

THE POPULATION CONTROL MOVEMENT--A CAMPAIGN TO DENY SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT by

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The father of the modern debate on population was Thomas Robert Malthus. His famous Essay on the Principle of Population first appeared in 1789 and was an overnight best-seller. Since that date, his essay has sired thousands of children and today the descendants of Malthus are the dominant race in the world of birth-control literature.

The great appeal of Malthus was that he made the poor responsible for their poverty. The poor, said Malthus, insist on indulging in large families, And as population grows in the ratio of 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, whilst food production can only grow in the ratio of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, the numbers of people will always outrun the amount of food. Starvation and poverty are the 'natural' result.

All this was, of course, ordained by God on High. The only escape, said Malthus, was for the poor to practise sexual restraint.

But Malthus's ideas did not go unchallenged. William Godwin, an early socialist and father-in-law of the poet Shelley, was to contest the Malthusian analysis. He claimed that the real cause of poverty and starvation was the unjust organization of society and the unfair distribution of wealth. The solution, he said, was not sexual restraint, but social change.

If we substitute contraception for sexual restraint, the same debate rages today.

The Apostles of Birth Control

Rising living standards, trade unions, social welfare and the acceptance of family planning have cut the ground from under the modern Malthusian's feet. But the Malthusians have simply shifted to new ground--the Third World. From now on the poor classes slowly took on a darker hue and more distant position. They came to be situated less and less in Manchester and New York and more and more in India, China, Africa, and Latin America.

So, by 1917, Dr. A. Robinson could write in a preface to a book called "Uncontrolled Procreation or Fertility Against Civilization": 'It is our duty to preach birth-control in our own countries, the countries we like to call civilized. But we have an equal, if not greater duty, to disseminate the principle and practice of birth control in the backward nations, the nations with a higher birth rate. It is of the greatest importance for the future of mankind that the gospel of birth-control be preached incessantly to the peoples of Russia, China, Japan, India, Mexico, etc. It is not good for the civilized nations to reduce their birth rate to the desired minimum, and the rather backward races to breed without restriction. Troubles would certainly ensue in the following years. It behoves us to communicate with minds that understand us in different countries and to exhort them to become apostles of the religion of birth-control. If we cannot find indigenous apostles we shall have to send our own."

And this is precisely what has happened. Family planning the world over has come through the influence and intervention of Western apostles.

The modern Malthusian speaks of dependency ratios and KAP surveys but underneath the veneer of scientific jargon there is still the Malthusian motive: the will to control the population of the poor rather than the consumption of the rich, the desire to eliminate poverty by reducing the numbers of the poor rather than in inequalities of society.

The White Man's Fear

As the death rate began its dramatic fall in the poor world, the fears of the rich world began to rise. The 'stirring masses' of the 'population explosion' could become a threat--especially if they were hungry or jobless. They might even 'go Communist', upset the balance of power, raise their prices, reduce access to cheap raw materials, and the whole basis of Western affluence might begin to crumble.

Few would seriously deny that fears like this were the mainspring of Western involvement in population control. It started in the most conservative circles of American society, where a small group of people began ~~pressing~~ the urgency of population control in the poor world. So, in a book entitled, "Too Many Asians", published in 1959, J. Robbins candidly wrote: 'There are too many Asians for their own good. They have been breeding trouble for themselves and for the world as a whole. . . . When the sun goes down on an Indian village, the people are left in darkness. They have no books, no movies, no television. There is only one thing to do--go to bed. There they find their sole source of recreation and amusement, their brief escape from the hours of hard work of the day. At the root of Asia's problem of population is copulation.' Not poverty, not drought, not poor government, not the colonial hangover, not land reform, not cheap prices for raw materials. . .no, the problem was too much sex and not enough television.

There is no Conspiracy

During the 1960's, the population issue really caught fire. Foundations pumped millions of dollars into Universities and Institutes for the study of the problem and the training of specialists to combat it. The United States Government, along with other rich nations, began earmarking aid for population control. The media took up the message and soon the general public in the rich nations were being told that the Africans, Asians and Latin Americans were poor because they had too many kids.

Anyone who has studied the literature of population--as I have done almost daily for the last eight years--cannot but be struck by the amazing uniformity of the concepts and the language. Some radicals see the whole thing as a world-wide capitalist conspiracy. This strikes me as ridiculous: The whole thing has happened completely openly. The facts are there for anyone--with the time and the funds--to research. Given the immense weight of the USA in world scientific research, given the dominance of the English language in scientific publishing, given the abundance of scholarships in the field of population studies, given the possibility of almost instantaneous world-wide communication, it is not in the least bit surprising that this neo-Malthusian way of thinking has been quickly spread to most of the world.

The Answer Discovered

And so it came about that by the late 1960s population was pinpointed as the number one obstacle to world development. The prestigious Pearson Report published in 1969, concluded that 'no other phenomenon casts a darker shadow on the prospects for international development than the staggering growth of population' and the President of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, went on record as saying that 'to put it simply: the greatest single obstacle to the economic and social advancement of the majority of the peoples in the underdeveloped world is rampant population growth'.

The solution seemed simple--birth control. And the means seemed readily at hand--the Pill and the Loop. In 1964, a leading family planner held up 'the Loop' and declared it would 'change the history of the world'.

'Scientific' surveys showed that most of the women in the poor countries were eager to limit their families. Western experts, who knew nothing of the poor countries except their luxury air-conditioned villas, drew up large scale programmes to promote low-cost contraceptives. When the first results began to come in, it appeared that the women were not adopting these methods as rapidly as the surveys showed that they should have done. The reaction was more experts, better administrative methods, more surveys, more efficient contraceptives, and better mass communications programmes. In some cases, programmes were designed with the sole aim of getting women to adopt family planning without changing a single thing in their environment of dismal poverty (Pégucigalpa, late 1960s); or experts were dropped via helicopters on unsuspecting Himalayan Villages (Nepal, 1970); or Moslem women were coerced into buses to have loops inserted without any explanations (Tunisia, mid 1960s); or young women were given contraceptive injections against their husbands' wills (various African countries).

An Expensive Failure

The results were a dismal and expensive failure. The 'history of the world' has not been changed. Many millions are much poorer and the radical, political, and social changes, which the population controllers hope to avoid, are drawing much nearer. And there are hundreds of millions more people.

Even in countries like Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, where birth-control is working, a growing number of specialists concede that the success has little to do with family planning programmes. In the countries where it is not working, like India and Pakistan, poverty is at last becoming recognized as a real problem to be tackled.

More and more recent studies (many of them American) have demonstrated that the lowering of population growth rates is dependent on such things as higher living standards, more equal income distribution, higher levels of employment, education, health care--and not by pills and loops alone.

A Prediction Gone Wrong

On top of all this evidence, there is one country that has not used a single Western expert, that has roundly condemned Western neo-Malthusian theories, that has taken the old Godwin road as opposed to the Malthusian way, and that has largely solved its problem. The country is China.

And the experience of China finally demolishes the Malthusian case. For what were the neo-Malthusians saying about China? As late as 1960, W. Vogt was writing: 'China quite literally cannot feed more people. . .the greatest tragedy that China could suffer, at the present time, would be a reduction in her death rate. We have watched Wang die, his agony passed, by the side of the road. . .millions are going to die in the same way. There can be no way out. These men and women, boys and girls, must starve as tragic sacrifices on the twin altars of uncontrolled reproduction and uncontrolled abuse of the land resources.' (from "People: Challenge to Survival")

Yet today, China feeds a hundred million more people--and feeds them well. Clearly something was very wrong in Western prophecies and Western analysis.

The answer is that China succeeded because she first carried through fundamental reforms leading to a rise in living standards, abolition of unemployment, spectacular drop in mortality, increasing emancipation of women, remarkably efficient sanitary infrastructure, social security, one hundred percent school attendance, and that by this means she has lowered her birth rate far beyond any other large country in the Third World. The lesson to be drawn seems clear enough.

Twenty Years Lost

As someone with wide international experience in the field of population problems, I do not hesitate to write that the population problem, as traditionally defined, is the greatest red-herring in the field of world development. By stressing population in such an isolated, simplistic manner, neo-Malthusian thinking might have lost the world twenty precious years in solving its number one problem--poverty. If twenty years ago, India had undertaken massive structural changes, a real land reform programme, and distributed services and resources more equally among its people instead of trying to persuade illiterate women to adopt the rhythm method by bribing them with coloured beads, it would probably not now be sterilizing people at a rate of 63,000 in two weeks (a goal achieved not long ago in a much-publicised family planning festival). Nor would it have to admit that millions of its people are worse off than they were fifteen years ago (as was shown recently by the Dandekar study on poverty in India). At the root of India's population problem is not 'copulation' but an alliance of national and Western vested interests which is opposed to radical change.

Simple Truths

Aaron Segal, in his book "The Rich, the Poor and Population" has told us that 'the road back to population sanity involves a few simple, unpleasant truths'.

- That people are not poor because they have too many children.
- That any decision to reduce the birth rate of a given society can only be taken by the members of that society in response to their needs. Outsiders can play only a marginal role.
- That trade, aid, immigration, income distribution, education, maternal health, all have much more to do with reducing the birth rate than visitors arriving to give away pills and loops.
- That the rich world could really help by paying fairer prices for raw materials and buying more cheap labour-intensive manufactured goods from the poor world.
- That it would also be helpful if the population foundations, with all their ample funds for publicity, would mention some of these urgent things in their dialogue with the American public and its leaders.
- That the rich countries should concern themselves with the real causes of poverty, in their own countries as well as in the Third World, rather than relying on population control as a form of conservative social control.
- That the rich countries should not ask poor countries to 'do what we say and not what we do'.
- That if we cannot help create conditions in which individuals will want to reduce their fertility then we have absolutely no moral right to coerce by any means whatever.

Fear is the Spur

The basic motivation behind the Western drive to 'control' the population of the Third World is fear. Graphs depict the burgeoning population of the Third World as a Hiroshima-like, A-bomb cloud, and even such superb scientists as Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug can write of 'staring over his shoulder at the relentless frightening advance of the population monster'. Speaking of Indians, he even writes about 'the population monster growling behind them'.

In my whole life, I have never seen a population monster. As I look over my shoulder at West Africa, where I recently lived, I hear silence rather than 'growling'. The silence of the Berber tribe from north Mali who, between January and May last year, were reduced by drought and famine from 8,000 to 16. Today, it may well be that not one single one is left. Twice before that, the Malian Minister of Agriculture, Sidi Coulibaly, had been to Europe to try to alert Western governments and institutions about the impending disaster. Nobody took him seriously. The Africans were just far-away statistics.

Yes--in all this talk about population it seems that one basic truth has been forgotten. Population is people. If we claim that there are too many people on the earth, then why are we so sure that we are not the excess ones? We Westerners who individually consume and pollute as much as fifty or more African or Indian peasants? In all my years in the field of population, I have never one single time heard a member of the population establishment say that there were too many upper-middle class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the world, but two such people have openly told me that there were too many blacks, and countless others have been implied this be it in their writings or conversation.

Yet fearful attitudes have never helped build a better world. Fear has never built cathedrals, or empires, created art, fed the poor, opened the doors of prisons, cared for those in need, started revolutions--and there are many types of revolution.

Are we Afraid?

We live in a world of growing economic, social and political interdependency, as the energy crisis has only too aptly shown. One of the greatest dangers of today is parochial, selfish, ethnocentric attitudes which blind us to the realities of the world. Ultimately, our fate is bound to that of the Bengali rickshaw driver or Congolese peasant women as much as to our own job or country. We forget this at our peril.

We need a broader, clearer vision. We need to see people as infinitely precious, infinitely beautiful, and not in terms of 'negative dependency ratios', 'frightening growth rates', and other similar heartless expressions. Are we afraid of our mother, or child, or neighbour or husband? Then why are we afraid of Mohamed, Vijeya, Liu, or Carita?

In the world of Genesis, Cain could say about Abel 'Am I the guardian of my brother?' and at least hope to get away with it. In today's world of globalised economies and thinking, the Western Cains can no longer say the same. Today Cain will have to learn that he can only guard himself if he guards his brother. The future of humanity rests upon this realization more than any other one.

If we want to survive, clearer vision and greater compassion, not better pills, is what is most urgently needed.

HOW DOES WOMAN LIVE AND EXPERIENCE HERSELF?

There are different levels with a broad spread of circumstances wherein we can experience ourselves or be experienced by others as women. What do others say about us; how do others experience us? Although this is a second question, the answer to it affords precious knowledge and will help us considerably to find the answer to the basic question. Only then can we proceed with the following questions:

What is woman? What are we?

What is her task? What is our task?

Where do we place ourselves along the scale of womanhood?

Eve..... 12 3 4 5 Mary

Where do we place our fellow women?

We quote from a paper presented by Sr. Lora Ann Quiñonez to the Inter-American Conference of Religious:

... Thus, women are, 'by nature', passive, emotional, illogical, dependent, intuitive, timeless, conservative; men, on the other hand, are 'innately' active, adventurous, aggressive, rational, logical, independent, self-confident. (...) To depart from these established patterns is to be 'unnatural'. A man who is tender, expressive, who enjoys poetry and ballet, is said to be 'effeminate'; a woman who is attracted to intellectual pursuits, who is aggressive is said to be 'unfeminine'.

This traditional view has been largely discredited by modern psychological, sociological and anthropological research. (...) Physical differences between the sexes are grounded in nature; social and behavioral differences are defined by culture and inculcated from earliest infancy; children must 'learn' to be masculine or feminine in the context of a particular culture and society, at a given moment in history.

Before developing her topic "De priester een man" (The priest is a man), E.N. Vos de Wael-Smulders writes:

(...) Let us first reflect briefly on the phenomenon: woman.

She is human and all human possibilities are elementary present in her. To the male belongs the strictly masculine function of the organ that is called 'masculinity'. Similarly, woman has her "femininity". In human existence these organs are not symbolized in various ways, but they are themselves the symbol or rather the design of two human modes of existence: the one ready to be directed toward something or somebody, or toward chosen possibilities, so as to enter these, give the best of oneself and thus become fully human; the other open, accessible, ready to embrace someone, something or possibilities, so as to lead these to full maturity and then surrender them. These modes of existence are related as word and response. To become man by oneself is impossible (Editor's note: The word is understood here in the generic sense) within this understanding of existence. The female identity is as fleeting as a soap-bubble which bursts as soon as one grasps it. The Christian paradox 'Anyone who finds his life will lose it' (Matt. 10, 39) which, for man, comes more or less 'from above', surges up, for woman, from the very ground of her existence.

Now man is free to follow a given plan or not. Woman can move through life like a man. She can even make use of two of his attributes: aggressivity and self-importance. It is noteworthy that she seldom chooses these attributes even though, objectively speaking she may have just as much reason as he has for making use of them. It is not that those

around her would not tolerate this, because, where suitable, some would accept that she shows aggression or self-importance. And it is not that, by nature, woman might be meek and humble of heart, for she is not, though there is a constant invitation within her to kindness and humility, just as she is aware that her voice takes on a certain strength in maturity, but never the volume or heaviness of a man's voice. The social judgment about woman can change according to culture and is always, in some ways, a prejudice; but a prejudice does not appear out of the blue, neither does the saying: 'Men are God's trees, women are his flowers.' (...)

The actual difference between the sexes has been the cause of various excesses, simplifications, mutual exploitation and discrimination in the customary unfavorable sense, by which - and this is sometimes forgotten - man also was often deluded.

From "De Nicuwe Boodschap" April - May '72

A group of women religious, including Lieve Windericks, who meet in Rome with Jo Herpels, cism, as moderator, have this to say:

A mixed community shows us a few points:

- At first, woman is inclined to compete with man, but competition among women is much more evident than between women and men.
- The unmarried woman is the weakest. A married or an engaged woman receives attention because of her husband or fiancé. The girl who enters into a relationship with a young man, with the intention of marrying him, is subjected to the aggressivity of all the other celibate women.
- Woman is related to other persons. When these persons leave the community, woman is deeply disturbed. Men, on the other hand, attach themselves more to ideas.
- Woman has attention for details seen in a living, concrete whole. She cries easily. Her tears disarm a man.
- Woman seeks to work in group, in team, but teamwork is harder on her than on man.
- Woman questions the established masculine models. She wants to acquire independence. She very subtly competes with man.

Are love and life proper to woman, as some cultures would have us believe? Is woman's creativity a defense mechanism? Woman is changeable, unpredictable, etc. Is this because of her 'nature' or from necessity?

In his book Heel de Mens (The 'Whole Man'), Han Fortmann quotes F.J.J. Buytendijk:

... When culture barely gives woman the opportunity to go straight to her goal, there remains nothing else for her to do but to shuffle quietly toward it. Woman, a snake? But she is also said to be "Mary" and no obstacle for the "Holy" Year: Holy Year can be called holy only when woman again becomes aware of her dignity and mission and keeps her eyes fixed on her inimitable model.

The disciple, who made a place for Mary in his home after the death of Jesus, was not mistaken when he wrote: 'What we have seen with our own eyes; what we have watched and touched with our hands, the Word, who is life... of what we are giving our witness.'

The first witness was the simple woman of Bethlehem. (Abbé Richard)

And Jo Herpels, cicm, continues:

Does Mary, the Mother of Jesus, teach us anything? Not as an object of devotion, but as the co-worker of salvation. She was the first to be concerned about the answer to God and she started the march of humanity toward salvation.

- Advent is the expectation of the great revolution. Indeed, the God of the Christians is the great revolutionary of history. Advent is the time of Mary, virgin and mother.
- Mary is a woman who incarnates the consent of humanity to God's invitation. She is a woman of the people and God's virgin, called to build her own life project in the perspective of salvation; to live the history of humanity in her own history, in a meaning that was made clear for her by the God of history.
- Mary is the mother of Jesus. Her life is enacted in the tension between presence and absence. She is totally the mother of the child Jesus. Gradually she becomes ever more convinced that this child is Son of God and has his own project. Hence her fidelity and openness to perceive God's project in Him who was the fruit of her womb: being actively present as mother, and yet having a withdrawn and respectful love for God's project.
- Pentecost is enacted around Mary. At Pentecost the Church is born and receives its apostolic mission. Mary disappears. Church structures are gradually established. Little by little they become all important. That threaten the heart of the Church, of life. Nevertheless the event of Pentecost cannot disappear from the life of the Church. In what forms does Mary remain present in the life and the event of the Church? How is the presence of woman assured in the life of the Church? Where is the femininity of the Church?
- **What characterizes Mary is her mode of 'being', more than her activity, her presence more than her competence."**

(from ICA, May 1975.)

EVANGELIZATION AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

by Domenico Grasso, S.J.

The existence of a relationship between evangelization and the witness of the Christian community - that is, between the word of God and the life of those who profess it - is clearly affirmed by the Book of Acts, the book of evangelization par excellence. Peter himself affirms it in his address to the Sanhedrin, which is recounted in Acts 5. He talks about his preaching, about his proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ, and about all those who bear witness to this. It includes not only those who lived with Christ in person and received a mandate to bear witness to him but also "the Holy Spirit given by God to those who are obedient to him" (Acts 5: 32).

It was with a view to such witness that the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost. He descended on the apostles, who were about to begin spreading the faith in Jerusalem. But he also descended on the other people gathered together in the Cenacle, whose number is put at 120 in the annals of the primitive Church. It is a clear sign that the spread of the faith, which is eminently the work of the Holy Spirit, would be carried out through the combined and complementary activity of two groups. One group, the apostles, would utilize the divine message entrusted to them by Jesus (Acts 1:8). The other group, the Christian community, would exemplify in their lives the implications of the message proclaimed by the apostles.

Real-life witness

Luke describes the witness of the community in two passages which are highly suggestive and which can scarcely be disregarded. They awaken in us a feeling of nostalgia, and we yearn to see the same state of affairs repeated in the life of the Church today. I cite them here in full:

All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required. With one mind they kept up their daily attendance at the temple, and, by breaking bread in private houses, shared their meals with unaffected joy, as they praised God and enjoyed the favour of the whole people. (Acts 2:44-47)

The whole body of believers was united in heart and soul. Not a man of them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in common, while the apostles bore witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They were all held in high esteem; for they had never a needy person among them, because all who had property in land or houses sold it, brought the proceeds of the sale, and laid the money at the feet of the apostles; it was then distributed to any who stood in need. (Acts 4:32-35)

These two passages contain the most authentic description of the Christian community and of its role in the diffusion of the faith. The author of Acts expressly underlines the relationship between this communitarian life and the spread of God's word as proclaimed by the apostles. He remarks that Christians "enjoyed the favour of the whole people" (Acts 2:47), that the general populace "spoke highly of them" (Acts 5:13). As a result, "day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving" (Acts 2:47).

So it is clear that word and living witness go hand in hand. The message preached by the apostles and the living witness of the community are two components of one and the same reality: the spreading of the faith. Evangelization, which is the vehicle for the spreading of the faith, cannot do without either. Without the living witness of the Christian community, the spoken message of the apostles, the living witness of the community could not make clear its underlying secret. It would remain an enigma, leaving observers surprised but incredulous, because the life of the community would be so different from that lived by the common run of mortals. At best Christians would be regarded as curiosities, akin to the Cynics of Antiquity who turned their scorn for the things of this world into a norm of life and who thus aroused the sympathetic curiosity of other Athenians.

There is no sense in asking which of the two factors, spoken word or living witness, is the more important. They are equally important. The apostles did not simply proclaim historical deeds and facts of an extraordinary character. They spoke about happenings which were meant to give a whole new orientation to people's lives. And this new orientation was already alive in the example radiated by the Christian community. In this sense it is completely true, as Vatican II stressed over and over again, that the whole Church is missionary; that the task of evangelizing non-Christians is not a prerogative of the hierarchy or of religious institutes but a duty incumbent on all Christians. And Chapter VI of the conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes* is concerned with indicating concrete ways in which this overall cooperation might be realized at every level of Christian living.

Community and sign

We might well ask ourselves why there is this close relationship between evangelization and the witness of the community. Is it merely an accidental one, bound up with the ever-attractive power of example? Or is it an essential relationship, without which proclamation itself could not continue to exist or, at the very least, to explain its own efficacy? It is my belief that the relationship is an essential one. Proclamation and community witness are inseparable, one cannot stand without the other. We are not dealing here with the power of example alone, we are dealing with something that has to do with the very existence of gospel proclamation itself. There are not many who see the matter in this light, but I do not see how it could be otherwise.

In the first place, the witness of community life is the supreme sign which makes clear what proclamation is; namely, the word of God on the lips of human beings. We know that in the proclamation of the gospel message it is God himself who speaks; it is his voice that is heard and that must be accepted by faith. But if the latter is to come about, it is necessary not only that God speak but also that his word show up as something divine, as something coming from him. To all appearances, proclamation is a human word coming from a human being. That is not really the case, however. It is the word of God which makes contact with us through God's messenger, offering us salvation and inviting us to accept it. But how are we to make out the word of God himself in the human speech that reaches our ears? Here we run into the whole problem of signs, which is very important in theology and even more important in proclamation.

In the time of Christ and his apostles, the sign was made up of a whole complex of extraordinary facts and deeds; among them the physical miracle occupied first place. Even the most unsophisticated person could see the hand of God in the working of a miracle. Jesus himself felt compelled to underline the probative value of his miracles. In speaking of the Pharisees and their opposition to his assertion of divinity, Jesus alluded to his

miracles as signs by which such people could and should reach the conclusion that God was with him, and that therefore his awesome and unheard-of claim to be God's Son was true. But the Pharisees closed their eyes to the light. They did not wish to see what the average man on the street, and even the man born blind, clearly saw. Hence Jesus did not hesitate to say that the Pharisees were without any excuse. The same applies to the Apostles and their message was not a merely human one. And scores of people were thus converted. With the closing of the New Testament era, however, miracles disappeared for all practical purposes. I do not mean to say that they ceased to exist. I mean that they became something essentially rare. What were the successors of the apostles to do in order to demonstrate the divine origin of the message which they continued to proclaim? Once miracles ceased, they could not help but wonder about the strange new state of affairs. If Jesus himself had affirmed that there was a relationship between the proclamation of the gospel and miracles (Mk 16: 16ff), why should the latter cease when the former work was still going on?

Saint Augustine answered this question in a famous letter to Honoratus, better known under the title *De utilitate credendi*. As Augustine sees it, physical miracles were necessary at the start of the Church when it was not yet solidly established. But as time went on, the need for such miracles disappeared. They were replaced by another miracle which was an equally splendid sign of the divine origin of the gospel message. This new miracle was the Church herself, particularly with her note of holiness. Her divine origin was now signified by the temperate life of the Christian community; by its chastity, patience, and voluntary poverty; by its willingness to accept even death for the sake of adhering to Christ. In an earlier day the apostles had believed in Christ because they saw him risen from the dead; and because they believed thus in him, the head of the Church, they also believed in his body, the Church, which they did not see. For later believers the situation had changed. They could see the body of Christ, the Church, and her holiness. That is why they believed in Christ, whom they could not see and in his message which was now being proclaimed by the authorized successors of the apostles. And Augustine closes his presentation with an enthusiastic question: "Since we can verify this great help from God, since we can see such progress and such great results, how can we hesitate to throw ourselves into the arms of the Church?" (Migne, P.L. 42, col. 90-91). In short, the divine origin of the Church and her message is proven by her holiness, by the effects which the word of God produces in those who have embraced it. That is the authentic sign of God's presence in the midst of the world.

Hence there is a most intimate relationship between evangelization and the witness of the community. They represent the two sides of the same coin: i.e., the spreading of the faith.

Community life and the relevance of salvific facts

The witness of the community, its life based on charity, is the sign which proves the divine origin of the word of God proclaimed in the process of evangelization. But it is also much more than that. It is the reality which makes clear the relevance of that message for man's life. Here we come to an even more intimate aspect of the relationship between proclamation and community.

What counts in our proclamation is not just - or even mainly, we might say - the facts that are announced insofar as they are valid as history. What counts in these facts and events dealing with Christ's life, death, and resurrection is their relationship to human beings.

There is only one response to offer when someone asks how it is possible to prove that

Christ is still relevant today, twenty centuries after his incarnation; to make clear that he is still capable of transforming man's life even though his living situation today differs greatly from that of the past. We must point to the fact that this is still happening because there are still people around who find the ultimate meaning of everything in him. These people are Christians, the followers of Christ, those who have accepted him into their lives and have felt the power of his gospel message. Note well that it is not a matter of the witness of one or another given individual. It is the witness of the Christian community, of a group of people from many different social levels and walks of life who find in Christ their reason for living.

The witnessing of the apostles radiated a charm, a special allure, which did not fail to impress all those who came in contact with them and their message. Even the Pharisees, who were decidedly opposed to their preaching, could not refrain from admiring these men who were ready to endure anything for the sake of their Master: "Now as they observed the boldness of Peter and John, and noted that they were untrained laymen, they began to wonder..." (Acts 4:13). They felt they were being confronted with something mysterious. At Iconium, the air of conviction in Peter's words was so impressive "that a large body both of Jews and Gentiles became believers" (Acts 14:1). The same was true for the life and witness of the Christian community. Those who observed it sensed some element of mystery and were attracted by it. The community "enjoyed the favour of the whole people" (Acts 2:47). Thus in the witness of the Christian community, which was made up of the apostles and the faithful, there was an implicit invitation to follow the example of its members and to do the things they had done to obtain the impressive results. The same holds true today. If we wish to point up the relevance of Christ for man's life, only one course is open to us. We must incarnate it in a community which sets an example for the world; which clearly shows that its life is inspired by values that are not the prevailing ones, that it possesses a secret unknown to most men and not possessed by this world. Its witness thus projects an element of mystery that attracts and lures people to seek further. It plants the invisible in the very heart of the visible.

Witness and faith

The relationship between evangelization and community witness is intimate for an even deeper reason. It is so because of the very nature of faith itself, of which the evangelization process is the vehicle. Faith is an encounter between persons; evangelization is the proclamation of a message which is identified with a person. In order to approach us, Christ needs some person or some reality in which to incarnate himself so that he may take on solidity and clearly show us his love. The Christian community, the Church, is that reality. It is the mediator between God and man not only because it brings us to God but also because it brings Gods to us. It brings him to us through the concern, and affection, and love it shows from human beings. When human beings come in contact with the Church and see her life, they must be able to see the presence of God and the effects of his love in the Church's impact on human existence. The power of God's love for man is revealed in the love which the Church shows for God and for human beings. It was with good reason that Jesus said: "If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:35). This love is the source of the phenomenon of communion without which there can be no faith.

Hence the Church, the Christian community, is necessary for the spread of the faith.

Undoubtedly the human mind finds it hard to understand how or why God chose to entrust his message to such imperfect human beings. BUT insofar as he chose to respect the laws involved in incarnation, he had no other choice. Only a person can introduce us to another person.

In conclusion, then, I would stress that there is an essential, constitutive relationship between evangelization and community. Without the professing community, the Christian message could not make evident its divine origin, point up the meaning it gives to human life, or spell out the summons which it entails. And without that note of summons, Christianity would be in danger of looking like just another message.

A revivification of the evangelization process must come through the Christian community if it is to have an impact on a world which has lost sight of God and which thinks it can do without him. Until the Christian community becomes a radiating center of charity, it will be very difficult for human beings to see that its works are good and to inquire about the ultimate source of this goodness.

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NEWS FROM AND FOR THE GENERALATES

HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX (SFB) : During their recent Chapter the following were elected to the Council:

Superior General: Sr. M.P. Chauvin (re-elected)

Assistant General: Sr. C. Mallet (re-elected)

Councillors: Sr. H. Fernando (re-elected)

Sr. M. Slaven, Sr. I. Subijana, Sr. M. Bringas.

We offer our sincerest congratulations to all concerned and look forward to continued cordial collaboration with the Institute.

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FRIENDSHIP: A JOURNEY TO COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING by Samuel Rayan, SJ

(an unofficial talk given during the I.C.M. General Assembly, India, December 1974)

Friendship is something to be lived rather than to be talked about. It is one of those things which are difficult to describe or define. St. Augustine is reported to have said, "If you ask me what love is, I do not know; but if you do not ask me, I know what it is."

We need love, affection and esteem. This need is one of our weaknesses and one of our strengths. We can also give love, affection, appreciation and honour. This, surely, is no weakness but strength. It is a privilege to love and honour. We suffer from lack of affection and acceptance. I guess that most diseases of the mind and some diseases of the body have this lack of love and acceptance as their root. I am not sure if enough love exists on this earth. There is a great deal, but perhaps not sufficient. The call and the basic mission of every man and of every woman is to love and to add to the amount and the quality of love on this earth. Teilhard de Chardin said something like this, "Love is the new force of gravitation, drawing men together to form the new society. Love is also the principle of the new evolution making for the new human community." Every man is on a mission of love to other men. The central insight in the Bible is that it is love that matters. Already in the 7th century B.C., love for God and love for neighbour became the core of religion (Deut.). In the New Testament this insight has been underscored afresh. The insight of the modern man seems to tally with the ancient viewpoint of the Bible. The insight of modern men is that love matters in medicine and therapy, in education of the young, in social relationships, in the building of a new world.

C.S. Lewis has written a book: "The Four Loves." The four loves are affection, friendship, eros and agape.

- a. Affection: is the sort of warm cozy feeling which you have for things small, pretty or familiar. And the objects of affection can be persons or things. Affection for a child, a dog, an old shirt. It can sometimes become very oppressive and narrow, it needs to be redeemed by agape.
- b. Friendship which we shall describe shortly can also become narrow and needs to be redeemed by agape.
- c. Eros is the special love between adult man and woman. Its characteristic is that it involves sex in a special way. Agape must liberate it from possessiveness and narrowness of heart.
- d. Agape is the love which God gives to man. A rare Greek word has been used by early Christians to describe God's relation to man as revealed in Jesus Christ. Its characteristic is other-centredness, total selflessness, total self-gift for the well-being of the other. There is no limit to which it has not gone. This sacrificial love must complete, purify, redeem the other three loves. This is the thesis of Lewis' book.

To speak about friendship. Its characteristics are equality and freedom. The old saying is that friendship finds or makes equals. It is the converging of two or more spirits upon a common point of interest, of action, or concern or creativity. Lovers are depicted as looking at each other, friends as looking together at a third. And that third can be a thing, a program, a cause, a person. Friends share concern, experience, creative action. They may or may not help each other, and if they do there is no feeling of obligatedness.

That means, there is a sort of kingly independence in the experience of friendship. Friends give a freedom to each other. Therefore friendship is totally unpossessive and non-demanding; it is ready for great sacrifices for the friend, but once the sacrifice is made it is easily forgotten by both parties. Its danger is that it can become exclusive, restricted to its own circle, narrow, highbrow, elitist. That is why it will need agape for its redemption. Touched by agape, the little circle of friends can open up, begin to expand, include others, also those of different cultures, different status etc. And when the agape comes in, friendship can become warmer and tenderer. And with the help of the love that God puts in our hearts, friendship can go to the extent of loving the unlovable, as God does. And to love the unloveable is to make them love-worthy.

Is there an aspect of friendship in the relationship between God and man in the Old Testament? In the Old Testament God is King and master, or Father, or Husband. These are the three great relationships used as symbols in Old Testament religion. Man, therefore, or Israel is God's slave or servant, His son or daughter or child, or His wife.

a. Take the King-servant relationship. In spite of this, to us unattractive symbol, we find a touch of tenderness in the way the servant is treated. There seems to be a measure of friendship, of partnership even, around the Abraham story in Genesis. The epistle of James (2:23) reminds us that God calls Abraham his friend. Similarly Moses is God's trusted friend and ambassador and collaborator. There is a figure of a Servant of God in Isaiah. But he is a very honoured figure, a confidant of God, in a relationship coming very close to friendship. (Is.42) In the New Testament St. Paul calls himself the slave of Christ and the servant of God, and yet, we know how much Paul knew of and experienced God's love and tenderness, the honour that God extends to man, the sonship to which man is raised not only through an adopted sonship but real participation in life divine; and the indwelling of God's Spirit, which entitles us to call God Abba, Father. Still this symbol of Lord-slave is not one that appeals to us today. Neither is King and subject a welcome language, through the English and the Belgians have kings.

b. As for the Father-child relationship, it is appealing to most people, because most of us have experienced love, affection, protection from our fathers. The symbolism speaks to our hearts. The Old Testament contains very telling passages on God's tender love (Hosea 11). Yet we know that there can be a danger of paternalism here. Not that God can be paternalistic and be tempted to this questionable behaviour, but that God can be misunderstood as being paternalistic and we may begin to be such. We can take before God an immature, infantile attitude. This would be disastrous. Therefore there is danger in calling God Father. There are advantages but the advantages have their limitations too. If Jesus was living in today's history and He were one of these young people of today, would He still have constantly spoken of God as Father or would He perhaps have introduced God to us as Friend? I do not know, but I am sure that in circles where 'father' is too paternalistic a word and evokes not so pleasant memories, Jesus would have used different and more meaningful similes and symbols. Because his concern was not with words but with the truth, the convergence of reality.

c. As for the husband-wife or bridegroom-bride relationship. Old Testament speakers made use of this from the days of Hosea, the prophet, early 8th century B.C. It is present also in the New Testament, in several passages. It has been popular with the mystics of all religions. In Hinduism in the Krishna stories; in Sufi-mysticism, in Christian mystical writings which see Jesus Christ as the bridegroom. But the symbol was never too clear, nor popular, except perhaps in convents; I think it is out of date, and when it was used it was not so much for individuals as for the community of Israel or of the Church. Using it for individuals was an exclusively convent terminology.

Perhaps friendship would be one of the ways in which Jesus would today express the essential relationship between God and us. I said one of the ways: He won't reject others, He may indeed want to supplement this with other ideas and symbols current in our day. And a firm basis of saying this is the passage in Jn. 15, 'I shall not call you servants any longer, but friends.' And the reason He gives is interesting. What He has heard and learned from God, the Father, He has shown to us; and that is why He can no longer call us servants or treat us as such. He must now treat us as friends because He has taken us into God's family secrets. Sharing God's secrets, sharing His life, seems to be at the basis, among other things, perhaps, of friendship. Abraham is friend because God has spoken to him and communicated to him something of His design for mankind. Moses is a friend, and in one place it is said, "God spoke to Moses as a friend speaks to a friend." In appointing Moses as the leader of Israel, a great deal of God's programme for the nation was communicated to him and to his people through him.

We remember the friendships of Jesus, there is the group of the twelve, who travelled and lived with Him and shared his anxieties, sorrows, doubts, struggles and joys. There is a slightly wider circle of the disciples, the seventy-two. Then there is a group of women, listed in Lk. 8, who followed him in his journeys, serving him, helping him, often putting their resources at his disposal. Jesus also had friends among bad people; we often find him in bad company, with the despised tax-collectors and customs officers, with the ritually impure people, with Samaritans with whom Jews should have nothing to do. He associated with people whom religious authorities and social forces considered as sinners and outcasts.

There is mention of Lazarus and his two sisters who were friends of Jesus. When Lazarus is ill, Mary sends a note saying, "Your friend is ill." That was a beautiful letter for its precision, its economy of words and ink, and its implicit trust. John's gospel speaks of the disciple who was Jesus' special friend, and says a great deal about this friend though his name is not revealed and remains unknown to this day. In the Middle Ages, even monks were interested in the question of friendship. I remember reading in 1944 a booklet by Abbot Aelred on friendship. It is a beautiful little book, defining a kiss as the mingling of two spirits.

I do not know what was the idea behind asking me to speak on this topic. In some sense the topic is old-fashioned. Is there a fresh interest in it? A new interest may have to do with the new personalism, the appreciation of the human person as having primacy among values. It may be related also to a felt dissatisfaction with impersonal and purely functional religious traditions. This has been particularly felt by clerics and celibates.

As far as I am aware, there are four questions to face.

1. One is the old question, whether women can be friends. Friendship is often conceived and depicted as a masculine thing; men can be friends, men can be independent and free as described earlier. Women could not perhaps be that independent and uninvolved. Men are very ordinary human beings while every woman is a queen. There can be only one queen, she cannot have equals, she stands out all alone in solitary splendor. This is a matter psychologists have been looking into and must look into a little more. I have heard serious people say that there has never been real friendship between two women, all great friendships have been between men. All friends are Davids and Jonathans. The question becomes sharp and urgent in the convent set-up, particularly in the present context of more personalized religion, a religion not merely of formulation but of experience, a religion not only of the brain but of the heart and of the whole person, one in which the whole person, body included, is involved.

in experience, worship and prayer. Is friendship among women and sisters possible? If it is not possible, more than half of their personalities is likely to remain underdeveloped. Will friendship develop properly between woman and woman? I am no psychologist and my reading on the matter is limited, but I believe such friendship is possible and can flourish. I hope and pray science will corroborate my belief; but now I affirm this on the simple ground that women can be and often are very selfless. They are noted for their great capacity to reach out and for sacrificial love.

2. Is there a need for friendship? I believe there is, because it is through closer communion and relationship that we grow and develop, become progressively personal and human. It is possible to live in a religious group of celibates, doing a great deal of work, turning out a great deal of things, without ever loving anybody in a warm way, without ever having a relationship that stirs the heart, without ever having experienced any strong affection, but living on the level of duty and of what is 'correct'. Is it easy or even possible for someone like that to experience or understand the language about God's love for men and the invitation to love him in return and to love another? What could all that mean if one has never experienced affection, if love has never exploded in the centre of one's being, exploded like a sudden outbreak of light? If one has never had the great and beautiful experience of grabbing someone's hand and pressing it with firmness and warmth, or stretching out one's own in out-going personal involvement? It seems to me that some warm friendships, some close friends are a grace everyone needs, including celibate sisters and celibate priests. We need someone before whom we can be ourselves; we should perhaps be ourselves before everyone, I suppose, without masks and poses and acting on the stage but at least one to whom we can show all our wounds without fear of being rejected or despised; who, we know, will accept us as we are: small and weak and vulnerable.

3. The next question is whether there can be friendship between man and woman, without moving towards eros and marriage. I have heard talks and discussions denying this possibility: sooner or later eros will enter and friendship will land up in marriage or in personal disaster for one or both. And the same kind of question is posed with greater sharpness whether there can be genuine, fine, uplifting, mutually liberating friendship between priests and nuns, between a priest and a nun, or between a priest and a girl or woman in the parish, or between a sister and some fine fellow far or near. There are problems here which need not be enumerated. It is easy and likely, when someone is lonely or sad, to meet a sympathetic face, or look, or work, or heart, and fall for it. But is it as great a tragedy as we used to think in former times? Formerly change of life-style was a matter of embarrassment and of tears for everyone. It is no longer so today, we accept the human. But for someone who really wants to remain celibate in order to serve, the question is important. If one wants it, and believes that it is really is one's way of life and vocation and charism, and yet gets emotionally involved, how to deal with the situation? How may he or she or both bear the agony and how are we, the others, to react to it? There are problems in it of which it is good for all of us to be fully aware, to place them in the daylight and look them in the face. This is more important, to be aware of the problems, and meet them squarely, because we live more and more in an open society, in greater pluralism with fewer and fewer of the old protections. We are called upon to live as mature people, true and responsible to ourselves, to others and to God, responsible for our own choices and decisions. I would accept both the need of friendship and the risk of problems, I would look not only at the problems but also at the possibilities of deep human relationships and of recognized risks. They can be enriching and liberating; they redeem celibates from splendid and false isolation and

clerical chauvinism. They can give them a wider human experience, make them more compassionate and understanding, qualities clerics have often missed in the past. People should be allowed to mature and deepen, and love should be given time to grow in purity, through the relationship, its problems and risks, fidelity to God and man, and the quietly endured agony of it all.

Let us sum up: We need to have friends. Then we can, sometimes at least, be wholly ourselves and share our closer, more intimate life with some people, and thereby receive comforting or strengthening, and clearer guidance and sympathetic understanding, warning, help and correction. Friendship is a need and a grace. It has possibilities of insight, of understanding biblical, religious or human language of love, compassion and tenderness--tenderness called by Eric Fromm, the greatest of human inventions. It can be religiously enriching, the experience of human warmth and human tenderness, given and received. It can become the sacrament of God's love. It can suddenly become the place where one comes across perhaps for the first time, the real meaning and depth and vibrations of sentences like: "The Father himself has love for you," and "God so loves the world as to give his only son for its well-being." These words, because we have heard them from our childhood, fail to impress us and slip through our mind like worn-out coins through our fingers. But when you suddenly come across a real friend, beaming and tender and free, and a heart-relationship is established, some of these words begin to explode in our spirit and reveal a world of light.

4. Perhaps the greatest problem for us is that of expression of love and friendship. This is a difficult and delicate point, and I do not know how to handle it. I do not know if anybody today will answer it in a set of written and rigid rules. The more the personal relationships are seen as really personal and the more the person is understood, not merely as a spirit but as a spirit in history, which means the body is the person with the interiority and power of relating to the other person--then oftener do the body and all material things come to be recognized as signs and symbols. The meaning of every symbol derives from a complex of realities. First of all from the way two people relate; secondly from the meaning a symbol has in a given human group. We cannot abstract from that and live in a private world, with only private symbols. Symbols often are community possessions. They change as society changes. Symbols differ from one culture to another. In the West you shake hands, women and men. In Tamilnadu men and women do not shake hands with each other. In the West you may, as a sign of reverence, kiss a priest when he pays you a visit, also the beautiful young ladies of the house may. That would be unthinkable in South India except in very Westernized families. It would be a shock, a scandal. Whatever morality is involved here, it is bound up with cultural traditions and diversity of cultures. The expression of friendship and love is governed primarily by the relationship between the two people concerned but it is also governed more or less--in what degree or proportion it is hard to define--by society. Now society itself is in transition and is rapidly changing and young people contest and reject society's traditions and norms. The situation then becomes more complex. In Lk. 7:36-40 Jesus is at table in a rich pharisee's house and a woman who was known as a prostitute comes from the city and falls at his feet, weeps there, washes his feet with tears and wipes them with her hair, kisses them, anoints them with ointment. And his table-mates are scandalized. They would have expected him to prescribe to the woman the manner of expressing her love and to prescribe the distance at which she might do it. But Jesus prescribes nothing and leaves it to her, to her culture, her heart, her present feelings, to choose her own way of expressing her penitence and love, and the manner she chooses is welcome. Jesus would prescribe nothing; he would not say, "don't touch me," or "stand over there!" Neither would he say if she stood over there and wept, "get up and come here."

STUDY GROUP ON SMALL COMMUNITIES

The group came together at 4:00 p.m. on 28 April 1975.

Present: Fr. A. VanSonsbeek C.S.S.P. Sr. M. Keenan R.S.C.M.
 Sr. M. Motte F.M.M. Sr. J. Burke S.N.D.N.

Chairman: Sr. M. Motte, F.M.M.

For Sedos: Fr. B. Tonna and Fr. L. Skelly, S.M.A.

1. Sr. Mary Motte read a letter sent by Fr. G. M. Cuppen, now working with Missio-Aachen on the pastoral initiatives taking shape in the African local churches, in which he asked to work closely with the Group. It was agreed that he would be kept informed of the progress of its investigations.
2. Fr. Van Sonsbeek pointed out that a great deal of study concerning Small Communities had been published in a book form, re. Comunidades Igreja na Base (Estudos da C.N.B.B.). He himself had summarized the sociological and theological principles emerging from the study. Others referred to studies undertaken by Pro Mundi Vita and Meeting for African Collaboration. And of course there was a vast amount of source material in the "family" bulletins of the Institutes.
3. It was finally decided to proceed as follows:
 - a) The group would focus on small ecclesial communities which are pastoral agents in their particular milieu. Purely Religious Communities would be excluded (at least for the present).
 - b) Fr. Tonna would extract from the material on Brazil presented by Fr. Van Sonsbeek a general outline of the basic features common to small communities there.
 - c) The Documentation Study Secretary would go through the family bulletins for this year and gather the material on the topic to be found in them. Sr. Joan Burke would study the M.A.C. paper, Sr. Mary Motte would analyze an earlier collection on the subject submitted by Fr. Van Sonsbeek and Sr. Marjorie Keenan would examine the relevant Synod documents. This research would, no doubt, considerably modify the picture derived by Fr. Tonna from the Brazil sources.
 - d) From all this it was to be hoped that a framework would emerge which would identify the major types of small communities and the constants in their practice.
 - e) The Generalates would then be approached for further information and their reactions to the results of the above mentioned studies.

--L. Skelly, S.M.A.

REPORT ON MEETING OF STUDY GROUP ON SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Group met at 4:00 p.m., 29 April at the Sedos Secretariat.

Present: Fr. J. Farren O.P. Sr. Joan Burke S.N.D.N.
 Sr. A. Cornely S.H.C.J.

Moderator: Fr. B. Tonna

For Sedos: Fr. L. Skelly, S.M.A.

1. After much discussion as to how to proceed and how to detect the signs of the times, that were of greatest interest to us as a mission-oriented organization, it was decided that the Group should concentrate on the "signs" which were obvious. These could be detected from United Nations documentation, from the new works being undertaken by the Institutes and from the creation of new organizations to tackle growing problems.
2. It was further decided to contact resource persons here in Rome on the following issues: (a) present economic trends especially as regards food; (b) the population explosion and its implications; (c) political developments; and, (d) scientific "future" forecasting. Individual members of the Group would approach people who were experts in these fields, e.g. Fr. A. McCormack, M.H.M. on population, Fr. P. Land, S.J. on economics and Mrs. E. Masini of Inades on future forecasting, in order to discover from them what they detected as the signs of the times in their spheres of interest. They would also ask the experts cooperation in locating the best sources of documentation. These documentation centres would then be contacted by the Secretariat. The experts mentioned above (along with one qualified in the field of politics) would be asked to address separate ad-hoc meetings of the Sedos membership in the course of the first fortnight in June. The Bulletin would be used to publish the trend reports on these particular signs of the times.
3. The Group then discussed the best ways of discovering criteria for the discernment and analysis of trends which were genuine signs of God's action in the world. It was agreed that this was really a task for experts, e.g. theologians and sociologists. The members decided to defer consideration of this point for the present but to contact the Secretariat by phone if they had suggestions to make.

--Fr. L. Skelly, S.M.A.

THE RIGHT INVESTMENT: ELEMENTS FOR THE ONGOING FORMATION PROJECT by Fr. B. Tonna

The Lord invested in the Twelve. The Church invests in people. It really finds itself when these people become its Mission. The missionary-sending Institutes are rightly sensitive to the question: how do we invest in people? The generic answer is "through formation". The specific answer is more elusive: there seems to be no "right" formation model for tomorrow's missionaries.

Sedos was involved, this last week, in two "happenings" in Rome which threw light on this common quest. Our President, Sr. Francis Webster, and the Executive Secretary met Fr. A. D'Souza, SJ, international coordinator for CEVAM--the Centre for the Exploration of Values and Meaning*. The Assistants of religious Institutes (men) also met to share views and experiences about ongoing formation and the Sedos group was amply represented.

As a contribution to the ongoing formation programme, here is the gist of what I took home with me after the two meetings:

1. Ongoing formation (continuing education, formation permanente) is a "learning to learn" process which has as its high points intensive periods of refresher courses (re-cyclages), seminars, meetings, etc.
2. The immediate objectives of these periods vary from personal conversion, to theological up-dating through the acquisition of new skills, community living and retraining.
3. Specifically, it is often geared at the 35-60 age bracket, takes the real world today as its parameter, moves from concepts to experience, stressing the Bible and the liturgy.
4. The right unit for a meaningful programme of ongoing formation seems to be the province (diocese or region) rather than the individual religious community. In this sense--and because of the priority of investing in people--a number of Provincial Superiors have re-defined their role as that of animator and coordinator of ongoing formation "high points"
5. Between them these "high points" should cater for the essential ingredients of ongoing formation: theological up-dating, acquisition of new skills, exercises in community living and, above all, conversion to and growth in the basic values of the Christian faith life and of the charism of the Institute.

* CEVAM organizes month-long leadership training programmes in various parts of the world. The programme coordinator is Fr. A. D'Souza, S.J., and further information may be obtained from: CEVAM, 6515 East 82nd Street, Suite 213, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250, USA.