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FAMIGLIA CRISTIANA ED EVANGELIZZAZIONE  
ALCUNI PROBLEMI DELLA FAMIGLIA CRISTIANA  
NELL'ATTIVITÀ MISSIONARIA OGGI

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- Fr. Gabriele Ferrari, sx

(Following is the text of the presentation made to the Synod by Father Gabriele Ferrari, sx. Fr. Ferrari is one of the ten Superiors General elected by the Union of Superiors General to represent them at the Synod. He is also the present President of Sedos. The text of his address is given here in the original Italian.)

### Introduzione

Prendo la parola come delegato dell'Unione dei Superiori Generali e come responsabile di un Istituto esclusivamente missionario. Parlo sul tema del Sinodo collocandomi dal punto di vista dei missionari esteri che, invitati dalle Chiese Locali a collaborare nell'evangelizzazione, prestano la loro opera nelle singole chiese sotto la direzione pastorale dei Vescovi; ma che sono anche coscienti nello stesso tempo di trovarsi in una posizione privilegiata (anche se scomoda...) oltre i confini d'una chiesa locale, spettatori di fatti e problemi che superano la chiesa locale e si ripercuotono nella coscienza della Chiesa universale, ponti fra due culture differenti e testimoni privilegiati della penetrazione del messaggio evangelico nel mondo d'oggi.

1. Importanza "missionaria" del tema del Sinodo: Il tema di questo V° Sinodo è provvidenziale, in continuità con i temi dei precedenti due sinodi, anche se complesso e da trattare con attenzione e cautela, perché da esso vengono molte conseguenze pastorali. Nello stesso tempo è necessario che il Sinodo guardi bene in faccia i problemi connessi con la famiglia, anche se non è sempre possibile offrire le soluzioni auspiccate. Dal coraggio con cui il Sinodo affronta questo tema della famiglia, dipende molta della credibilità della Chiesa nel mondo d'oggi.

L'evangelizzazione che è "La grazia, la vocazione e l'identità più profonda" della Chiesa (EN 14) non consiste primariamente nella trasmissione d'un insieme di verità da accettare, ma nella proposta di un incontro con Gesù Cristo, il "Vangelo di Dio" (EN 7.1) che chiama l'uomo e gli rivela la sua identità ed i valori seminati dal Verbo nella sua cultura (AG 11). L'uomo gli risponde nella fede e modella la sua vita sul Regno, "sul mondo nuovo, sul nuovo stato di cose, sulla nuova maniera di essere(...) che il Vangelo inaugura"(EN 23). L'evangelizzazione è un processo di illuminazione e rivelazione che richiede tempi lunghi di comprensione, traduzione, assimilazione e annuncio (EN 63).

Tale processo che tende al "rinnovamento dell'umanità" (EN 24) raggiungendo e quasi sconvolgendo "mediante la forza del Vangelo i criteri di giudizio, i valori determinanti, i punti di interesse (...) i modelli di vita dell'umanità che sono in contrasto con La Parola di Dio e col disegno di salvezza" (EN 19), tale processo non potrà non interessarsi di evangelizzare quella realtà umana che è il "nucleo naturale ed essenziale della società" (pacem in Terris, 7), presentando un modo nuovo e "lieto" (di Letizia evangelica, beninteso) di vivere il matrimonio e la vita familiare.

Per questo affermiamo che la realtà matrimoniale e familiare - il sacramento con tutto quanto esso suppone di pastorale prima e dopo la sua celebrazione - sta nel cuore dell'attività missionaria della Chiesa, la cui crescita non è

misurata dalla statistica dei singoli battesimi (come spesso si pensa), ma dal numero e dalla qualità di quelle cellule viventi del Corpo di Cristo, le "chiese domestiche" (LG 11) che sono le famiglie.

2. Alcuni problemi "missionari" della famiglia: Ci sono alcuni problemi che sono sentiti in maniera acuta dagli evangelizzatori nella loro attività, specialmente nelle giovani chiese, e che attendono una risposta da parte di questo Sinodo.

2.1. L'inculturazione del matrimonio: Evangelizzando i non-cristiani, La Chiesa cattolica, proveniente dall'Occidente, ha certamente compiuto la missione divina affidatale dal Redentore. Ma la sua attività era inevitabilmente "segnata" dalla teologia del tempo. Essa ha annunciato ed introdotto il matrimonio sacramentale secondo il rito e la concezione propria del tempo, e nessuno vuole condannarla per questo. Oggi tuttavia guardando al matrimonio cristiano - particolarmente in Africa - non si può astenersi dal constatare che esso pare sovrapposto o giustapposto al matrimonio tradizionale che, pur essendo in crisi, è tuttavia così coerente ed aderente alla cultura locale da far considerare il matrimonio sacramentale un'aggiunta poco significativa, spesso di difficile comprensione nei suoi riti, condizionata nella sua stabilità da quella del matrimonio tradizionale.

Non si può dimenticare che esistono fasce culturali della Chiesa in Africa nelle quali gli adulti battezzati sono praticamente esclusi dalla recezione dei sacramenti (in certe zone si arriva anche all'87% e anche più). E' un fatto che preoccupa gravemente gli evangelizzatori e che non dovrebbe essere indifferente per coloro che hanno a cuore l'evangelizzazione della nostra società, la quale non può dirsi evangelizzata finché non saranno state raggiunte le radici della famiglia.

2.2. I condizionamenti sociali ed economici: In molti Paesi mancano le condizioni minime per una vita familiare secondo il progetto di Dio. "Nella famiglia si ripercuotono le conseguenze più negative del sottosviluppo: indici veramente deprimenti di insalubrità, povertà e miseria, ignoranza ed analfabetismo, inumane condizioni di vita, sottoalimentazione cronica e tante altre realtà non meno tristi" (Giovanni Paolo II a Puebla, Doc. Puebla 571). Si aggiungano le guerre che oggi vengono combattute dai soliti contendenti sulla terra dei poveri, le repressioni violente, l'incertezza del futuro, l'espropriazione delle terre, le migrazioni forzate in cerca di lavoro: sono fenomeni sociali che recano danno e disunione alle famiglie già costituite, ed impediscono alle nuove famiglie di costruirsi in maniera stabile. E tutto questo nella generale indifferenza di un mondo che ha quasi abbandonato la speranza di migliorare.

2.3. L'urbanesimo: Esso porta nelle principali e già sovrappopolate città delle autentiche masse umane senza che queste vi possano trovare né casa né lavoro. Vi rimangono senza alcuna assistenza sociale e religiosa, vittime di tutti i mali della città. La gioventù - la più attratta dal miraggio urbano - tagliata dalla sua cultura, finisce per assumere atteggiamenti e stili di vita nocivi alla famiglia ed alla sua promozione umana e cristiana; prostituzione, unioni libere, divorzio, infanzia abbandonata sono fatti e fenomeni che non fanno bene sperare per il futuro della famiglia. In questa situazione non solo viene scardinata la famiglia nucleare, ma anche quell'importante struttura familiare che è la famiglia "allargata", un valore da non lasciare cadere.

4. Il "machismo" e la condizione della donna: Questo fenomeno (che non è caratteristico della sola America Latina) insieme con l'inevitabile corrispondente disprezzo per la dignità femminile, causa gravi danni alla struttura familiare (Puebla 834, Africae

Terrarum 36). In nome di questa concezione si consente ogni libertinaggio all' uomo, si colpisce con severità la donna emarginandola dalla società, spingendo i figli (ed in particolare le figlie) a fuggire di casa alla prima possibile occasione verso unioni matrimoniali che non possono che essere precarie.

2.5. Il "problema demografico": Parlo di un problema noto a tutti e faccio notare che, se finora non si sono sentite nel Terzo Mondo le incidenze morali e familiari delle pratiche anticoncezionali con la stessa acutezza che in Occidente, tali pratiche vengono diffuse come la soluzione unica del problema demografico, e sono acriticamente accettate anche in ambienti e culture che finora avevano rispetto e stima per la trasmissione della vita. Non mancano Paesi emergenti dove i governi, sotto la spinta di organizzazioni mondiali o di grandi imprese economiche, tentano di controllare la crescita demografica con metodi subdoli o violenti, come la sterilizzazione obbligatoria o forzata e l'aborto.

3. Le attese "missionarie" per questo Sinodo: Mi pare che sarebbe necessaria una proclamazione coraggiosa dei valori cristiani del matrimonio e della famiglia, nel rispetto delle singole culture, portatrice di speranza, ma anche carica dei reali problemi della famiglia oggi. Insieme ad essa è necessaria una pastorale fatta di pazienza e di misericordiosa pedagogia dei valori cristiani ed umani, attenta alle persone e avvocata dei loro diritti, una pastorale che affronti in positivo il problema della paternità responsabile e del rispetto della vita e che promuova la dimensione missionaria della famiglia. La Chiesa deve essere ancora una volta "La voce di chi non ha voce" (Paolo VI) e non solo proclamare l'ideale della famiglia, ma denunciare con forza ogni ingiustizia che ne impedisce il raggiungimento.

3.1. Una proclamazione coraggiosa e rispettosa dei valori culturali: La Chiesa proclami coraggiosamente al mondo la "lieta notizia" sul matrimonio: Cristo ha elevato e consacrato il matrimonio umano facendolo "tipo" della sua unione con la Chiesa. Proclami il valore, la dignità, la bellezza e le esigenze del matrimonio e della famiglia. Faccia comprendere soprattutto ai nuovi cristiani che il sacramento non viene ad aggiungersi al matrimonio tradizionale, ma ne è il cuore. San Paolo non chiede ai suoi cristiani di "sposarsi in chiesa", ma di vivere il loro matrimonio nel mistero di Cristo e della Chiesa (Ef 5,32) secondo le esigenze della "nuova creazione". Questo sarà possibile nella misura che tale proclamazione lascerà lo spazio per la necessaria inculturazione.

Il cammino dell'inculturazione è esigente, ma essenziale per l'evangelizzazione (AG, 15.19.22; GS 53.58; EN 20; Cat.Trad. 53) e per la missione che "non è mai distruzione, ma riassunzione di valori" (Red.Hom. 12). Paolo VI afferma che "occorre evangelizzare non in maniera decorativa, a somiglianza di vernice superficiale, ma in modo vitale, in profondità e fino alle radici, la cultura e le culture dell'uomo"; e se è vero che il Vangelo non si identifica con le culture, tuttavia "il Regno è vissuto da uomini profondamente legati ad una cultura e la costruzione del Regno non può non avvalersi degli elementi della cultura e delle culture umane" (EN 20). Lo stesso Paolo VI mette in guardia gli evangelizzatori da ciò che egli chiama "La rottura tra Vangelo e cultura" che è "senza dubbio il dramma della nostra epoca" (EN 20; Red. Hom. 12). E Giovanni Paolo II nel corso del viaggio in Africa ha più volte invitato gli Africani ad essere se stessi, nella fedeltà alla loro cultura. Parlando ai vescovi dello Zaire (3.5.80) ha apertamente affermato la necessità di inculturare il messaggio evangelico. Parlando alle famiglie di Kinshasa (3.5.80) ha paragonato il matrimonio cristiano ad una montagna molto alta che pone gli sposi nell'immediata vicinanza di Dio" ed aggiungeva: "Bisogna riconoscere che la sua scalata richiede molto tempo e molta fatica". E più avanti diceva: "Le tradizioni africane saggiamente utilizzate

possono avere il loro posto nella costruzione dei focolari cristiani in Africa: penso in particolare a tutti i valori positivi del senso della famiglia (...) la serietà dell'impegno matrimoniale al termine d'un lungo cammino".

3.2. Una pedagogia pastorale per il matrimonio e la famiglia: Nessun agente pastorale si attende dal Sinodo una "canonizzazione" delle forme tradizionali del matrimonio in contrapposizione all'attuale forma canonica. Tutti sono coscienti che esse - pur nella loro fondamentale positività - necessitano di essere purificate, elevate e perfezionate nel mistero pasquale di Cristo (LG 17; GS 47). Ma sono molti a chiedersi se non sarebbe opportuno e pedagogicamente indicata una pastorale di paziente e temporanea tolleranza per cui cristiani che nel giro dei pochi anni di catecumenato non riescono a comprendere ed armonizzare le esigenze del sacramento del matrimonio con il dato culturale del matrimonio.

Questo non allo scopo di abbassare l'ideale, ma di aiutare i nuovi cristiani a superare a poco a poco e nella misura che la luce della fede apre loro il cammino, quegli elementi ambigui o negativi che "oscurano" (GS 47) i valori del matrimonio. Questo da una parte permetterebbe di salvare il matrimonio tradizionale, che rischia di sparire nell'attuale momento storico, e dall'altra potrebbe aiutare i nuovi cristiani a comprendere il senso profondo della legislazione ecclesiastica.

3.3. Una pastorale familiare attenta ai veri valori della famiglia: La missione di Cristo di evangelizzare non comporta certamente quella di provocare un vuoto culturale, quella "rottura" di cui parla Paolo VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi (n.20). Il Sinodo quindi inviti gli evangelizzatori a sostenere, promuovere e difendere i valori della famiglia tradizionale finchè questi non sono in contrasto con la Parola di Dio ed il disegno di salvezza; ed a porre attenzione che i valori "nuovi" come la parità dei diritti dell'uomo e della donna, il diritto ed il dovere dell'istruzione, la liberazione dal fatalismo naturalistico, l'accentuazione della famiglia nucleare rispetto a quella "estesa" si integrino nel mondo culturale precedente e servano di lievito ai valori preesistenti, perchè non sarà sulle ceneri della famiglia tradizionale che sarà costruita quella cristiana.

4. Promozione della giustizia per la famiglia: In un tempo di rapidi cambiamenti, teso allo sviluppo, carico di tensioni causate dallo scontro delle mentalità dall'impatto con ideologie e sistemi politici, economici e sociali lontani dalla cultura locale (si tratta di fenomeni particolarmente acuti nelle nazioni emergenti), è di somma importanza che la Chiesa oltre a preoccuparsi delle riforme liturgiche e degli aggiustamenti teologici sul matrimonio, alzi con rinnovata energia, la sua voce nel mondo per difendere i poveri, coloro che pagano i conti più cari di tutti questi cambiamenti.

Proclamare la santità della famiglia, il rispetto per la vita, la promozione della donna senza che tutti i cristiani vengano nello stesso tempo ammoniti a promuovere la giustizia, i diritti dell'uomo e della famiglia alle condizioni minime per l'esistenza, senza rinnovare la società del nostro tempo con la forza del Vangelo, sarebbe non solo una grave incoerenza con il Vangelo che proclamiamo (EN 31) ed una contraddizione con il costante magistero della Chiesa in questi ultimi vent'anni, ma soprattutto un grave pericolo per la credibilità della Chiesa, come ha detto il Sinodo del 1971: "Se il messaggio cristiano intorno all'amore ed alla giustizia non dimostra la sua efficacia nell'azione a favore della giustizia nel mondo, più difficilmente esso acquisterà credibilità presso gli uomini del nostro tempo" (Ed. EDB 1270).

Così pure è necessario che la Chiesa - spesso l'unica voce libera in un mondo schiavo del denaro e del potere - denunci senza timore tutto ciò che strumentalizza e sfrutta l'uomo, le guerre e le oppressioni, le dittature politiche ed economiche che hanno nelle nazioni emergenti dei facili campi di azione liberi ed a buon mercato. Il magistro dell'attuale Sommo Pontefice è esemplare (Red. Hom. 13-14; Discorsi in Messico, Africa e Brasile).

3.5. Una pastorale positiva per una paternità responsabile e per la vita: Un posto

di particolare importanza nella pastorale familiare spetta al problema della regolazione delle nascite. Finora nei paesi emergenti esso non si è presentato con acutezza e forse noi missionari ci siamo rallegrati di non essere confrontati con questo spinoso problema. Ma non è saggio dimenticare la portata del problema. Il fatto che la regolazione delle nascite non sia ancora un problema, non è dovuto ad un prudente discernimento o ad una scelta cosciente e responsabile da parte dei genitori. Spesso si tratta di una semplice accettazione dei cicli naturali della vita senza intervento della prudenza umana.

Il Sinodo inviti le giovani Chiese a preparare ed offrire un'adeguata catechesi ed informazione sulla paternità responsabile ed un servizio di consultazione sui metodi per conseguirla, secondo gli insegnamenti della Chiesa. Solo così la Chiesa preparerà i suoi figli ad affrontare quei family plannings, così poco rispettosi delle persone e della vita, che molti governi hanno già attuato o preparato.

3.6. Una pastorale per una famiglia missionaria: Il Sinodo ribadisca la vocazione missionaria ed evangelizzatrice della famiglia cristiana, come presentata da Paolo VI nell'Esortazione "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (n. 71) e partendo dal concetto di famiglia come "chiesa domestica" (IG 11). Venga richiamata la responsabilità evangelizzatrice della famiglia 'ad intra' cioè tra i membri della famiglia e 'ad extra' tra le famiglie cristiane attraverso la testimonianza ed il sostegno reciproco, e nei confronti delle famiglie non ancora cristiane e di quelle in cui l'unione è finita oppure la convivenza è problematica. Se vogliamo salvare la famiglia ed i suoi valori sarà quanto mai indicato insistere sulla dimensione missionaria della famiglia, sulla necessità di aprirsi alle altre famiglie e di essere apostolo in mezzo ad esse.

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OUR FATHER: The reflections presented by five scholars at the prayer sessions BOOKLET in preparation for the Melbourne Missionary Conference, are now available in print (64 pages) at the Jesuit Mission Secretariat, Borgo S. Spirito 5, for 1,000 lire each (4,000 for 5 copies, 7,000 for 10).

"I don't think that anyone doubts that faith is transcendent and that its manifestations respond to each culture. The problem is, however, that 'each' manifestation of the faith (even the historically original one) is mediated by a culture. This makes it difficult to know 'what' is the transcendent element in faith and 'who' may determine it. And funny enough, it is possible that the solution of this problem cannot be 'but' a cultural one."

Enrique Nájera, Mexico

Reference: TEACHING ALL NATIONS, Vol. XV, 1978 - Number 4.

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SYNOD 1980 ON FAMILY LIFE

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Selected Points and some Introductory  
Comments on the "Instrumentum Laboris" (Continued).

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- Brian Hearne, CSSP

(This is the second part of Brian Hearne's reflections. It is continued from the 15th October issue of Sedes Bulletin and deals with Part III of the Synodal Working Paper.)

Part III: Pastoral Problems

Dialogue: This part begins by repeating the call for dialogue, so that the pastors of the Church do not just give one-sided teaching, but are really open to the experience of Christian families and listen to them. Various 'tasks' or 'functions' (munera) of the family are then dealt with briefly and rather repetitively.

(a) The task of building up a community of persons (52-55): This refers to the inner life of the family and to its relationships with others, through the celebration of family feasts, prayer, mutual love etc. To achieve this, there is need for the careful preparation of couples for marriage, so that they are helped to develop a deep inter-personal relationship as the basis of their family life--this applies especially to very young couples. The Christian family must give a witness of a certain simplicity of life and generosity in the midst of a society dominated by 'consumerism', by the need to 'have' rather than to 'be'. Abortion is seen as an example of selfishness.

(b) The task of sanctifying itself and the world: What was said in Part II about all family life sharing in the sacramentality of marriage is repeated: marriage is not just one ceremony, but a lifelong 'event' of grace: this also has important theological and pastoral implications. A real family spirituality based on love, prayer, and the Word of God needs to be developed, so that the Christian family is a real sign of hope to the world of today. The Church, at every level of its life and membership, must help in this task: bishops, clergy, religious, laity, parish, basic christian communities. The sacraments and spiritual direction are specifically mentioned. Experts are invited to plan family liturgies, etc. (presumably with the help of the families!)--another practical need. Various family associations and family planning groups are recommended, and the need for advisors for family life is stressed (60).

(c) The task of caring for life: Life is a gift of God, and children are the greatest gift in marriage (G et S). The way public opinion is being manipulated about birth control methods is deplored, and the Church must hold to the prophetic teaching of *Humanae Vitae* about the unlawful use of artificial methods. There is, however, a strong stress on the need for responsible family planning, with suitable methods. Clear knowledge of these methods is a necessity, and materials must be adapted to local situations and cultures. Doctors and specialists should be available to help in special difficulties: one has to ask how this is possible in most of the Third World. It is also said (No. 66) that priests and religious should be well informed on latest methods and scientific knowledge, and that scientists should continue to explore ways of making natural methods more safe and perfect. The Synod 'recognizes the

anguish of many who cannot follow church norms...let them confess their frailty, come to the sacraments, and seek greater fidelity...". Here, the ideal of theology and pastoral reality appear to conflict, as is shown by the many episcopal directories on this matter since 'Humanae Vitae'. With regard to childlessness, adoption is mentioned, and also the family's duty to care for the sick, the old, the lonely, as an expression of spiritual fecundity.

(d) The task of education: The family is the primary, though not unique and independent, subject of education. The parents are the first educators of their children, and the first proclaimers of the gospel to them. Favourable mention is made of various experiments to involve parents in the pastoral initiation of their children, in preparing them for sacraments etc.

Appropriate sex education should be given, following the Christian anthropology of Part II, but (a) adapted to cultural background, (b) personal responsibility and (c) adequate knowledge of biology.

Nos 73 - 79 deal with special problems concerning education today. The Christian family is called to scrutinise the 'signs of the times'. Educational institutions are often unable to serve their purpose, for ideological or political reasons; religious pluralism presents many problems as well as opportunities; the generation gap seems to be getting wider; developments in ongoing adult education are noted; and the importance of the various means of social communication is pointed out. In the family, the gap between culture and the gospel must be bridged, and there is a significant reference to the way in which the various cultures of the world are mutually necessary, in a process of giving and receiving to each other, as they come together in full equality in Christ. (cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi No. 20).

(e) The social task of the family: The family is the first and vital cell of society, the place where the social values are learned and where values are transmitted. The family and the state have complementary tasks; the state has no right to usurp functions that belong to the family and the principle of subsidiarity has to be respected. The state has the duty of ensuring public morality and security. It is suggested that a possible 'Bill of Family Rights' should be drawn up. The Christian family is called to look critically at society, to direct society along the right lines, and to play its full role in social activity. Some special problems are looked at: the universal dimension of the family as a sign of human unity is described, and international injustice is seen as a basic cause of many family problems: the intolerable disparity between the rich and poor nations must be lessened by a new international economic order if family life is to be protected and fostered. Every family is called to be open to each other, every nation to each other, every race to each other, in total giving, and in the search for truly human structures in the world, with the emphasis on being rather than on having.

The preparation needed for marriage and family life: This is best done in the family itself, but should be an aspect of ordinary catechesis, stressing values of true love, dignity of sex, co-operation with others, personal responsibility etc. The 'remote' preparation of a couple for marriage requires 're-catechising' and deepening of faith: meetings of young couples are very helpful in this process. The immediate preparation must help the young couple to make proper commitment: this is especially necessary where very young couples are involved, since imperfect motivation is the main reason for divorce. Expert help may be needed in this. Special care should also be given to 'mixed marriage' couples (inter-church marriages), following Pope Paul VI's instruction of 1971. The preparation of seminarians, priests, religious, catechists, laity is also stressed: here some examples could be cited from AMECEA countries, for example Kenya. (See Nos. 86 to 91).



Pastoral practice: The document ends with some remarks on pastoral practice in certain difficult problems. 'Free union' and 'trial marriage': in some places these are due to economic reasons; often too, undue stress on the subjectivity of love, or on the relationship as a 'private matter' plays a part; psychological immaturity may also be a factor. In some places, marriage is postponed until after cohabitation and the birth of the first child: this is a very deeply rooted practice and is a serious pastoral problem. Solutions to these problems must be found by proclaiming always the full requirements of faith to people in their concrete situations, to help them to grow towards this ideal, without cutting them off completely from the communion of the Church. Efforts must be made to gain justice for all (salary, dwelling environment...) to remove the economic reasons for free unions. On 'divorce', people who have remarried need pastoral care, and the Church must show mercy for human weakness. This should not be seen just as a problem of admission to sacraments but as one that concerns the whole of life...prayer, upbringing of children etc. 'Abortion' is again firmly rejected, despite the increasing numbers of abortions.

Reference: AFER, Volume 22, No.5, October 1980.

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### THE LIVE-IN PLAN

Virginia Fabella (Philippines) and  
Sergio Torres (Chile)

(Mother Teresa's challenge to the Synod to experience the daily problems of the poor in their families before speaking to them recalls an interesting experiment at the recent Asian Theological Conference, held from January 7-20, 1979 at Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka. The Live-In Plan as it was called had a considerable influence on the Conference. The experience is described in the following short account. Ed).

The live-experience was a vital part of the ATC. Without it, the Conference would have been incomplete, for deriving help from actual life situations and issues for theological reflection is basic to a contextual and relevant theology.

The success of the live-ins was due to a large extent to the preliminary work of the Preparatory Committee in Sri Lanka. An organizer was appointed for each of the nine live-ins with (1) village folk; (2) fisherfolk along the Indian Ocean coastline; (3) tea plantation workers; (4) coconut plantation workers; (5) industrial workers and trade-union personnel; (6) women in Baddegama, where a special training project for women is located; (7) youth and students on a collective farm; (8) minority groups in Paranthan; and (9) slum dwellers in Colombo.

When the participants arrived in Sri Lanka for the ATC on January 7, they were immediately ushered to a small retreat center in Negombo, conveniently located near the airport on the outskirts of Colombo, the capital city. As each participant registered for the Conference, she or he was given a choice of the live-ins, and equipped with a short introduction to that particular live-in and a detailed schedule for the next three days, together with a map and a general survey of Sri Lanka.

The live-ins were well organized, giving the participants opportunity to visit local groups and lay people working for the liberation of the oppressed sectors, as well as time to do collective reflection on their experience. The live-in organizers had been cautioned not to cushion any of the difficulties of life in these sectors so that the participants could know at first hand what it meant to queue for transportation, to sleep on mats on bare floors, to be without any running water or modern hygienic facilities, and to do without privacy.

The three-day experience had a great impact on all the participants. It was an eye-opener even to the Asian themselves. It was one thing to see a slum from a passing automobile, another to be immersed in its squalor and dejection. Some of the participants were shocked to see the outright contradiction between the living conditions of the poor, and the witness of the church. The dehumanizing situation is far from the claims of liberation of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

All these experiences and reactions were apparent in the reports that each group was asked to present in both written and audiovisual form to the rest of the ATC participants when they convened in Wennappuwa for the Conference proper.

The audiovisual presentations were either in drama, song, or pantomime. In ten to fifteen minutes, each group captured for the assembly the core of their three-days experience. The presentations depicted the attitudes, questions, and struggles of the different marginalized sectors as the participants had observed them. In most cases, the assembly could easily empathize with the portrayals, but the depiction of the minority situation of the Tamil-speaking people of Paranthan provoked such controversy among the Sri Lankan participants right in the process of the presentation that it was never completed. The opposing views and sympathies regarding the situation of the Tamil-speaking flowed from both emotion and conviction. At this first indication of conflict and tension, one participant stood up and announced: "Now our conference has really begun."

The written reports did not evoke the same reactions. The questions they raised were more factual and intellectual.

The general format for the written report consisted of a brief description of the situation, an analysis of it, a comparison with similar situations in other Asian countries, and a short theological reflection on the experience or on relevant issues that surfaced in their particular live-in.

One of these reports is a fascinating description of the live-in at the coconut plantation prepared by Cynnyng Cheng from Hong Kong and Eunice Santana de Velez from Puerto Rico.

It was recognized that the live-in made a difference in the shape of the conference. Most of the participants agreed that it was an excellent preparation for the sessions that followed. It imparted both the dynamics of the group and the depth and sensitivity of the reflection. Perhaps not enough was utilized from the live-in experience, but it helped to relativize a lot of things. It made the simple Holy Family retreat-house dormitories and facilities seem like First World accommodations; it made clearing the tables and helping with the dishes seem part and parcel of theological conferences. It confirmed the conviction that no theology or talk about God can be separated from the life of the people, especially from the struggle of the poor and the marginalized.

Reference: Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology.

(Papers from the Asian Theological Conference, January 7-20, 1979, Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka). Ed. Virginia Fabella, New York, Orbis Books 1980.

## NOTES ON ENCULTURATION (BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH)

- Bishop Francisco F. Claver, S.J.

(At the Synod of 1974 the Local Church emerged as a serious issue for the first time in modern history. The present Synod is dealing with the consequences of this reality in so far as it affects the family.

Francisco Claver is Bishop of Malaybalay in the southern Philippines. The Local Church of Malaybalay is a living reality where the exercise of responsibility is widely shared. This is illustrated perhaps by a small item: the Bishops' Quinquennial Report is copied to lay and clerical leaders in the Diocese. The Bishop makes a plea in this article for the freedom of people to live the gospel as the Spirit moves them within the limits defined by their culture - their very own way of being human. Ed).

### THE ISSUE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

About the most explosive issue that surfaced at the Synod of Bishops of 1974 was the problem of the free development of the local church. It was chiefly a concern of bishops from the third world--and a most pastoral one: for it was clearly linked with people's aspirations for identity, liberation and development, all important preoccupations in Africa, Asia and Latin America today. The deeper but not entirely explicit concern, I would think, was one for the church's credibility in her preaching of the gospel in the ferment and turmoil that are the concrete life situation of people in the third world.

Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, took cognizance of this concern, but, I am afraid, rather too cautiously. The papal stance is couched in general warnings (a disappointment to those who looked for more positive support in their efforts at building up genuinely local churches). But perhaps the document's approach was best. Local churches will develop not merely by Roman pronouncements but, more dynamically, by the gospel's own inner logic and by the people's acceptance of that logic and its implications for life--their life.

Hence the current interest in the enculturation (1) of the gospel. In the next few pages, I would like to explore the problem from an anthropological and pastoral perspective.

#### The Gospel and its Preaching: Some Basic Presuppositions

We take off from the gospel itself and the manner of its preaching. At the very outset, a few basic presuppositions must be stated starkly. For I fear these are all too easily forgotten in discussions on the subject, and the result is that hard positions are taken about "ecclesiastical colonialism" which often are quite untenable.

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(1) Enculturation is, generally among anthropologists, the process of learning a new cultural tradition, hence synonymous with socialization. Ecclesiastical usage spells the term "inculturation." I prefer the former spelling since the term is already in wide use among anthropologists. The basic sense is retained likewise.

1. Common humanity in diversity of cultures: We start with the mandate of Christ to "preach the gospel to every creature." I believe it makes a very fundamental but unexpressed assumption, to wit, that there is such a thing as the psychic unity of people of all races, cultures and times. There is, that is, a common humanity underlying the great diversity of people, whatever the physical differences among them, whatever their current stage of development, whatever their particular genius as a people. It is this humanity possessed in common that makes people capable of being preached to.

But these same people to whom the gospel is preached are bearers of a culture: they have a way of life, a particular set of behavior patterns, of thought categories, of values and attitudes. It is the total complex of all these elements that marks them off as distinct from other people of differing life's ways.

When therefore Christ says that the gospel must be preached to all men, we can take this to mean simply that its message must somehow permeate their way of life, their culture, influencing, sublimating even their modes of behaviour and thinking, but at the same time never destroying their identity as in individual cultural groupings.

The gospel then is transcultural in nature, and this only means that it is eminently enculturable. Whatever the cultural configuration of a people, it can be enriched by the gospel. And it can be the basis for a novel but nonetheless valid expression of the same gospel.

2. Gospel as preached already encultured: Yet this gospel is never transmitted in a pure state. It is of necessity already encultured in and by the preacher who transmits its message. It may be possible to isolate the "essence" of the gospel in the manner of scholastics who talk of a philosophia perennis. But I doubt they can express that essence through a culture-free medium. The very language they use is necessarily culturally conditioned. To paraphrase a sacrosanct philosophical dictum: Quidquid datur, per modum dantis datur.

The fact cannot be stressed enough: in its very preaching the gospel is always couched in the language of the preacher, is initially already encultured. The preacher cannot avoid using the thought categories of the cultural group he belongs to--or has learned to belong to. These are a part of himself as a human being. (2)

3. Gospel encultured by its hearers: The gospel, encultured initially in the preacher and expressed within his (cultural) mental framework--even when he uses the language of the preached to--must in turn become encultured in and by the people who receive the gospel. Its message has to become integrated into their culture as it was (at least so it is hoped) integrated into that of the preacher.

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(2) Here we hint at, but bypass completely, the question of the extent to which the preacher reared in one culture can internalize a new one and make it part of himself; also other questions of an epistemological and psychological nature in the area of transcultural communication and learning. But this much we can say: the process should be qualitatively the same as the enculturative process we are discussing here from the reference point of the receivers of the gospel.

Properly speaking, it is not this or that particular culture that must be infused with the gospel, with its message and values, but the people themselves, the bearers of a culture. They receive the message, not fully understood, perhaps, in the beginning because of the cultural sieves (the preacher's and their own) through which they receive it, but sufficiently, as in any intercultural communication, for them to be able to grasp something of its essential sense.

4. The essence of gospel enculturation: The enculturation of the gospel by a people consists, I would think, mainly in the growth in the understanding of its message according to their specific thought categories and in the living of the message so understood according to the behavior patterns dictated by those same categories. The growth will mean change, of course, in the people's thinking and acting, but it need not be such as to destroy their own specific mode of thinking and behaving. (3)

In practice, this means the people enculturating the gospel will work to make the values they have already interiorized in their socialization into their culture group jibe with the values of the gospel. Or, for those who believe that gospel values are already contained seminally in all cultures, the enculturation of gospel values will mean the further evolvment of human into more explicitly Christian values.

5. Enculturation essentially metanoia: In a very real sense, the enculturation of the gospel is not different from metanoia, on-going conversion, not only of individuals but, more importantly, of communities, of whole peoples. The community aspect of metanoia is, I believe, what would specify it from metanoia conceived of simply as individual conversion.

If conversion is possible only by a free act of the will of the person being converted, the enculturation of gospel values must also be done freely, consciously, deliberately, by a whole community. In the beginning of the process of their "Christianization," the free act of the community may not be very explicit in the individual acts of conversion. The very raising of the question of the local church is, it seems, an awakening to the freedom and deliberation necessary to community metanoia.

It should be a welcome development. Social religion (religion sucked in, as it were, with one's mother's milk in the process of childhood socialization) tends to be the dominant kind of religion, for instance, in traditionally Catholic countries. It is not something to be despised. But at the same time, it is not the kind of religion to be satisfied with. The continual metanoia of people that is the enculturation process we speak of here is then something that goes beyond the practice of social religion.

A corollary to all this is that it is only the "natives," acting as a community, that can truly indigenize the gospel--and by the same token, develop a genuinely local church.

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(3) The enculturation of the gospel can be likened to the assimilation of food by the body. Food is heavily cultural in its preparation. Nutrient substances are assimilated and the body conforms them to itself while expelling their cultural dross. I wouldn't press the analogy too far, but the point is the gospel, presented initially in an encultured form, is received and assimilated by its hearers in conformity with their own cultural patterns. But this first conformation is only the beginning of a process.

### Cultural Facts

Modern social sciences offer some insights which should be most helpful to efforts at indigenization. Some of these insights are very elemental and commonsensical, but they must be explicitated nonetheless for the reason that they are often overlooked. The following, mainly from cultural anthropology, should be of some relevance to our present discussion.

1. Hybrid character of cultures: We begin with a characteristic of cultures in general: every culture is mongrel, an amalgam of borrowings. The fact of borrowing goes on all the time. Hence, generally, it is not possible to have a "pure" culture, one that is completely un-influenced or untouched by factors outside of it. This must be said because often enculturation is taken to mean doing away with what are considered foreign accretions, imposed from the outside, alien to the purity of a culture. They may well be that--additions, impositions--but in every instance what is considered foreign or alien must be scrutinized carefully. Genuine assimilation into the fabric of the culture may well have taken place.

2. Cultural identity: Despite the fact of constant borrowing, people possess a distinct cultural identity. In borrowing traits, artifacts, values, patterns of behavior, norms, world views, etc., people make borrowed items their very own by transforming them to fit their own cultural image, ethos, etc.

The identity or uniqueness of any particular culture does not lie in the wealth or paucity of items the people have not borrowed from others, but in the special manner in which they have organized and integrated cultural elements into a whole. In this organization and integration, they invest a borrowed item with a character that is specific to their culture.

Countless examples can be cited to illustrate this phenomenon from the borrowing of material items (jeeps, guns, Coca-Cola, etc.) to the acceptance of non-material ones (democracy, Maoism, Catholicism, etc.). In every instance of borrowing, the recipients give the borrowed item something distinctively their own.

3. The problem of meanings: The process of "making things over" entails, in most cases, changing meanings. In the final analysis, this is what makes borrowed items different. Thus, a mere tool in one culture could be an emotionally laden status symbol in another. Or vice versa. The reason for this is simply that the recipient people have their own way of looking at their world, of defining it, and anything that enters that world, if it is to become part of it and not remain a superficial imposition, must be re-interpreted and re-defined according precisely to their way of looking at things.

The problem of meaning is the most sensitive area of crosscultural interaction. Necessarily so, because the culture of a people is at core a set of coherent meanings that makes it possible for them to be, simply a people. It also renders their world intelligible.

4. Cultural process and history: This intelligibility is always of the present--and of the present as it is evolving. Culture is a now event, a present process, continually in the making, but at the same time always rooted in its antecedents. The direction the process will take at any given moment will not therefore be entirely haphazard but will be dictated to a great extent by those same antecedents interacting with whatever influences are impinging on it from the outside.

In other words, the re-interpretation that we spoke of in the preceding section is not a once-and-for-all event but a process too. Even while we talk of a set of coherent meanings giving intelligibility to a people of the world in which they live, the very meanings can change over time, and with them the intelligibility of their world.

If this aspect of intelligibility is kept in mind, the problem of cultural purists would, I think, be greatly simplified. Their interests are often focused on authenticity in cultural expression and thought, and for this they more often than not delve deep into the historical antecedents of their people. If these antecedents still have something to do with the here-and-now life's ways of people, well and good--they are of immense relevance. But sometimes they are only residual in nature, persisting relics of a dead past. If proponents of cultural authenticity are not to become mere antiquarians but real promoters of their people's cultural health, they must begin to center their concern on the living traditions of a people. What are operative now? What are the values they go on now? What are the social structures these values reinforce and support? These are some questions they should look into.

### Indigenization in Practice

Indigenization and enculturation--metanoia, too, for that matter--are probably distinct and distinguishable ideas. But from the point of view of process--the process, that is, of the acceptance of the gospel by a whole people--I see no need for the distinctions, for complicated semantic subtleties. For our purposes we take them to be synonymous. Hence the following observations from a pastoral point of reference.

1. Indigenization as total involvement in life: A primary principle in the indigenization process may well be that it will automatically take place when the church (however defined) gets deeply involved in the whole life of a people.

Involvement can mean anything. What is intended by the term is everything that total and integral human development stands for. The gospel must penetrate the whole way of life, the culture of a people, and this whole must be the over-riding concern of the church's preaching. Hence, too, the church's approach will necessarily have to be holistic. The Synod of Bishops of 1974 used the term "integral evangelization". The term aptly describes what we mean by the holistic approach.

2. The holistic approach: In this approach, social structures and cultural values cannot be divorced from each other. For the simple fact is that structures and values interpenetrate and are supportive of each other. Concern for one part must necessarily imply concern for the other, and the whole must come under the transforming influence of the gospel.

If for reasons of strategy and economy, the church must concentrate, say, on valuational change--historically this is what "conversion" and "spiritual life" have meant in practice--it must become more aware of the repercussions of such a change on social structures. And vice versa. Or else we will continually have to face the problem of "Sunday Christians", the end-result of compartmentalized, non-integral evangelization.

On a slightly different but related plane, our concept of conversion must not center solely on the individual but also on the community of which he is part. The emphasis of our preaching must now begin to move more explicitly toward the social dimensions of the gospel--without, of course, forgetting its personal, individual aspects.

3. The learning church: new values: Paying attention to structures and values, to the individual and the community, will mean taking seriously Vatican II ideas of participation, co-responsibility and dialogue. This means that the church must be a learning church, open to change, adaptable. We have far too much emphasized the teaching function of the church, purity of doctrine, dogmatic absolutes. Hence the **peculiarly** Roman difficulty with enculturation, not so much with the concept but with its carrying out. For enculturation connotes the possibility of learning--and the relativizing of absolutes.

The three key ideas from Vatican II mentioned above are in essence the new values that have to be pervasive in the church in order for real indigenization to take place. And the new attitude that must come in with these values has perforce to be one of honest trust of people, of their basic good sense in the enculturation of the gospel into their life ways. We pay lip-service to the concept of *sensus fidelium* as a valid *locus theologicus*, but in practice we refuse it its rightful place--and strength--in the dialogue of life that we say the church is engaged in with the world of today. It is in the serious consulting of this *sensus fidelium* that the church (and here I mean principally the institutional church) will become truly a learning church.

4. A dialogic methodology: There is a methodology of enculturation implied in the three concepts of participation, co-responsibility and dialogue. If we accept the assumption that enculturation is no different from on-going conversion and is the process of *metanoia* itself, and people under the guidance of the Spirit are in truth architects of this process, then they must continually reflect on their faith experience within the context of their culture. This reflection--participative, co-responsible, dialogic--is a methodology of no mean import.

Indigenization, to speak sociologically, amounts to the setting up of structures more in conformity with--or at least built on--prevailing indigenous structures; and concomitantly, the inculcation--or evolvment--of values supportive of new structures. Structures are at base people-relationships, and new people-relationships arise more quickly and firmly in dialogue situations in which participation, as full and as wide as possible, is assured, and full responsibility for decisions taken is accorded the participants in the dialogue. If this holds true for social groups in general, it should be true too for the community of believers that we say the church is.

5. Adaptation and Experimentation: If we accept this methodology, adaptation and experimentation will have to be accepted henceforth as ordinary and permanent means in the church of enculturating the gospel.

The principle of adaptation was canonized by Vatican II. But somehow the experimentation that is needed to effect real adaptation is frowned upon. There still is too much suspicion and fear at the center (Rome) of what is happening in the periphery (the local churches). This is all the more reason for the methodology we spoke of above--and the attitude of trust. These are essential pre-requisites for the full flowering of the gospel in church life anywhere.

6. Continual search for meanings: Finally, to get at the root of the greatest problem in the entire process of enculturation, there must be a constant search for meanings underlying religious behavior--culturally, conditioned behavior--as well as greater freedom in "baptizing" cultural facts, i.e., in investing them with new meanings.



The search for meaning , or perhaps it is better to say, the explicitation of meaning, is part of the whole problem of developing indigenous theologies. If mental sets and categories differ from people to people and these enable them to look at reality with special nuances and emphases, this special characteristic of people should be given free rein in the re-interpretation of the gospel and of the faith itself.

The cultural heritages of peoples are rich and varied. The church has been more ready to accept their external manifestations in the name of liturgical adaptation. But the internal aspects of the same traditions--the thought content, the thinking patterns themselves--these are suspect? And yet they really are nothing more than specific ways of being human and therefore capable of becoming new modes of expressing the gospel of Christ.

The baptizing of cultural elements had the force of traditions in the early church. (The great church festivals are a case in point: their beginnings are deep in popular traditions preceding Christianity or its introduction.) The fact seems to have been forgotten in the freezing process that ensued in the western church in its rather excessive preoccupation with verbal orthodoxy. The baptizing spoken of here is not, however, a mere slapping on of new names for old things, but like conversion, a process of deeper and deeper intensification and elaboration of meanings, dependent on the manner and extent of the use of the methodology we proposed above.

In a very true sense, indigenization is a continual search for meaning, an ever urgent task to articulate the gospel in and through the language and culture of a people--and by a people. This requires from the official church a strong faith that the Spirit is indeed working in and through people in their very searching and growing, in their attempts at expressing the gospel in their own special way, even when, to the horror of Roman Inquisitors, their expression of the faith does not seem to be in perfect concordance with the "purest" cultural traditions of the western church.

This is by no means a plea for syncretism. But it is for the freedom of people to live the gospel as the Spirit moves them within the limits defined for them by their culture--their very own way of being human. When all is said and done, this is what the issue of the local church is all about.

#### Footnote from the Boondocks

This paper is not written in the rarified vacuum of ivory-tower speculation but from the grumbling, churning guts of a living church. Or so we like to believe. For the church as we know it in this particular region of the Philippines is indeed quite totally immersed in the life of people.

The ideas we have been discussing here are not simply ideas, then, but real principles of action in our preaching of the gospel in the here and now. The possibilities they have opened up for us for a rich and effective apostolate are truly tremendous. This we can in all honesty say from our experience of them.

And here we must confess that, although we have been speaking all along of enculturation, we hardly think in terms of it. But we do in terms of life--and of people. And the result is movement. We trust it is movement in and with the Spirit.

Reference: STUDIES in the International Apostolate of Jesuits, Vol. VII - June 1978, No. 1.

## LA FAMILLE CHRETIENNE

### Attentes "Missionnaires" Vis-à-Vis de ce Synode

- P. Joseph Hardy, SMA

(Fr. Joseph Hardy is a member of the Steering Committee of Sedos and is also one of the ten representatives of the Union of Superiors General attending the Synod. Following is the text of his intervention presented to the Synod. The text is given in the original French).

Je fais cette brève intervention simplement pour joindre la voix des missionnaires, spécialement ceux d'Afrique, à celle des jeunes églises dont ils sont les collaborateurs. Ce sont les conclusions de documents plus systématiques déposés au Secrétariat du Synode au nom de l'U.S.G.

1.1. En écoutant les jeunes églises ces jours-ci deux sentiments partagent le coeur du missionnaire. Beaucoup de joie et l'action de grâces car la graine, souvent semée dans les larmes, est devenue un bel et grand arbre. En même temps un certain sentiment d'échec car les missionnaires expérimentent évidemment les mêmes difficultés que les Pasteurs des églises et ils font les mêmes constatations vis-à-vis de la famille et du mariage chrétien. Certains ont même l'impression que la pratique actuelle de l'Eglise bloque le processus d'évangélisation. Qu'on pense que dans certaines communautés chrétiennes 85% des baptisés sont exclus de la participation sacramentelle et spécialement de l'Eucharistie à cause de leur "situation matrimoniale irrégulière".

1.2. Ils considèrent que la prédication du Message appelle toute culture à la conversion (G.S. 47) sans qu'elle signifie la destruction ou le bouleversement de ce qui constitue le patrimoine humain d'un groupe social, son milieu d'échange et de croissance (E.N. 19-20; Cat.Trad. 53; Red. Hom. 12). La Relatio II.3 a bien situé le problème. Le mariage et la famille sont des réalités sociologiques fondamentales. En un sens le mariage est le plus culturel des sacrements, comme le montre sa constitution historique progressive, assimilant les coutumes et les signes utilisés par les peuples nouveaux convertis à l'Évangile.

2. D'où les 'attentes particulières' des missionnaires vis-à-vis de ce Synode qui sont comme des motions que nous aimerions porter à l'attention de cette Assemblée.

2.1. Qu'on encourage les recherches et les études qui conduiraient à dégager le noyau central de la doctrine évangélique et de l'enseignement de l'Eglise sur le mariage et la famille.

2.2. Qu'on adopte une large décentralisation des recherches - selon les différentes cultures ou par grandes aires culturelles - sur les pratiques actuelles du mariage naturel ou coutumier, et aussi sur les possibilités de formes canoniques et liturgiques variées. Il serait bon d'encourager et de soutenir les centres théologiques et pastoraux locaux pour travailler à cette recherche.

C'est une chance historique qu'aujourd'hui Pierre soit prêt à écouter Paul et Barnabé au retour de leur mission et que de plus il prenne lui-même son bâton de pèlerin pour aller voir sur place les problèmes des nouveaux peuples appelés à l'Évangile. La collégialité s'exerce ainsi pleinement et on ne court plus guère le risque d'une nouvelle bataille d'Antioche (Gal. 2).

2.3. Qu'on encourage une pastorale matrimoniale de l'Alliance, en adoptant la pédagogie progressive de Dieu, faite de dialogue, de patience, de miséricorde, fondée sur une spiritualité de la marche et de l'espérance. Sa Sainteté Jean-Paul II s'adressant aux familles d'Afrique à Kinshasa, le 3 mai 1980 leur disait à propos du mariage: "Le sujet est merveilleux, mais la réalité est difficile! Si le mariage chrétien est comparable à une très haute montagne qui met les époux dans le voisinage immédiat de Dieu, il faut bien reconnaître que son ascension exige beaucoup de temps et beaucoup de peine". Ajoutant que ce sont "par des ascensions morales et spirituelles que la personne humaine se réalise en plénitude et domine l'univers", il poursuivait: "Les traditions africaines judicieusement utilisées peuvent avoir leur place dans la construction des foyers chrétiens en Afrique...". Suit une longue liste de "valeurs positives". Il est temps d'entamer cette ascension, en respectant les étapes provisoires.

2.4. Qu'on encourage les structures pastorales de soutien aux familles chrétiennes et les mouvements familiaux locaux et internationaux. Que le Synode en parlant de la famille et du mariage chrétien porte une attention toute particulière aux familles qui doivent incarner l'idéal chrétien dans des situations parfois infra-humaines de sous-développement et de pauvreté. Elles ont droit à une parole d'espérance et de soutien.

Il faudrait que le Synode rende un hommage particulier aux catéchistes et à leurs familles. Ce sont eux qui ont fait l'évangélisation en profondeur et ils continuent d'être l'épine dorsale des communautés chrétiennes. Plusieurs Pères de ce Synode sont d'ailleurs les fils de ces familles de catéchistes.

3. Je termine par quelques raisons qui semblent imposer aujourd'hui une action plus urgente et plus énergique dans les domaines ci-dessus mentionnés:

3.1. C'est un problème de justice envers les peuples nouveaux qui entrent aujourd'hui dans l'Eglise. La lettre du collège apostolique réuni à Jérusalem est toujours valable: "L'Esprit-Saint et nous-mêmes avons décidé de ne pas vous imposer d'autres charges que celles-ci qui sont indispensables" (Act. 15,28). Et j'engage cette Assemblée à relire ce qui semblait alors indispensable en vue de la paix, de l'unité et de la mission, pour comprendre la relativité historique du droit ecclésiastique.

En Afrique ou ailleurs, il ne serait pas juste de remplacer les anciens interdits et tabous, générateurs de peurs, par de nouveaux qui seraient étrangers à la Parole de Dieu.

3.2. C'est une question de justice vis-à-vis du caractère catholique de l'Eglise, pour que l'Epouse se présente à l'Epoux revêtue du pagne africain, du sari indien, du puncho sud-américain, etc.

Peut-être nos frères orientaux auraient-ils quelque chose à nous dire en ce domaine, comme en d'autres aspects du mariage et de la vie familiale.

3.3. C'est un problème d'efficacité apostolique des communautés chrétiennes, puisque de fait, de nombreux baptisés sont marginalisés vis-à-vis de la vie ecclésiale à cause de leur situation matrimoniale. Comment alors parler de la famille engagée, témoinante et missionnaire comme le font *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 71 et *Catechesi Tradendae* 68?

3.4. C'est un problème de stratégie missionnaire. Il s'agit d'ouvrir à l'Evangile de nouvelles zones - géographiques et sociales - et de faire entrer en catéchuménat de nouveaux peuples disponibles mais qui hésitent devant les exigences du

Message, et parfois devant son caractère apparemment étranger. S'il était mieux inculturé et mieux incarné chez eux, il est probable que ces peuples feraient "l'option pour le Christ", adoptant peu à peu la voie et les moeurs de Jésus. En face des idéologies, en face de certains prosélytismes religieux agressifs et en face de la multiplication des sectes pagano-chrétiennes, le temps presse pour leur proposer le Message de libération totale (EN 33).

3.5. Enfin il s'agit de simple réalisme historique. Les nouvelles églises de l'hémisphère Sud prennent de plus en plus de poids et de place dans la catholicité, comme le démontre encore une fois ce Synode. Il se trouve qu'elles sont les plus pauvres en moyens de toute sorte. Il faut que la solidarité catholique les aide à prendre toute leur place, à jouer complètement leur rôle, à parler leur propre langue (EN 63).

#### Conclusion

Je conclus par l'intention missionnaire de ce mois d'octobre 1980. Elle est une intention de prière et de réflexion proposée à tous les chrétiens en ce mois traditionnellement consacré à l'éveil missionnaire du peuple chrétien. Elle devrait être un sujet de discussion pour ce Synode et un beau thème pour un prochain Synode, comme l'a proposé la Conférence Episcopale de Madagascar:

"Que tout effort pour introduire la Religion chrétienne aux différents peuples et cultures soit un succès, sans porter préjudice à l'unité de la foi catholique".

- end -

"Inside the Universal Church we have to acknowledge for each cultural area 'the existence of spiritual stages,' corresponding to the different levels of dogmatic, moral, etc. perception.

It does not mean that we lower the evangelical ideal or despise tradition. We just recognize the real way of Incarnation in history. To be convinced of this, it would be enough to read the general guidelines of the history of the Christian West, concerning the progressive perception of human rights.

This demands that the Christian West respect the stages of other Churches. For instance, having the advantage of Platonic or Aristotlian philosophies, the greco-roman world was able to formulate in precise terms the symbols of faith with wonderful concision. I don't think that we should demand all the Churches either to be equally sensitive to all those dogmatic precisions (after all, Scripture language was judged quite barbarian by the first christian intellectuals), or to proceed that fast towards an identical assimilation of the content of Revelation.

Unless a great discretion is observed towards the spiritual experiences of young Churches, the West (especially through the professors of philosophy and theology sent to those Churches) runs the risk of imperialism, which is more dreadful because they appeal to the purity of faith and morals.

Having said this, of course, the exigency of the Gospel must remain integral."

Adolphe Razafintsalama  
Madagascar

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