- Confessing Christ today;
- In search of the community: the joint search of people belonging to various beliefs, cultures and ideologies;
- Education in view of the liberation of the community;
- The structures of injustice and the struggle for liberation;
- Development of man; the ambiguities of power, technology and the quality of life;
- The requirements for unity.

The local committee, which has the task of the material preparations in Nairobi, has done everything possible to make the Churches of Kenya interested in active participation in the Assembly.

The AACCC (All Africa Conference of Churches) has already appointed people in various parts of Africa to prepare talks on subjects which might contribute, in the African context, to a cultural and theological orientation of the participants and of the local churches. As pattern centres of African culture for these talks Gambia, Ghana, Zaïre, Dahomey, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, Malawi and the Cameroon have been chosen.

5. NEEDED: RESIDENCE FOR THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

&& As a religious community of families bound together by the task of serving the Church, && the Ecumenical Institute (see SEDOS 74/898) has hoped for some time that their work && would contribute to the great rethinking of "the religious" that is going on today. && Thus around the world they live as communities with a common life of worship, study && and discipline.

&& Since their housing needs are similar to those of the traditional religious orders && it has been possible in many parts of the world to use houses or parts of houses de- && signed for this purpose.

&& In Rome they are looking for space that would accomodate more or less fifteen people, && for a year or longer, in or near the city. This might take the form of an unused wing && of a large religious house, or a house in need of caretakers while waiting to be sold && or renovated, or part of a retreat or school facility, or a gatehouse or guesthouse && not currently in use-whatever would provide accomodation as well as some common wors- && hip, refectory and study space.

&& Currently living in an apartment at Via Monzambano 5, interno 5, tel. 49.28.63, they && would be glad to hear about any possibilities of this nature.