



## INCULTURATION

By Dr. Oluf Bohn

(Dr. Bohn presented the following paper at a recent Sedos meeting)

With the papal exhortation on Catechesis the word 'inculturation' (53) is recognized in the theological vocabulary. It is equated with 'acculturation' which I find rather unfortunate, but I shall return to that problem later.

Since inculturation is an aspect of the Evangelization of the Church and it is therefore necessary to begin here. When we read the New Testament it is easily observed that mission and Church are two sides of the same reality. Mission is something quite natural for the young Church. There are many intentions behind this missionary effort as described in the New Testament. It depends on the author of the particular scripture, which one gets preference, but we can gather them under 3 headings.

I. Mission is a continuation of the proclamation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That means that it is a proclamation of the liberation of mankind, a liberation of the whole man. This liberation is proclaimed in deeds such as healings etc., and in words. It is a liberation from death, sin and all other evils such as alienation, poverty, illness, etc.

II. According to Ephesians and the First Letter of Peter, it is not only a liberation of the individual person or a liberation which takes place inside a given people or a given society, it is also the proclamation of unity amongst all men in Christ. Christ as the Lord of the universe and The Head of the Church wants to unite the whole of mankind into one single people not only on the spiritual level but concretely in the world.

III Mission is the proclamation of a love-AGAPE which surpasses all the love, eros, which mankind can mobilise by its own efforts. Eros is a natural inclination to love others who are also inclined to love us. It is a natural and necessary love without which we would die. AGAPE is the love for which the world has longed always and will continue to long for, because it sets it free, is liberating and gives us the possibility of loving our neighbour as God loves him. It is this AGAPE, brought to earth by Christ, which is the real conqueror of death, sin and alienation. The Eros love is not surpassed by AGAPE but is integrated in it.

Mission is therefore not only the offer of forgiveness of sins, etc., but much more: it is God's offer to us of the beginning of The Kingdom of God, the offer of the restitution of mankind in God and therefore it is God's overwhelming gift to mankind here and now, and because we have received it we should offer it to others. Through our obedience to God's will both in our own lives and in society, and through our will to mission we bear witness to God's empowering the total liberation of man. This is an invitation from God to all men to be his people and to give glory to him for their salvation and liberation in him.

Consequently, evangelization is more than a mere proclamation of the Gospel, it is a work of liberation, which is provocative in many ways. It may create difficulties for the Church of today because political, economical and cultural questions can easily arise from an evangelization made in that spirit.

I do not say however, that the Church shall or must involve itself in a class-struggle. Evangelization is also reconciliation of all men in Christ, but before this reconciliation can be reached other problems like the above-mentioned may come up.

Evangelization is the communication of Jesus Christ not only as a doctrine but also and in the first place, as an Event. The coming of Christ was an event, which had a universal end; or otherwise expressed, it involves communicating the development of the historic event, Jesus Christ.

This event was 'dressed' in a culture, and it can never be separated from culture. Our faith in Jesus Christ cannot exist without our own culture. Faith, liturgy, Christian life as a whole is always dressed in culture and our problem is how people from other cultures can receive the Gospel expressed in our culture, in such a way that they can develop their own Christian culture in full communication with the whole Church.

In an attempt to answer this crucial question we have to return to The Salvific Event in Jesus Christ in order to determine this event better.//

Christianity is a concrete particularity, which has to get a universal meaning through Evangelization; Christianity is the particular singularity of Jesus from Nazareth, which has as its universal destination to destroy all other particularities in the world.

What does that mean or imply?

Jesus was born into a Jewish culture and he had a double relationship with it: one of acknowledgement and one of rejection. That means that through his deeds and his preaching he gave acknowledgement to some part of the Jewish faith and rejected other parts by the same deeds and words. For instance, what he recognized was that creation is a free gift of God; that it has its destination in God; that God has chosen for himself a people to fulfill his own plans, that God was God for all mankind and that he would intervene definitively through the Messiah in order to create The Kingdom of God.

What he rejected was not only that the fulfilment of the law or sacrifices in the temple were a means of salvation, but also that men and women had to become Jews in order to be saved. He also rejected the Jewish expectation of the Messiah by uniting the "figure" of the Messiah with the idea of The Son of Man (Dan. 7) and The Suffering Servant of God (Is. 53), and he thereby made The Kingdom of God a universal Kingdom of God among men, According to St. John he made AGAPE the all prevailing theme of his particularity.

In Christ we have the real and only revelation of God and by the particularity of Jesus we can determine what that revelation is.

By this particularity he burst open the particularity of the Jewish religion, and he opened it by being rejected and killed by some of the Jews. His rejection by the Jews is the same as his rejection of certain elements in the Jewish religion, and his revelation of God's immense love for us (AGAPE).

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// I am here indebted to Father Theoneste Nkeramihigo's article entitled: "A Propos de L'inculturation du Christianisme" (Telema October-December, 1977 reprinted in Sedos Bulletin May 15, 1979).

Christianity was for a while lived in a Christian-Jewish culture, which means that the particularity of Christ had opened the particularity of the Jewish religion, in effect by admitting pagans to the young Church without circumcision.

It is important to note how the New Testament itself shows us a progressive inculturation.

If we examine The Synoptics and the beginning of The Acts we can see how the authors determine the particularity of Christ quite naturally in a Jewish context. The Kingdom of God is for the marginalized, the poor, the sinners, the sick, women, children and salvation is a gift. That means, so to say, that it is a bursting open of all the Jewish ideals, with the addition of, or perhaps better, through the self-abandoned love of God in Jesus Christ.

But the religious-cultural situation has changed completely perhaps, in the Gospel of St. John, and without doubt in the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians. The cultural context now is Hellenism. The Christian-Jewish faith, this new particularity, is confronted with a world full of mysterious and heavenly powers which threaten men, determine their fates, etc. Using the particularity of Christ in connection with what they recognized as the Jewish faith, both authors declare that Christ as the Lord of the universe has destroyed all evil, all heavenly powers, etc. Both letters declare that we are all created to God in Jesus Christ, or created unto Him, so that we, in him and through him, can reach our fulfilment in God. The fullness of life can only be reached in God. This proclamation of the Gospel does not destroy the overall picture of the Hellenistic world, but it demythologizes it.

This is a bursting open of the Hellenistic culture to the Christian-Jewish one and vice versa, it creates a mutual enrichment in the life of the Church, in Christianity.

I dare say that the proclamation of the Gospel we have in these two letters is different from what we find in the Synoptics, but it is the same Gospel, because they deal with the same event, Jesus Christ. It is only the accentuation which has shifted. This is the first example of inculturation which we find in the history of the Church.

We have to widen our scope a little more (when we consider) the letter to the Ephesians. The letter is among other things in praise of God who has united former Jews and former pagans into one body in Christ, and in Church. According to the letter to the Ephesians 1:10 God planned "that the universe, all in heaven and on earth might be brought into a unity in Christ" and in 1:22, we read "God made him, Christ, the head of all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all".

Besides conquering all the inimical heavenly powers, God has created himself a new people understandable both according to Jewish ideas and according to a Hellenistic mentality: by being united into one body in Christ you have received the fullness of life, God's pleroma. Through the Church we receive the forgiveness of sins and that is the same as the conquering of evil powers. This idea is very important. The recapitulation, that brings into a unity in Christ, all in heaven and on earth (1:10), so that Christ may be our peace to the full extension of the word (Eph. 2:14) is made through the Church. As Kyrios of the world, this government is established through the Church which has the universal task of making the risen Christ present to us, giving us peace.

These ideas which I tentatively have developed indicate important relationships:

1. Real peace in all aspects of the word is only possible through the Church, as the sacrament of salvation.
2. It is therefore, only through the Church that mankind can be united and a real inculturation can take place.
3. The world as a whole and in all its parts can only be saved to the degree in which it receives the fullness of Christ through the Church. That solves for me the important problem of how the order of creation can be embraced by the grace of God. It is only when it is embraced by the particularity of Christ, which is the pleroma, that the order of creation is integrated into the order of salvation. This idea does not mean that people outside the visible Church cannot be saved; neither does it mean that the visible Church always transmits the pleroma to the whole world.

The reference to Ephesians should prove that inculturation is not only the transmission of the ideas of the Gospel to another culture and adapted to another language, but that inculturation is the transmitting of the particularity of Christ which unites people.

The Letter to the Ephesians is not only an example of how the Gospel in its Christian-Jewish particularity is being transformed into a new language, inserted into a new culture in order to liberate man there; it is also an example of how inculturation is the uniting of the Christian-Jewish people with the people of the Hellenistic world, who coming to faith in God, are united with the already existing people of God. The particularity of Christ in the Christian-Jewish culture has burst it open to other cultures to the mutual enrichment of the whole Church but without any imposition of one culture in the theology of the Church. Inculturation is reconciliation but never conformity. The different cultures, after a purification, have preserved their own identity, inspite of the fact that one culture may have an influence on the other.

The particularity of Christ is the particularity of the risen Christ. That means that no culture can be united with Christ without a purification. The world, as the word is used in the New Testament, is of course God's creation, but the world has to be saved, and that means that it has to undergo a process of purification in order to be integrated as the order of creation into the order of salvation. Just as Jesus rejected elements in the Jewish religion and culture and recognized others the same process, must take place wherever the Church unites itself with a new people.

In the Greco-Roman world the use of Greek philosophy by the Christian theologians is very revealing. Whether it is Plato or Aristotle who is the inspiration, no theologian has adopted them uncritically. First, their conclusions underwent a purification and their philosophical ideas were rejected or transformed so that they could serve theology.

Many of you, I can imagine, are wondering why I do not talk about incarnation but only about inculturation. Incarnation is used very frequently also in the document on catechesis--but the determination or definition is ambiguous. As has already been pointed out by Fr. Ary, the term could have two different meanings:

- a) The Church taking flesh in institutions, universities, etc.

b) "A Kenosis": the Church, so to say, disappearing into the masses in poverty, as priest-workers, etc. But what is more important, incarnation is often used in such a way that one may begin to suspect that Christ's death and resurrection is more or less left out of view or forgotten.

I know very well that Irenaeus speaks very much of incarnation, but he never forgets the death and resurrection of Christ, whereas one has the suspicion that some theologians use the idea as if an "incarnational-theology" represents an evolution towards a more satisfying vision of human destiny forgetting that we all have to die, so that we may live. (I am not attacking Teilhard here!)

In order to avoid difficulties it is sometimes best to start with new terms. This avoids any misunderstandings and for this reason I will not use acculturation. Besides being an artificial word it already has its own context: situations where two cultures are confronted with each other. When we speak about evangelization we have quite another situation or we are expected to have it. Speaking of mission and evangelization we must admit that missionaries are coming with their Christianity inserted in their own culture, Christianity cannot exist without a culture nor in an abstraction. Evangelization ensures that the particularity of Christ in the one culture should burst open the particularity both of the new culture and also of that culture belonging to the missionary in order that they may be, so to say, united in Christ. All cultures have the same value before Christ, the same right to development and to inner transformation along their own lines or to be enriched through contact with another culture. But all cultures have the same end, which is to be united with the particularity of the dead and risen Christ.

Father Theoneste Nkeramihigo also uses inculturation in a secular sense: the reconciliation of two different cultures, where one of them or both are trying to find their own identity in a mutual respect for one another; but in our case it is necessary to underline that for a Christian there is only a reconciliation in Christ (and that is why we have to undertake mission).

For a historian - as I am, it is much easier to explain how inculturation was brought about, and I feel anxious now when I am about to explain my ideas to you, who have a real experience in missionary activity.

After having read so much about Church and the culture of today, I feel sure that many Catholics have reservations about inculturation, otherwise I would not have come across so many bitter comments on the present situation from Africans or Indians. In a way I understand the reservations in the Church because the way of inculturation must be very different from place to place. You cannot reduce it all to a common denominator, which often was the case in the past.

We have to understand that each particular situation is a locus teologicus for inculturation. Even if it is difficult to comprehend, we must recognize that the World is to a large degree the starting point for all kinds of ecclesiastical work. Just as the Acts of the Apostles show us how the young Church has to revise her ideas constantly (e.g. Cornelius) according to new situations, so we have to do the same today.

It is therefore much easier to develop a theory of inculturation than to carry it out in practice.

You may often hear people talk about inculturation as the insertion of the universal message into a new culture. Such an expression is quite understandable, because we all feel that the Gospel is universal, something for all mankind independently of time and place. But universality contains the idea that Christianity is only a doctrine, and that is wrong: Christianity is the adherence to the person Jesus-Christ and Jesus is an event, a particularity, whom we follow, have faith in, in order that this liberating and salvific event, particularity, may get that universal value which God has planned.

Summing up I will say: The particularity of Jesus-Christ is the Agape, the will to liberate unto God and the parousia. To this should be added certain elements from the Jewish religion which the Church comprehends as revelation, But all other elements in Christianity are particularities, which can be considered as accidents (scholastic term) or, to use the modern expression, contingencies, which have no everlasting value. In the Agape I am including the Church, the sacraments and, in a way, dogmas as such, but dogmas are ways for the self-understanding of the Church, and this self-understanding is still developing.

To conclude: Christian inculturation implies therefore first and foremost a "return" to the liberating particularities of Christ which in a very plain way enable Western Christianity to listen to the experiences of mankind and enter into a dialogue with other men (both in Europe and in the Third world).

What is this experience: I understand it as experiences of new or forgotten dimensions of the reality of life. Finally, I have made an attempt to formulate the whole idea in a definition: Inculturation is the process by which the Catholic Church by the liberating and reconciling particularity of Christ, in a mutual movement, bursts open the culture of the proclaimers of the Gospel and the culture where the Gospel is proclaimed to such a degree that the two cultures, preserving their own identities become reconciled in Christ, and the Church becomes a liberating, purifying and animating part of the new world.

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#### Women Religious

There are about a million women religious in the world, but they are very unevenly distributed. Italy alone (145,000) has almost as many as the whole of Africa (33,500) and Latin America (120,000). Fifty-six per cent of women religious are in Europe (529,000). There are more than twice as many women religious in Asia (79,000) as in Africa (33,500).

In Europe and North America there is one priest per 1,000 Catholics and one Sister per 500; in Asia, one priest per 2,500 and one Sister per 750; in Africa one priest per 3,000 and one Sister per 750; and in Latin America one priest per 7,000 and one Sister per 2,500.

Reference: SPIRITAN NEWS, January-February, 1980, Number 27.

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Available at Sedos: A New Missionary Era--Papers from the Knock Missionary Congress, 365 pages. The papers treat of the following topics: Mission in the World Today; Pastoral Aspects of Mission, the Spiritual Life of the Missionary, the Challenge of Justice, Making the Church Incarnate, Some of the contributors are Archbishop McGrath, Parmananda Divarkar, Jose Comblin, Brian Heane, Bishop Ndingi, Walbert Bühlmann, Archbishop Buthlezi and many others.

There are a few copies available at Sedos. Price: 7,000 lire.

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR MISSION IN THE 1980s

From the Conservative-Evangelical perspective

By Dr. Peter Stam

Just a word regarding my own personal background as a starter, to aid you in understanding where I am coming from. Rather than being an academician, my experience has been on the operations level. My wife and I spent 18 years teaching in the Congo (Zaire), and since then I've been involved in Mission administration for 15 years, 13 in Canada and 2 back in the U.S. Our own society, The Africa Inland Mission, has 750 missionaries serving in 9 countries of east and central Africa, over 500 of them being from the United States. My own responsibility is that of directing the administration of the U.S. headquarters.

The conservative evangelical perspective in Mission is represented by Mission members of two associations, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association, with 48 member Missions and over 8,000 missionaries; and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, also including a total of over 8,000 missionaries. These two associations with a grand total over 16,000 Protestant missionaries include a majority of those serving world-wide today.

Our planning and preparation for ongoing MISSION in the 1980s is based on our specific presuppositions regarding Mission. I therefore list those presuppositions, for without them our position is not understandable. This is of course NOT intended to be a full doctrinal statement, but includes only those basic doctrines and presuppositions directly bearing on Mission. I list them here without discussion or defense, as either would be outside the scope of our session today.

1. The conservative-evangelical accepts the divine origin and inspiration of the Scriptures, and acknowledges the Bible as our complete and final authority for life and for ministry.
2. We accept the unique divinity of Jesus Christ as the only and eternal Son of God.
3. We accept the uniqueness of Christ as the only way of salvation, of reconciliation with God, through His substitutionary death for us.
4. We recognize the eternal lostness of those not believing in Christ. We do not accept the neo-universalist viewpoint that all will ultimately be saved. I should comment here that that viewpoint has done more than any other to vitiate the strength and urgency of Christ's mandate to us.
5. We accept the responsibility of all churches and all individual Christians to participate in world evangelism. By evangelism we do NOT mean simply social action, but the Proclamation of the Good News of salvation through the death, resurrection and present ministry of Jesus Christ. Christians of the young, third-world churches share in this responsibility.



6. We believe in the importance of a godly life-style for all professing to follow Christ, meaning a break from non-Christian elements in ANY culture, including our own, and from the ungodly immoral living of the world around us. This assumes the absolute nature of the moral standards taught in the Bible, and rejects the relativistic ethical standards so common today. We further recognize the living of a Godly life-style as an essential part of evangelism.
7. We accept the responsibility of Christians, churches, Missions, to disciple, that is, to teach the Scriptures, the necessity of obedience to Christ, and to bring to maturity in their faith, all new believers.
8. We accept the adaptability of basic Christianity to any culture, and its contextualization, within the limits of Scriptural standards and teaching, is not only possible, but essential.
9. We accept the validity and necessity of all kinds of social and developmental ministries, in connection with and in the light of the top priority of meeting mankind's spiritual needs.

On the basis of these presuppositions we proceed with our planning and preparation for Mission in the 1980s, and suggest the following parameters as governing that preparation.

1. Our overriding goal, objective, is nothing less than world evangelization, the proclamation of the message of salvation through Christ to everyone, every nation, every tribe, every language. The slogan of the Lausanne Congress is our slogan-- "LET THE EARTH HEAR HIS VOICE." More specifically, our objective is to establish mature churches, which obviously involves much more than mere proclamation. And it is of course our response to the command of Christ Himself in the words of the Great Commission. The establishing of mature churches involves teaching believers the Scriptures, training leaders, and in fact assisting them in developing their own theology, consonant with their own culture as well as with the Scriptures.
2. Recruitment, in the light of the above objectives. This will put heavy emphasis on evangelists, pioneer workers, theologians, and Bible teachers. We recognize further that we cannot depend wholly on volunteerism, but must engage in active recruitment through local churches and training institutions.
3. We recognize the necessity of continuing research and exploration of unreached areas and people. The U.S. Center for World Mission under the direction of Dr. Ralph Winter, and MARC, the Missions Advanced Research Center, division of World Vision, have already done a great deal in this regard, and have estimated the total number of unevangelized to be 2.8 billion people, two-thirds of the world population, more than 80% of which must be reached cross-culturally. Dr. Winter estimates that there are 16,750 distinct cultural groups without a witness for Christ. Much more needs to be done to identify these groups and plan a strategy for reaching them.
4. We are determined to more adequately prepare and orient our candidates for overseas ministry. This will include greater emphasis on:
  - a. Cross-cultural communication and adaptation.
  - b. Inter-personal relationships and self-awareness.

c. Supreme emphasis on a personal daily relationship with the living Christ, and a thorough applied knowledge of the Scriptures.

5. We believe in the necessity of close ties between mission boards and the local churches which send out and support the missionaries, and intend to maintain close communication with them in recruitment, in screening of candidates, and in the on-going ministry of the missionaries.

A relatively new organization, the Association of Church Mission Committees, otherwise known as APMC, has done excellent work in encouraging local churches in their missions program and in closer relations with Mission societies.

6. We believe in close cooperation with and under national churches already in existence. In the case of our mission, for example, in the countries of Kenya, Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania, mission organization has been largely dispensed with and missionaries work with and under the direction of the African churches, which in those countries are strong and numerous. Furthermore, even in outreach into unreached areas, evangelism by international interracial teams has proven most effective. World evangelism in the 1980s will increasingly be carried on in close cooperation with third-world mission societies, of which there are an increasing number.
7. We recognize the great needs of and our responsibility to ethnic minority groups in urban areas in this country. A.I.M., for example, has an expanding ministry among the Afro-Americans of the city of Newark, New Jersey, and intends to expand that ministry to other cities. The Latin America Mission has begun work among people of Hispanic origins in several areas, and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship works extensively among Chinese Americans. Christians from the overseas churches will increasingly be involved with us in this work.
8. We recognize the need for INCREASED MOBILITY of the missionary force. This includes the formation of mobile strike teams composed of missionaries with varied qualifications who accept jobs on a recognized temporary basis and are prepared to move on short notice to take advantage of sudden opportunities. For example, three years ago we were invited to send medical and educational teams into the Comoro Islands, and within three months were able to place twenty-two workers there--not really fast enough. After two years of work, they were all expelled by the Marxist/Muslim government, and went back to former ministries. Now after some six months of renewed negotiations, that door has suddenly reopened, though we don't know for how long. We need to be ready for such possibly short-lived opportunities. Increased mobility also implies the need for redeployment of missionaries from mature areas to more needy ones, away from established mission stations to situations of greater identification with those to whom they witness.
9. We recognize the need for ever increasing cooperation in every possible way with other societies, organizations, churches, of similar doctrine and standards, to accomplish as speedily as possible our joint responsibility of world evangelization. There is no room for competition in this supremely important and urgent task, in which we are partners with Almighty God

Himself. There are already many examples of such cooperation --joint efforts in schools, medical programs, evangelistic efforts. Right now the Africa Inland Mission and the Sudan Interior Mission are cooperating in reaching the 250,000 Somali nomads of N.E. Kenya, with significant breakthroughs in the witness to this Muslimized tribe. This model must be followed wherever possible.

10. We recognize the need to develop more fully the TEAM APPROACH to missionary work--a close-knit loving and caring community working together to reach a specific area, and in the process demonstrating true "body-life," modeling for those being reached a loving Christian community.
11. We declare our commitment to developmental ministries, to reaching the needs of the whole person, the physical, the intellectual, the spiritual. Our missions are heavily involved in medicine, education, famine relief, community development, literacy programs, and a host of other such projects. One unusual example is our work with the Turkana tribe of N.W. Kenya, thousands of whom were starving to death because of prolonged drought. We cooperated with the Kenya government in convincing them that fish were edible, teaching them to fish, and assisting them in setting up cooperatives to provide a market for their fish. Today more than 20,000 Turkana are settled along the western shores of Lake Turkana (formerly Lake Rudolph), making a living from fishing. And meanwhile the church has been strongly planted, with hundreds of members. For we believe that development must be tied in with a spiritual ministry, and that the latter actually holds top priority.
12. We believe in the absolutely basic and essential need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ on the part of the whole missionary body, and a daily demonstration of utter faith in the God who works miracles. For the completion of world evangelization will be a miracle of God, accomplished by His power, through the instrumentality of men and women wholly committed to Him.

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#### STUDENTS IN ROME FROM MISSION COUNTRIES

The three Roman colleges of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith have 329 priest-students from mission countries registered for the 1979-80 academic year--a new record. Preregistrations for next year indicate an increase to 350 students. The colleges are the College of St. Peter the Apostle, the Urban College and the College of St. Paul the Apostle.

There are 51 Nigerian students, 45 from India, 22 from Zaire, 19 from South Korea, 17 from Tanzania, 15 from Rwanda, 14 from Ghana, and 10 from Uganda. The other 136 students come "from throughout the missionary world," according to the report. (NC)

Reference: SUNDAY EXAMINER, Catholic News of the Week, Vol. XXXIV No. 11, March 14th, 1980.

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## INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON MISSION

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(Manila, December 2-6, 1979)

By M. Amaladoss, sj

(Printed in Vidyajyoti, this article adds another dimension to our previous accounts of the Congress).

On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the diocese of Manila, Philippines, the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies of the Philippines co-sponsored an International Congress on Mission in Manila. Delegates--Bishops and National Directors of Pontifical Mission Aid Societies--had come from some forty countries, mostly Asian, though a few had come from Africa, the Americas and Europe. Representatives of a few missionary Congregations were also present as observers. About 30 theologians, working in Asian countries, came as resource persons. There were about 200 participants in all.

The theme of the Congress was "The Good News of God's Kingdom to the Peoples of Asia". The Congress sought to set itself in the tradition of Evangelii Nuntiandi and the various statements made by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), and Bishops' Institutes sponsored by it, like the Bishops' Institute for Missionary Activities (BIMA) and the Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA). The focus was on Asia. A series of liturgies centred around various Asian countries strengthened this focus. The aim of the Congress was not to break new ground in the theology of mission, but to see how best we can bring the Good News of God's Kingdom to the peoples of Asia today. There were nine workshops: the Theology of Mission in the Asian Context, Inculturation, Dialogue, Liberation and Development, Basic Christian Communities and Ministries, Spirituality and Formation, Co-responsibility, Education, and finally the Media.

Papers written by the resource persons were generally made available to the participants before the meeting. A keynote address on "Church and Mission in Relation to the Kingdom of God especially in the Third World Context" by Bishop Patrick D'Souza of Varanasi, India, was delivered on the first day. I shall not attempt to survey these background papers (22 of them).

On the last day of the Congress the delegates voted unanimously to approve a "message" addressed to the peoples of Asia. Besides this Message, each workshop came up with its own Consensus Paper, as the fruit of its discussions. In the following pages I shall present briefly the main ideas that emerge from these papers which are the outcome of the Congress, and make a brief comment on the event of the Congress itself.

### The Message

Gathering up the fruits of the various workshops, the Message indicates the task of evangelization today:

It suffices for the present to indicate here the continued building up of the local Church as the focus of the task of evangelization today, with dialogue as its essential mode: through a more resolute, more creative and yet truly discerning and responsible inculturation; through inter-religious dialogue undertaken in all seriousness; through solidarity and sharing with the poor and the advocacy of human rights; through the creation of 'grassroots ecclesial communities' with structures of genuine co-responsibility and ministries of charism and service; through the fostering of evangelizing education in schools and non-formal education modes; and through an adequate media-ministry.

This task is set in the context of the contemporary Asian reality, which presents us with a vision of "a new world being born, of millions of men and women in search of new social structures and relationships, of a renewed humanity". Though this search is a perennial one, it is new "in breadth, restlessness and urgency". This is a common search in which Christians find themselves involved with the followers of other living faiths.

The Asian peoples, while still largely cherishing religious values, have been disillusioned by men of religion, as well as by ideologies and political systems. The Church too does not escape blame.

Many in our Asian countries have in diverse ways met Christ and his Gospel and have been deeply attracted by them. With sorrow we confess that many have not been equally drawn to the Church because so often they did not see in us, in our institutions and in our lives, the image and the realization of the Good News we proclaim. Have we not too frequently made his message mere words and doctrines, his deeds mere precepts and practices, his life merely a complex of rites and institutions?

The Christian communities in Asia, therefore, are challenged to an ever renewed conversion to God's Word so that "our Asian peoples may find the Christian existence and message truly transparent to Jesus and his Gospel, genuinely vibrant with his life". There are already signs of this renewal in the Asian Churches. There is an awakening of interest in a deeper spiritual life, in greater solidarity with the poor, in 'grassroots ecclesial communities' and new forms of missionary involvement. All this presages a true renewal of mission in Asia. The Message spells out the newness of this 'new age of mission'. First of all there is a new awareness that the mission is the task, not only of a few missionaries, nor of a few of the 'older Churches', but of every Christian and every local Church. "Every local Church is responsible for its mission, and co-responsible for the mission of all its sister-Churches." Secondly, "the Spirit of the Lord calls each people and each culture to its own fresh and creative response to the Gospel".

The keynote address, in its conclusion, emphasized this newness in rather strong terms:

We have reached a decisive turning point in the mission history of the Third World: there is no return to the past, neither to the past mission theories, nor to the past mission methods, nor to the past mission goals.

A new era has started that of the Third World Mission, which grows harmoniously out of the past into a new future.

The tiny Third World Churches are no longer only 'missions', the recipients of material help and of 'mission personnel'. They have now been entrusted by Divine Providence with a tremendous task: to be and to proclaim the Kingdom of God in the Third World with great faith, and a still greater hope, even though their success in terms of the Church structures they will be able to put up, may be minimal. Even so the Third World Churches are called upon to proclaim God's Kingdom not only to the Third World but far beyond to the whole world.

The Message concludes with two touching references: one to "our fellow Christians in the widening Asian 'Church of silence' as well as all those who suffer under totalitarian regimes of every kind"; another to the refugees "from different countries, but especially those from Indochina, now in camps or on the high seas or seeking to cross frontiers".

### The Consensus Papers of the Workshops

Though the workshop papers represent the views of the members of each workshop, actually they reflect a wider consensus in the congress. Reading through the Consensus Papers one is struck by the repetition of certain basic themes, though they are set in different contexts and are seen from different points of view. The main focus is on the building up of the local Church, the emphasis however being on the growth of grassroots (basic) Christian communities, with appropriate forms of service and structures of participation. There is a constant stress on a threefold thrust: inculturation, dialogue with peoples of other living faiths and solidarity with the poor. Finally a new attitude is advocated: an attitude of humility and collaboration. The Church does not merely give; it must also learn to receive. It is not merely challenged to constant conversion and renewal by the Gospel: it has to learn from the cultures and religions with which it is dialoguing. Though the theological spectrum that justifies these attitudes and orientations may be rather wide and at various levels, there is no doubt about a large consensus regarding the concrete tasks outlined above. In surveying the Consensus Papers, I shall not refer again to these recurring themes, but mention only other significant ideas.

The group on Mission Theology in the Asian Context tackles inconclusively an interesting question, raised in the keynote address: "Can Baptism be urged on those who want to adhere to Christ but would find life extremely difficult in the new sociological situation in which Baptism would put them?" I think that the question must be turned upside down. Why should Baptism have uncomfortable sociological implications? Why should it cut people off from their cultural and sociological roots? What are we doing to reform Church structures and institutions that alienate the people from their socio-historic situation? In any case, we have been asking for many years, at least in India, more radical questions like: Can the aim of evangelization be to make a Hindu a better Hindu?

The group on Inculturation stresses the need for 'responsible experimentation', proceeding by alternating stages of experience and reflection and subject to evaluation. In the face of the pluralistic cultural and religious conditions of Asian countries a search for a common vision of evangelization becomes a must. While men of different faiths and ideologies are called to dialogue by the need to re-discover "a dynamic, spiritual dimension to life" and to promote "harmony and peace in a world of divisions and conflicts", the Christian himself, through dialogue, "grows in awareness of his partnership with God in the coming about of the Kingdom".

The workshop on Liberation and Development demands unequivocally that "the Church of Asia must become the Church of the Poor". It articulates this demand in the words of BISA V:

What does it mean to be the Church of the Poor? Is not the Church for all men and women, for rich and poor, or saints and sinners? We found an answer in the way many Churches of Asia are moving in the direction of greater and greater involvement with the life of their people: their simply being with the poor; their attempts at working out programmes of human development-integral, respectful of the people's dignity, attuned to their cultures; their standing with them in their hard struggle for justice and for self-empowerment; their insistence that the rich become themselves real members of the Church of the Poor by fulfilling their obligations in justice and charity towards the poor. The Church of the Poor must do all this.

The localization of the Church finds expression in the basic Christian communities. They emerge from below. We cannot create them nor organize them from above. We can only facilitate their emergence and animate and guide their growth. Such communities are "self-nourishing, self-ministering, and self-propagating". What kind of ministries should a basic Christian community have?

If indeed ministries spring up in our Christian communities as the needs of the group and society are identified and met with activated charisms, we definitely must spare no efforts in having a participative leadership in our local Churches where everyone feels co-responsible. Only then is the community self-reliant. Only then can the community qua community be a leaven in the dough of concrete social life, playing a catalyst role, and offering a prophetic service both to society and to the Church by its very life-style.

Only the emergence of basic Christian communities will overcome "clericalism, over-institutionalization and stifling legalism. Instead it will make the Church truly a fellowship and communion of God's people, united in charity, respectful of each other's dignity and equality, and effectively at the service of the wider human community."

The group reflecting on Spirituality and Formation for Mission expresses grave concern at "the general tendency in our clergy not to care much for spiritual things". Since faith is something which is personally conveyed, holiness of life is the primary means for mission. Following Evangelii Nuntiandi serious attention is given to forms of popular piety.

Encounter with God is also experienced in the depths of the soul through community celebration of life events--as the cycle of life, seasonal celebrations and festivities. Hence, we would like to stress once again that popular piety and folk religiosity must be taken seriously, examined and fostered.

Formation for mission must be "inter-disciplinary, going beyond philosophy and theology to growth in cultural awareness, and be open to the real challenges of service in the varied needs of our Asian peoples." This necessitates a process of action-involvement/reflection-interiorization.

If we recognize that the local Church is the centre and source of evangelization then,

To be effective in its work of evangelising the local Church should, as a matter of great urgency, implement those directives that have been given by and since Vatican II, about the setting up of structures which by their very nature are geared towards the exercise of co-responsibility within the local Church such as parish councils, diocesan pastoral councils, regular meetings of bishops with the presbyterium, senates of priests, meetings of bishops with religious superiors.

We encourage the building up of Basic Christian Communities wherever possible as an effective means of promoting co-responsibility at the grass-roots level.

An area of special concern in the exercise of co-responsibility is that of economic structures where two principles have to be safeguarded, namely:

1. the gradual growth towards self-reliance of the local Churches; and 2. the commitment of Churches in the West to the creation of an economic world structure in which the demands of justice in the developing world are met.

Repeated emphasis on the local Church as the agent of evangelization may lead us to wonder about the role of foreign missionaries, They are

not only living signs of the universality of the Church, but because of their different cultural and Christian background, they enrich and challenge the local Church. The local Church should welcome, accept and help integrate them into her life.

Education has been an important means of missionary effort, involving a proportionately large human and financial investment. This may be a reason why it was the theme of a separate workshop. It paid special attention to two elements of the Asian context: the poor and the youth.

In all her educational endeavours, the Church should make a preferential option for the poor, leading to a genuine commitment and effort to bring about social justice in societies. This implies that, since evangelising education touches on liberation for more humane socio-economic conditions, the Church must break with educational orientations which foster elitism. Consequently provision must be made for widening the possibilities of universal access to education, equalisation of educational opportunities, and stimulating the young and adults to discover with the light of faith that they are called to live their Christian vocation in a more responsible manner within the context of solidarity with others.

Since the immense majority of Asians are young people, the dynamism the young bring to the Church is so far-reaching that their evangelization is definitely a priority for the Church in Asia.

### The Congress in Context

What will be the impact of this Congress on evangelization in Asia? It did not contribute to any progress in theological reflection on mission: none was attempted. The Message of the Congress is inspirational in nature. While it proposes a vision and the broad outlines of an approach, it does not come up with a grand plan or concrete strategies for bearing the Good News to Asia's millions. Neither did the Workshops propose resolutions concrete enough to demand immediate implementation. The Workshops could have been more down to earth and practical; they did not, in fact, resist the temptation of prefacing their vague resolutions with theological reflections.

What did the Congress do then? It did nothing. It was an event, an experience. It was the Asian Church becoming aware of its common identity and of its task of proclaiming the Good News in the context of its own existence. It was the Asian Church answering itself and discovering its freedom and spontaneity, its responsibility. The event of the Congress must be set in the dynamic of a movement of self-discovery and conscientization. The main points of emphasis in her task of mission have not radically changed since the FABC meeting in Taipei, 1974. But her understanding and conviction have become deeper. One need no longer talk defensively about inculturation and dialogue, about solidarity with the poor and basic Christian communities. There has been a growing consensus around these points. At the Congress they were refocussed around the task of the Asian Church to bring the Good News to the Asian peoples. The fact that the Directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies and the



representatives of the Missionary Congregations were at the Congress together with representative Bishops makes us hope that the Mission in Asia will take on a new dynamism, in a new perspective, with new orientations. The policy makers in the Asian Churches would certainly have gone back home strengthened and supported by the large consensus evident at the meeting.

The Congress was one step--but an important one--in the collective process by which the Asian Churches are becoming conscientized to their responsibility for the proclamation of the Good News in the special context of Asia. The tasks are not new: but there is a new awareness that these tasks are primarily ours. In the international forum the voice of Latin America has sounded loud and clear for liberation. The voice of Africa has proclaimed with repeated emphasis the need for indigenization. Asia is discovering her voice, gently and hesitantly, but surely in her ancient wisdom, for a dialogue of life with the people, with their challenging poverty, their rich culture and their living religion.

Reference: VIDYAJYOTI, Journal of Theological Reflection, February 1980, Vol. XLIV, No.2.

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#### SOUTH AFRICA

##### ORIENTATION COURSE FOR STUDENT PRIESTS.

Pretoria, 10th March 1980 -(DIA)-

From next year onwards, students for the priesthood in South Africa, will complete an orientation course at St. Peter's Seminary Hammanskraal, before moving to St. John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria for the major part of their training. This has been decided by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference in the course of their meeting held last month in Pretoria.

The training of priests, which has been under consideration for the past two years by a committee of bishops and religious superiors, will in future be divided into an orientation stage, an ordination stage and a post-ordination stage.

The first will orientate candidates in the direction of pastoral ministry by introduction to the mystery of Christ and inculcation of pastoral objectives, attitudes and skills. It is intended to be a period of "spiritual and psychological healing and growth".

The ordination stage, lasting five years, will comprise the major part of the students' philosophical and theological studies. After their ordination, students will receive obligatory formation or training in the post-ordination stage.

Father Sebastian Mahara, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, has been appointed rector of St. Peter's seminary when it re-opens next year.

It has been reported that the decision to house the orientation and ordination courses in separate premises is to be reviewed in the light of experience at a future date. A/E 3/218

Reference: DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION FOR AND ABOUT AFRICA, 10th March, 1980, 16th Year, No.97.

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## TRAVEL

Travel is one of those "the grass is greener on the other side of the fence" kind of things. People who don't do very much of it wish they did. People who do a great deal wish they didn't. Possibly one of the greatest aids to the 19th century missionary returning or leaving a field was the long sea voyage. It usually provides both a great deal of physical rest and enough time lag so that one could get emotionally adjusted to the idea that one had really left and was really going to "arrive."

For the Christian executive traveling on business the technological wonder of moving from one continent to another in less than 24 hours can be a trying experience at best. But because time has become such a valuable commodity to those of us in the West, and because we want to be good stewards of that time, it is all too easy to push oneself beyond one's physical, emotional and sometimes spiritual endurance.

What follows are some of the suggestions that we have gained from our own experience and the experience of others, suggestions that might make your next trip somewhat more pleasant and hopefully more profitable.

### Planning

Most long trips are scheduled well in advance. There's adequate time to plan. But even before taking a trip it's a very useful idea to write your own statement of purpose. Why are you taking this trip? What is it you hope to accomplish? What other things might you do at the same time? What will be the consequences when you return? (Perhaps you could decide not to take the trip. That will save all kinds of time and money!)

In our desire to spread the high cost of travel as much as possible we often plan too many things into a trip. We need to have a good understanding of our own capabilities and how many hours a day we're going to spend in each situation. It's very easy to go from eight in the morning until midnight ministering to people. However, one wonders whether one gives very good counsel at 11 p.m. after a hard day.

Schedule in rest breaks and do your best to see that they really don't turn into social events. If people haven't seen you in some time, and/or if you have a reputation for being able to help others, they will attempt to overbook you. Often they forget that you are right in the middle of a very busy trip. The only way we know to fight this one is to tell people quite frankly that you need the rest.

Think about what you will be doing during the travel time. Perhaps the most relaxing and useful thing you can do is to read a novel or to otherwise "waste time." Others find the privacy of being alone on an airplane for an extended period of time an excellent time to do some thinking, praying or some of that writing that most of us never seem to find time to do. Deciding to do these things ahead of time helps you to move into a trip much more relaxed, and often with a sense of anticipation.

Let people know your intentions. It's very useful to send an agenda ahead to those with whom you're going to meet to alert them to the things that you'll want to discuss and what it is that you hope to accomplish. (This is also a good time to tell them about any rest time that you will need.)

### Preparation

Keep a personal travel checklist of all the things that you might want to pack for a trip and use this as a guide for packing. Many travel agents have these. Get a copy of theirs and then develop your own from experience. There are many places in the world where a small flashlight, your own cake of soap, or even six feet of nylon string to hang your clothes out to dry, are necessities.

Have another checklist of the kinds of working material you might need, things like notepads, extra pens, recorder, address book, etc. Check this off in the same way.

Make sure that you leave an itinerary in your office and with your family with the names, addresses and hopefully telephone numbers of where you can be reached in case of emergencies. Leave clear instructions as to under what circumstances you want to be contacted.

If you're traveling overseas, make sure you take along some standard medicines. Lomotil and Entroviaform (both prescription drugs) are excellent for handling the revenge that Montezuma has been famous for. A broad spectrum antibiotic recommended by your doctor is always useful, as are such things as cold remedies and aspirin. And don't forget to get those inoculations well in advance. Three shots in one arm in one day can be terribly painful.

Wherever possible plan to travel light. Most airlines will allow you to carry on a garment bag with pockets in it as well as an under-the-seat briefcase. But in any event make sure you have some toilet articles and a light change of clothing with you as a carry-on.

### Entry and Re-entry

We are all familiar with the problems of jet lag. Most of us can handle the three hour time change we have flying across the United States, but beyond that jet lag can be a real problem. We also need to understand that some of us don't sleep well on airplanes. Usually you won't need a rest the moment you arrive, but within 12 to 24 hours there needs to be a time of catching up. Plan for it, and put it into your schedule.

Watch your eating. It's much better to skip a meal than to overeat. Our biochemistry needs to get restabilized, both for the time change and the difference in food.

Try not to begin a trip tired. If you see that you're going to have a very heavy schedule before you leave, consider leaving a day early and actually spending time at some place away from home.

In the middle of a trip or at the end, plan re-entry time. We all need re-entry time with ourselves, with our families, as well as our work. Sometimes you can combine all three of these by planning a short working holiday. Three days during which you

spend a half of each day catching up with office correspondence, and the other half day catching up with your community, will return you to your work both prepared for the situation there and prepared for the needs you'll encounter within your community.

### Think the Work of the Trip Through

Develop a standard list of questions that you need to be asking about your ministry wherever you go. In addition, have a list of questions that you plan to get answered at every place you're going to visit.

One very helpful tool is to organize your trip by setting aside a manila folder for each place that you're going to visit. As you correspond back and forth with people prior to your trip, you can put the information in this correspondence folder. Then when you're ready to go, pull out the folders and take them along.

Get your address book up-to-date. Some people find it appropriate to break their address books down by continent or country so that they are sure to touch base with the proper people when they're there. Remember that even though you can't visit with a lot of people, just making a telephone call to them can be very salutary. Some people find it very useful to jot down the names of family members, secretaries, and others along with the name and address of the people with whom you're in contact. (A loose-leaf address book makes this task easier.)...

### Briefing Yourself

If you are visiting people or places you've never encountered before, it's an excellent idea to get a briefing on both. There is plenty of information available in the local library-(or the Sedos Documentation centre--editor's note). Try to get some understanding of the religious, political, geographical and cultural situation into which you're going to go...

### Keep Track and Report

Often we see people take a trip from which they benefit greatly, but which they do not share with others. Think ahead of time what kind of reports you should be writing when you return and who should receive them. It's a good idea to take along a small spiral bound "trip" notebook in which you can jot down not only notes from conversations but an itinerary of places you've visited. You'll find this a very handy memory jogger when you attempt to reconstruct where you've been and what happened. Many people find it useful to report along the way by dictating or writing out their trip report as they go. However, extensive trips often need to be broken down in a series of different reports depending upon the needs of those to whom you're reporting and the subjects that you're covering. Remember to file those reports in such a way that the next person from your congregation who goes to visit that particular locality will be able to dig it out and find out what you discovered previously.

### Mind Set

How you think about a trip before you take it is very important. If you think about it as being burdensome and a chore, it will usually be difficult. If, on the other hand, you think of it as being a special time which can be used receptively and profitably, it can easily become a joy. Those of us who have the opportunity to travel need to see it as a privilege.

Reference: CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP LETTER, June 1979.

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 : DOCUMENTATION RECEIVED RECENTLY AT SEDOS :  
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<u>Code No.</u>	<u>Title of Document, Article, or Books</u>
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5.MI (1/80)	<u>Nicaragua - Hirtenbrief der Bischöfe von Nicaragua,</u> In MISSIO INFORMATIONEN No.1, 1980, pp. 19-30.
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