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Coming Events

Sedos Christmas Party: You are invited to our office party (including lunch) on 22nd December--12.00 - 2.30 at the Sedos office. (Just telephone if you are coming!)

Executive Committee

Meeting: 21st December 1981 at 3.00 p.m.

News Items:

FAREWELL

Fr. Joseph Lang, mm, has been transferred as Secretary General to Maryknoll headquarters in New York. He has consequently resigned from the Sedos Executive Committee to which he has given generously of his time and energy for many years.

Sr. Mary Motte, fmm, has been transferred to the Provincial House of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, New York and has also had to resign from the Committee of which she was a most active member for many years.

Sr. Mary and Fr. Joe formed the Task Force which organized the Sedos Research Seminar held in March 1981 in Rome and were also key members of the Steering Committee before and during the Seminar. Both will be greatly missed. The President and Executive expresses the gratitude and appreciation of Sedos to both for their wholehearted commitment to Sedos over the years. We in the Secretariat add our very sincere thanks to both for their generous collaboration and for their constant readiness to help us at all times. Our good wishes go with them in their new appointments.

WELCOME

Congratulations and welcome to Fr. Michael Fitzgerald, pa, and Sr. Josephine Bushell, sndn, elected to the Executive Committee at the General Assembly meeting of Sedos on 9th December 1981.

WORLD CONFERENCE OF RELIGIONS ON "RELIGIONS AND MAN"

15-21 NOV. 1981.

(Voici le texte de la Déclaration finale de la Conférence d'une semaine qui s'est tenue à Cochin (Inde) sur les Religions face à l'Homme. Cette conférence fut un événement remarquable: elle réunissait des représentants des grandes religions et révéla la profondeur d'une expérience religieuse commune, d'un partage d'idéal, d'intérêts et d'objectifs pratiques, absolument impensable il n'y a pas si longtemps.)

FINAL DECLARATION

By the delegates of the World Conference of Religions, Cochin, Kerala, India, 15th-21st November, 1981. on:

RELIGIONS AND MAN

From the unreal lead me to the real,
From darkness lead me to light,
From mortality lead me to immortality.

1. With this sublime prayer of surrender or harmony, taken from the ancient religious scripture of India, we began our pilgrimage of dialogue as religious persons united together in spirit by a common search for the final truth that enfolds and guides our common humanity.
2. We, two hundred and twenty-three delegates, men and women from all parts of India including forty-eight visitors welcomed from eighteen neighbouring and distant countries, have met together for one week at the Chavara Cultural Centre in ancient port-city of Cochin from 15th-21st November, 1981, for a World Conference of Religions on the theme Religions and Man.
3. The happy occasion of our coming together gratefully marked the tenth anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions held on the banks of Lake Sastamcotta near Quilon in Kerala, India, in 1971, and the tenth year of the Chavara Cultural Centre, Cochin. Our Conference also joyfully honoured the 150th year since the foundation of the Congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (C.M.I) at Mannanam, Kerala, India, and the 15th century of the Hijrah.
4. By this brief declaration, addressed chiefly to ourselves, we desire at the end of our rich and eventful conference to share with others some significant elements of our experience of an inter-religious dialogue. In this dialogue we as committed persons from different religious traditions--Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and others--have sat together, lived together, eaten together, prayed together, listened together, learned together, laughed and relaxed together during an intensive experience over five full days.

5. We are aware that we do not have a common religious language among ourselves. Although we have tried to express ourselves in the most general terms, still much of what many of us shared together was coloured with meanings and connotations which may not be fully acceptable to persons of all religious traditions. Theistic words like 'God', for instance, 'Creator' or 'divine' are unacceptable to Buddhists and Jains and others of the atheistic religious traditions. We want to state, however, that it is always our intention in this declaration to include all genuinely religious experience; language sometimes prevents us from doing this with sufficient clarity and accuracy.

I. THE RELIGIOUS PERSON

6. First of all we confess with humble gratitude to the new depths of understanding enfolding and permeating our common humanity, which were opened to many of us by our respectful dialogue with persons from religious traditions different from our own. Along with this, we also rejoice in the real unity we felt among ourselves as human beings who were united not only by our common humanness, but for many of us even more by the same ultimate and transcendent mystery wonderfully gracing us with genuine religious experience, though discovered and welcomed by us in different ways, sought by different paths or called by different names.

7. We observed at times a lack of self-critical attitudes in ourselves and others, but it is now our conscious desire to focus our attention on so much that was positive. We admitted to frequent flights into sterile abstractions during our lectures in full assembly, small group discussions and conversations, but now we wish to concentrate on the several specific human issues which drew forth our common concern as religious men and women. We regretfully acknowledged that much of our past religious history separated us from one another, but now we wish to look towards the future and to feel always the hope for humanity and the world that has stirred the hearts of us all. In short, while acknowledging much that divides us in our religions, we seriously desire to underline the deep religious experience that we all genuinely felt to be uniting us, and challenging us to draw closer to one another in reverence and trust. Religious faith makes us open to one another and this though it may be painful, can be creative.

8. Although our primary intention was to speak of religious persons, we had to face the problem of what we meant by religion. We all agreed that religion is first and foremost what truly religious people say and do and are. We all agreed that religion must be symbolized externally through the material and social elements of creed, cult and code, yet we were unanimous that its spiritual components were primary. All religions, we confessed, are in constant need of purification in their, ritual and perhaps moral expressions. Many religious persons stand in need of creative forgiveness for their failures to live sincerely in union with the divine and in unity with other human beings.

9. Because of its inner dynamism and essential relationship to human society and the world as a whole, religion can never remain static, but must adapt to the constantly changing signs of the times, especially in a modern secular society which, we agreed, poses both a great challenge and a stimulating opportunity to all the religions. Religion, we hold, is always linked with respect for the inalienable dignity and freedom of every human person. All

religions, therefore, are called to exercise a prophetic role in society and concern themselves with specific and concrete human issues. In this field, our inter-religious dialogue did not directly seek a new religiosity or religiousness. Rather, in a prayerful atmosphere of mutual respect for our religious traditions we set out to discover together a new role for religious persons today in the four vital human areas of the political, the scientific and the spiritual progress of all men and women.

II. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC

10. We recognize that industrialization and new technology have liberated persons by alleviating poverty, satisfying material needs and increasing communication through modern means of travel and the media. At the same time, we agreed that technology and industrialization have threatened human dignity by creating an impersonal environment for work and human relations. More radically, they have brought a threat to the survival of life on our planet by depleting natural resources by destructive waste, by polluting the atmosphere and by making possible an terrible nuclear holocaust.

11. In the face of this crisis, we urge ourselves and all religious leaders to seek ways of collaborating with secular leaders in politics, industry, commerce and science in order to find genuinely human solutions for these world-wide problems. Just as we religious persons have shown our readiness to meet together on a global level, let us try and foster in every possible way a new global consciousness for the entire human community. Then we shall be able to seek more universally and more effectively for true solutions to our various political, economic and social problems.

12. The youth of today are concerned and confused in the face of widespread social injustice that is institutionalized and deeply rooted in society. The solutions offered by Marxism or Capitalism do not satisfy many. Young people have not failed to observe how the religions have often supported oppressive structures in society. In the midst of the present human crises, let us as religious persons cast off all indifference, timidity, and subservience and courageously commit ourselves to achieve social justice for all, wherever the opportunity presents itself. Let us be ready to align ourselves with the poor, share their sufferings, and selflessly devote ourselves to achieve a just society which truly reflects the dignity of every human person. All practices of discrimination against women should be our concern, especially as women are denied equal rights even in religion.

III. THE POLITICAL

13. Let us as religious persons be faithful to the truth of our own religious traditions, but let us not continue to emphasize religious teachings, rituals of worship and codes of moral behaviour that divide and separate us. Instead, let us try to promote a society which will be guided by the true meaning of religion. This will be a society where the government seeks to give equal opportunity to the weak and the poor and social justice for all. It will be a society where full religious freedom is offered to all. Let us as religious persons enshrine in ourselves universal respect for the moral principles common to all great religions. Let us be prepared to show trust, appreciation and cooperation when we differ on specific ethical issues. Let us be quick to denounce and oppose injustices and atrocities perpetrated on others in the name of religion, whatever may be the personal consequences for ourselves.

14. Conversions based on personal convictions and not forced by unfair inducements should be considered normal. Legislation can only begin to uplift exploited sections of society. Religious persons should never allow their religion to be the tool of any injustice in society but constantly seek new ways of assisting the social and economic uplift of downtrodden people, showing always heartfelt concern for their plight.

15. Let us also work towards an international parliament of religions in the nature of an interfaith dialogue at international level that may be formed to plead before the whole world for the removal of any international injustice rooted in the misinterpretation of religion or in any denial of basic human rights, and for an effective international ban on nuclear warfare.

16. Many learned words were exchanged in the small groups and in the general assembly on the meaning of humanism and science without achieving a consensus. All however, were agreed that truth must be respected by men and women wherever it is found. The real conflict therefore, is within ourselves, when through prejudice or fear, whether as religious persons or persons of science we fail to welcome the truth honestly. As religious people committed to the search for ultimate truth, we believe that we are called in a special way to witness to all truth, scientific or religious, wherever we discover it, within our own experience or in the experience of others, no matter what the suffering or cost may be for us. At least, let us be more ready to live creatively the practical tension between science and religion in our lives.

17. We desire also to see fostered throughout the world Inter-Religious Councils, wherever people of different religions live together. Their aim would be to use their good offices to help prevent any tension which may develop among the followers of various religions and to be ready to help resolve conflicts like communal riots. Such councils could also help to identify areas of real human need and co-ordinate more effective responses. Let us join such bodies if they are already operating where we live. If they are not, let us take an initiative and begin ourselves to form an Inter-Religious Council.

V. THE SPIRITUAL

18. We all agreed that the spiritual was central to religion and formed the core of the religions, yet we were equally agreed that the spiritual cannot be separated altogether from the material and temporal realities of life. Striking witness to the importance of the spiritual is given in all the great religions by those who courageously devote themselves to radical asceticism and renunciation. Yet most agreed that spirituality was generally expressed by the different religions in the habit of contemplation, which was described by one as any act which is done for its own sake with full concentration. Such a contemplative attitude in persons can make of them life enhancing presences for the rest of the world. A spirituality, therefore, which does not in some matter have effects in human society and the world at large is sterile and unauthentic.

19. As religious persons we consider that we are called by our commitment to religion to give witness in our lives to the harmony of the spiritual with the material. We also agreed that we need to re-examine traditional religious values and their role in social change in the modern secular world. We felt that works of charity, either individual or institutionalized, should be re-oriented from almsgiving, though this will always remain a need in partic-

ular cases, towards serious efforts and struggle to change oppressive social and religious structures in human society which exploit the poor.

20. Let us each resolve for a deeper spirituality in our own lives as religious persons. Let us seek for a true yoga by which our openness to truth may penetrate at all times our involvement with the human and the material. Let us discover for ourselves and for our modern times more meaningful symbols of the ultimate in the human realities of modern life.

21. Let each of us strive more earnestly to develop the contemplative spirit in ourselves by a readiness to give the first priority to times of prayer and silence in our lives. Only then can we authentically lead others to a deeper spiritual experiences. Only then shall we become sufficiently sensitive to genuine religious experience in others, even when it may be symbolized or expressed externally in forms that are unfamiliar to us. Only if we ourselves become genuinely contemplative, shall we become spiritual enough to discern in the complexity of human affairs and material progress the eternal values within the totality of all things.

22. It is contemplative persons who can truly bring into their own lives and the lives of others that total liberation of human persons that all religions seek to bring. Truly contemplative persons will be able to stand fast and fight bigotry and even ridicule and abuse from members of their own religion.

CONCLUSION

23. As we go from this conference as a family that has grown together by a living dialogue, we renew within ourselves our continued concern for and involvement in the whole human family of people of whatever religion or of no religion. We renew our hope for the future of the human race. We renew our search for the absolute beyond the physical and visible, whom we variously call World Soul, Nibbana, the Siddha, the Creator, God, the Father, the Almighty, the Saviour, the one whom we seek by different paths.

24. We the participants in this conference leave this place, more committed to the authentic role of religion in the world today and with a renewed sense of responsibility and determination to save this planet. As many of us believe, the Lord of all is calling us in different ways to help build up the teeming millions of struggling human beings into one great family of God. The personal example of authentic human living in ordinary day-to-day life by the adherents of every religion, faithful to the teachings of their spiritual masters, will inevitably bring about a unity of purpose among all people of good will and an understanding of human and religious values as they truly are.

25. We chose to begin our conference on Religions and Man by expressing in prayer our surrender to, or our harmony with the truth. We now end it, and continue that prayer and our dialogue together, by a sincere resolve to take action, individually and collectively, wherever the opportunity presents itself, for the total liberation of every human being and the progress and the unity of all our brothers and sisters, especially the poor, the exploited or the voiceless. Let our words be matched by deeds.

THERE IS HOPE FOR A TREE

Rosemary Haughton

(Continued)

(Voici la troisième partie de l'article de Rosemary Haughton. Elle traite des difficultés rencontrées par ceux qui se trouvent engagés dans une Eglise en devenir, du besoin de la prière, de l'engagement, de la formation, de l'acceptation de la souffrance et du rejet, du problème d'une désobéissance sélective et du besoin de s'écarter des Eglises qui sont "mortes" ...)

CHAPTER V

"...ITS SHOOTS WILL NOT CEASE..."

Conscious awareness of mission: There is one important difference between the situation now and that of all but those earliest 'gossips' of the apostolic period, so that it is now, for the first time since those early days, necessary and possible for these 'gossip' carriers of good news to do this work with a full and conscious awareness of being charged with a mission from God for the sake of the whole church.

From being an 'unimportant' and unnoticed activity, from the point of view of the official preaching, it needs to become (as it was at first) an informal but serious apostolate, involving an appropriate formation and a conscious personal commitment in whatever form seems helpful and meaningful to the person and to the local church. This is needed because, just as the informal 'household churches' or 'neighborhood churches' are the most effective form of the church for our times, so within that the essential missionary work of the church is appropriately carried out in this way which arises naturally from the awareness of the presence of the risen Christ in the community, and the desire to spread that good news.

If such a mission is important and needed it must be recognized and supported, not as a substitute for other forms of preaching but as one among them, of equal value and honor. It may well be, indeed, that this is the most important missionary form of all in terms of sheer effectiveness, and that other forms are auxiliary to that. Yet it cannot do without them.

Formation for inculturation: The third type of mission arises now, and did at first, from one important lack in the 'informal' missions, which history has taught us to recognize. Naturally, and properly, any people on mission reflect and 'embody' the kind of Christian life and consciousness which characterizes the church experience from which they come, which is one, limited, human situation. They will reflect its limitations, and these may be serious, so that the way they preach may perpetuate and strengthen the faults and errors of the 'parent' church. This can mean that the work of spreading the gospel is actually blocked by the prejudice they arouse and the inadequate theology they propound. This is not a ~~criticism~~ of 'informal' carriers of good news, rather it is an occupational hazard of that form of preaching whose great virtue is its unassuming directness, by which people recognize the power of Christ in the lives and word of people 'like us'.

One answer to this is better formation, but there is a danger that this (with our Western passion for 'programs' and 'courses') could simply repeat the mistakes of 'seminary' education and create an élite, so that the value of the sheer ordinariness of such a mission would be lost in a welter of theological clichés.

"HE SENT THEM OUT TWO BY TWO"

Distinct preaching mission: This is why, especially now that the scale of the thing has become so large, there is a need for a distinct kind of preaching mission, modelled on that of the 70 in Luke's account (Luke 10) but geared to the contemporary situation. The need for this is already being met in various ways. Some are, like the twelve and their companions, essentially itinerant. Their work is to help local churches to discover and claim their identity, and to grow in that knowledge. They will stay only long enough to set each church on its way, but may return when necessary, just as the Apostles did, to help the development a stage further, to encourage, care, share, experience, celebrate. These 'traveling companions' of the Lord are needed to complement and help the pastoral work of those who form and support and nourish the local church, and whose own preaching is of the 'gossip' kind.

Not all those going on such a mission will be doing so as a life-long vocation. Some will do this for only a few years, either before taking up other work, or after a period of work, or after bringing up a family, etc., some, though, are needed to form a permanent (celibate?) core of the work. It seems, for instance, that Paul and other apostles were 'permanent' travellers, but some, like Timothy, travelled for a while and then settled, raised a family and served the local church in a pastoral rather than missionary capacity.

Whatever form this commitment takes, it needs to be absolute while it lasts. This kind of calling, which is very visible, will inevitably become a 'symbol' to many people of the whole church at a point of change. Therefore anyone doing this has to be willing to act out, in practical living, the response of the whole church to God's call at this time. That call, as it has been spelled out over and over by many Christians, official and unofficial, is to identification with the poor. It means to work for 'social justice', for the sake of Gospel. Those, therefore, who are the symbolic focus of that call, have to be poor, committed to work for justice, in the context of a mission of evangelization. (1)

(1) (A small model of this, in a limited context, can be seen in the French group called the "Compagnons Bâtisseurs", young people who spend their vacations building homes, schools, playgrounds and other things for the poor, wherever needed. A few people work full-time to provide continuity and to organize, but most do this work only for a few weeks a year. But while they do it they do nothing else. They receive no pay, only food and lodging and other necessities such as the cost of travel and communications. They go where needed, and stay only long enough for the work which is needed, then they return to their ordinary lives. This is a limited example of complete commitment within a defined area.)

Like those in the travelling ministry in the earliest days of the church they are men and women, married or celibate, young and old, life-long or for a limited time. But such preachers are not an élite, must always be 'little'. They are different, not in order to be something other than the church, but in order to discover the being of the church as body of Christ in mission, in their own lives and for the sake of the whole church.

FORMATION IS VITAL

Formation for them is vital, because a great part of their work must be not only to help the emergence of pre-church into 'church' but to assist the proper early development of a church, and this, as we have seen, depends very greatly on an accurate theological understanding of what that involves.

They have to be capable of perceiving the Christian nature of what is happening, and any possible and actual inadequacies. They must help to foster a good self-understanding in the emerging church, compensating for any one-sidedness, developing a deep and broad theology, providing contact with (but not imposing) the riches of a wide tradition in Christian liturgy, life-style, thought and form of action.

They must be able to help the other kinds of people in mission to realize their own kind of mission more fully and deeply. They must do all this as servants of the word of God, companions of that Jesus who helped people to discover their own depths and heights, and never made them feel small.

All things to all men: Therefore the formation of such missionaries requires a good theological base, capable of 'translation' into everyday terms, so that it may be 'all things to all men', as Paul tried to be. They need to have a strong ecumenical sense, to understand and love other faiths and traditions. They need to understand 'pastoral dynamics' and some sensible psychology. They need a good grounding in modern history in relation to political and social change, and the mechanisms of oppression and of revolution. They must not be politically naive or swallow social panaceas.

But they are evangelists, not social workers or politicians, and so they must also have their spiritual roots in the long tradition of Christian mysticism. To sustain the necessarily varied and mobile life-style demanded without becoming fragmented, eccentric or one-sided, a basis of taken-for-granted prayerfulness and constant recourse to God is essential. The content, place and time of formation can be as varied as the people involved, but the depth and scope of it must be great.

This is necessary because the need of the changing and emerging church for this kind of preaching is so very great. The future of the church depends to a great extent on whether there are people prepared to undertake this kind of mission, with all that it demands of radical dispossession, availability, rootlessness, and finally (if they do this work well) uselessness, since what they are called to is to preach the gospel, see it 'take root' - and then move on.

"That some may be drawn to the Lord": The description given here of how the itinerant mission would develop, and the kind of life style required, is (as with the description of new church) based on actual experiences which vary a great deal. An increasing number of people are being drawn into this, possibly without being aware of the precise nature of their role, but discerning it as they go. Many work in small groups which have a 'home base' but move from parish to parish within a large but defined area. These depend on denominational settings as a beginning, but look beyond it.

Others are 'free lance', not yet aware of the 'structure' of this mission, but exercising as they can in 'marginal' groups, especially those of alienated and 'unchurched' people. They badly need the affirmation of being recognized as important to the whole church.

Others again have contacts which make possible a wider range of encounters, but with less hope for 'follow-up' than the first kind. All of these need to know each other and to understand the theological dynamics underlying their particular mission.

People are drawn into this kind of work by the growth of an awareness of the need for it. Sometimes they have shared in the emergence of a new church and feel called not just to become the medium of a new one but to spread the message more widely. Sometimes they are driven by awareness of the failure of traditional forms to give life to those in such need of it and are themselves aware of capacities for leadership, or formation, which are best exercised in comparatively short-term situations, preparing others to carry on the work permanently, while they move on to do it again.

NEW CHURCH 'HOUSEKEEPING'

The second area of consideration is the 'domestic' life of new churches. What are their needs, how do they 'feel' about themselves? What is their style of 'housekeeping'? These are pastoral concerns.

Self-image: At all times the church's self-consciousness has tended to have some kind of overall 'coloring' reflecting the dominant 'image' of the church, the way in which it chiefly thought of itself. The twelfth century thought of itself as the mirror-image on earth of a heavenly kingdom (in a rather literal sense). The seventeenth thought of itself as a battle-line going out to fight evil. The Celtic churches felt God 'inside' a wholeness of nature and human beings, to be discovered from within. The nineteenth century church felt more like a home, a place of refuge from the evil world. With images like those, the church responded to situations along the lines indicated.

Possibly the church now is seeing itself as something like an underground or resistance movement, working for freedom against enormously strong powers, and willing to be allied with others, of many kinds, who are motivated by the same ideals of human dignity, justice and freedom. This image makes possible the willingness to cross cultural and religious boundaries, to do new and different things, and therefore to expect to be misunderstood and, in some degree, oppressed and persecuted. It also creates the sense of closeness, joy and gay courage which characterizes many resistance movements. But all this needs concrete conditions - a place, setting, some kind of structure

The "household" of God: For instance, a new church, in order to "emerge" and grow, needs a house, or several nearby houses, of a size to accommodate a number of people. (But some crowding is not only no draw-back but can be a positive advantage.) We have already seen why this is needed, but the need is so very simple and basic that it has to be re-stated in case it might be overlooked. Such a house is often a family home, or sometimes the home of a small group of 'religious', and best of all one shared by 'religious' and others. The house should, if possible, be free of official status, not owned by any secular or religious organization. This applies even more to new churches grown so large that they need a space as a hall or gym for meetings of the whole church. The danger of being 'controlled' is obvious.

Life of prayer: A church also needs a regular pattern of prayer. This is most importantly a regular weekly assembly of all the members of the local 'household' church as far as possible, and this meeting for worship often takes place even on occasions when the lack of the presence of an ordained minister made the celebration of the Eucharist impossible. (In Latin America this has become routine.)

The form of worship emerges from the concrete needs and desires of the members of the church, gradually modified by experience and growth. Around this, other meetings for worship, liturgical or not, develop in small or large groups. In some places such groups meet daily to recite some form of 'office', others find an informal and spontaneous type of prayer helpful, or both can happen, even the same people doing both. But the regular pattern (which can be varied by occasional or spontaneous meetings) is the essential basis of all other work of the church, since it defines the fact of being an assembly in Christ, directs all to him, and draws from him the wisdom and courage for every other aspect of corporate life.

Radically open: The church needs, as a conscious attitude to be cultivated, a willingness to say "yes." From the prayer life of the church, as it reflects on and celebrates Christ, comes an increasing awareness of His call to be radically open. This means being willing to respond to new and unexpected demands, entertain new ideas and new (and often peculiar) people. Discernment and judgment are needed; this openness is not the result of a mindless human optimism but of a profound trust in God which cuts across human valuations and is true prudence, a gift of the Spirit. In practice, this means 'building in' regular days of reflection, retreat, etc. and often includes sending a member to undertake study 'for' the church in, e.g. liturgy or pastoral care or 'liberation theology'.

- To be continued -

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Pune 411-014
India

To all the Sedos Members and Readers,

This comes with my prayers and best wishes for a truly happy Christmas. May 1982 be for all of us a year filled with the true peace that the coming of Christ should bring.

As you can see from the address, I am spending this Christmas in India. I arrived in Pune in mid-September to assist in the setting up of a documentation centre here at the missiological institute of the Society of the Divine Word. Fr. Zeitler, who is known to many of you, is the Director.

In a way, Pune seems like an extension of Sedos! Many of the Sedos congregations have houses here--the Jesuits, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the Medical Missionary Sisters, the Carmelites, etc. The institute itself is located on the grounds of the Papal Seminary which has a mere 600 philosophy and theology students.

In January, I will be attending the conference of the International Association of Mission Studies at Bangalore. Here, too, I look forward to seeing some of the friends I made in Rome and Geneva. (I just learned that Fr. Jenkinson will be at the Conference so I will be able to get first-hand news of Sedos activities). After the conference I will be returning to the United States to become Co-ordinator of the Overseas Ministry Research at CARA. From the 1st March, 1982 my address will be: CARA 3700 Oakview Terrace, N.E. Washington D.C. 20017.

This is just a short note to assure you that I remember with gratitude the kindness so many of you showed to me during my time in Rome.

"When a poor person is welcome,
--it is CHRISTMAS.

When one spreads JOY
--it is CHRISTMAS.

When there is sharing
--it is CHRISTMAS.

Sr. Joan Delaney, M.M.

HOMELIE DU PÈRE CLAVERIE
EN SA CATHÉDRALE D'ORAN,
LE 9 OCTOBRE 1981

(This is the text of the homily given by Mgr. Pierre Claverie the new bishop of Oran, Algeria on the occasion of the inaugural Mass in the Cathedral of Oran. It is an inspiring statement on Islamo-Christian dialogue. In the context of the Algerian situation where integrist movements are emerging both among Muslims and Christians the new Bishop's call to continuing dialogue is particularly courageous...Ed).

Frères et Amis,

au lendemain de la fête musulmane de la foi et du sacrifice, cette fête qui marque le terme du pèlerinage des croyants à la Mecque, nous allons commencer notre pèlerinage, le pèlerinage de notre Eglise d'Oranie avec son nouveau pasteur. Vous êtes depuis très longtemps en route vers la maison de Dieu, d'autres pasteurs m'ont précédé et je me joins maintenant à votre marche, espérant, par la grâce de Dieu, franchir une étape de plus avec vous. Car nous sommes des nomades: beaucoup d'entre vous le sont à cause de leur travail, quelques uns du fait des circonstances qui les ont obligés à se déraciner, tous nous le sommes spirituellement. La foi est mouvement vers Dieu: elle répond à l'appel irrésistible de son amour et nous entraîne à sortir de nous-mêmes pour aimer comme Dieu nous a montré qu'Il aimait en Jésus-Christ. Mouvement vers Dieu, la foi est aussi mouvement vers l'autre qui appelle et attend notre amour, auquel Dieu nous envoie pour manifester son propre amour. Notre vie sera donc un incessant pèlerinage des sources de l'amour à la terre promise de la communion universelle.

Notre mission: Notre mission s'inscrit dans ce double mouvement. Oui, notre Eglise est envoyée en mission. Je ne crains pas de le dire et de dire ma joie d'entrer avec vous dans cette mission. Bien des équivoques héritées de l'histoire planent sur la mission et les missionnaires. Disons clairement aujourd'hui que:

Nous ne sommes pas et nous ne voulons pas être des agresseurs...

Nous ne sommes pas et nous ne voulons pas être les soldats d'une nouvelle croisade contre l'Islam, contre l'Incroyance ou contre n'importe qui...

Nous ne voulons pas être les agents d'un néo-colonialisme économique ou culturel qui divise le peuple algérien pour mieux le dominer...

Nous ne sommes pas et nous ne voulons pas être de ces évangélistes prosélytes qui croient honorer l'amour de Dieu par un zèle indiscret ou un manque total de respect de l'autre, de sa culture et de sa foi...

Mais nous sommes et nous voulons être des missionnaires de l'amour de Dieu tel que nous l'avons découvert en Jésus-Christ. Cet amour, infiniment respectueux des hommes ne s'impose pas, n'impose rien, ne force pas les consciences et les coeurs. Avec délicatesse et par sa seule présence, il libère ce qui était enchaîné, réconcilie ce qui était déchiré, remet debout ce qui était écrasé, fait renaître à une vie nouvelle ce qui était sans espoir et sans force.

L'Amour de Dieu: Cet amour, nous l'avons connu et nous y avons cru: nous l'avons vu à l'oeuvre dans la vie de Jésus et de ceux qui vivent de son Esprit. Il nous a saisis et entraînés. Nous croyons qu'il peut renouveler la vie de l'humanité pour peu qu'elle le reconnaisse. Mais comment le reconnaîtrait-elle si elle n'était mise en présence d'authentiques témoins? Dieu nous a donné de connaître son Christ pour que nous soyons ces témoins.

Envoyés par Lui, là où nous sommes et vivons, le premier acte de notre mission sera d'accueillir et de laisser habiter en nous cet amour. C'est une question de justice au sens biblique de justesse, d'ajustement, de rectitude, de cohérence entre ce que l'on dit, ce que l'on fait et ce que l'on est. Et cette cohérence, cette vérité, se mûrit dans la prière, dans l'assimilation et la célébration de la Parole de Dieu, dans le discernement et l'accueil de sa Présence. Avant de parler, au risque de n'être que des cymbales retentissantes, des hypocrites et des menteurs, nous sommes appelés à donner chair à l'Esprit de Dieu dans un coeur ouvert, "un coeur qui écoute".

Qu'avons nous à défendre? Mais comment écouter si nous sommes pleins de nous-mêmes, de nos richesses matérielles ou intellectuelles, si nous nous répandons dans le monde avec suffisance, si nous écrasons les autres de notre puissance? Notre chance, en Algérie, est d'être assez démunis - mais l'est-on jamais assez? - de nos richesses, de nos prétentions et de notre suffisance, pour pouvoir entendre, accueillir, partager du peu que l'on a. Il ne faudrait pas que nous soyons perpétuellement préoccupés de nous défendre. Qu'avons-nous à défendre? Nos fortunes? Nos bâtiments? Notre influence? Notre réputation? Notre surface sociale? Tout cela serait bien dérisoire au regard de l'Evangile des Béatitudes. Nous ne sommes ni une multinationale, ni une frano-maçonnerie, ni une entreprise à but lucratif. Nous ne sommes pas là pour conserver et défendre un héritage mort, des pierres ou une gloire passée. Remercions Dieu lorsqu'il rend son Eglise à la simple humanité, sans costumes d'apparat ou d'emprunt, sans fards ni clinquants dérisoires.

Réjouissons-nous de tout ce qui peut nous rendre accueillants et disponibles, plus soucieux de nous donner que de nous défendre. Le disciple envoyé par le Christ est l'homme dans sa simple humanité: "Un bâton, des sandales, le confort sommaire de celui qui marche, c'est-à-dire l'homme léger, disponible, dépouillé de tout ce qui l'encombre et l'alourdit. L'homme qu'on ne confond pas avec son argent, ses diplômes, ses décorations"... Disponible pour aimer, au prix de ce qu'il a de plus précieux, sa vie. Lequel d'entre nous pourrait récuser cet appel, même si nous avons du mal à en tirer les dernières conséquences? Lequel d'entre nous pourrait refuser de s'engager sur cette voie si, d'aventure et malgré ses résistances, elle s'ouvrait devant lui? Le disciple serait-il plus grand que le Maître? La pauvreté évangélique ne serait-elle plus la première béatitude?

Plutôt que de nous défendre ou de nous protéger, nous devrions défendre ce que nous jugeons être essentiel à la vie, à la croissance, à la dignité et à l'avenir de l'homme. L'amour de Dieu nous y pousse.

Notre conversion: Pour cela et pour la vérité de notre mission et de notre amour, ne nous laissons pas seulement emporter par nos passions ou les réactions de notre sensibilité. Il est trop facile de céder à la critique démagogique qui dispense de réfléchir aux causes réelles et profondes et se contente de parler à tort et à travers. Essayons plutôt de progresser dans la compréhension des mécanismes de l'injustice et dans la

conversion de nos propres comportements, personnels, sociaux, professionnels. Je suis convaincu de la force de la persévérance, sans éclats ni précipitation. La création du monde nouveau auquel nous aspirons se fait dans la durée. Là encore la prière, l'écoute attentive vont avec le sens de la pauvreté et de la justice.

Que le Seigneur nous donne assez de lucidité pour percevoir ce qui doit être fait pour que l'homme, tout homme, soit respecté. Portons notre regard sur nous-mêmes et nos communautés, sur les relations que nous entretenons, sur les milieux dont nous sommes effectivement solidaires, sur nos alliances et nos préférences... La course à l'argent et au confort à tout prix, que beaucoup de chrétiens partagent avec un monde de consommation sans mesure, n'est-elle pas à l'origine de bien des aveuglements et des compromissions qui nous font mettre l'Evangile sous le boisseau?

Nos réactions devant l'injustice: Regardons encore de plus près nos réactions devant l'injustice dont pauvres et petits sont les victimes quotidiennes, devant le mépris avec lequel on traite ceux qui ne peuvent ou ne savent pas s'exprimer ou se défendre, devant l'insolence avec laquelle nouveaux riches et puissants étalent leurs richesses à la face des pauvres qu'ils écrasent. Ne participons-nous pas à cette évolution de sociétés où les riches s'enrichissent alors que les pauvres s'apauvrissent sans cesse et sans appel? Les mécanismes économiques que risque d'entretenir la coopération y contribuent souvent et les modèles sociaux que nous présentons accroissent le déséquilibre et le malaise. Là encore, et quoique les données de ces situations nous dépassent et nous échappent souvent, quoique nous n'ayons pas toujours prise sur les causes profondes, nous pouvons au moins laisser la Parole de Dieu nous questionner, nous provoquer et nous conduire à une meilleure appréciation de nos solidarités sociales. Chacun à sa place, si modeste soit-elle, peut veiller à la qualité des relations qu'il entretient avec les autres et réfléchir aux moyens de mettre en oeuvre une justice plus effective.

Notre foi nous pousse donc à recevoir de Dieu l'amour par lequel Il nous demande d'aimer à notre tour. Nous participons ainsi à la création d'un monde où l'homme pourrait acquérir les moyens d'être reconnu quels que soient sa fonction économique, son rôle social, ses opinions politiques ou ses convictions religieuses. Inséparables, ces deux aspects de notre mission ne font que reprendre le "double commandement" de l'amour de Dieu et de l'amour du prochain qui résument, pour nous, la Loi et les Prophètes.

Appelés à faire Corps dans le même Esprit: Mais pour répondre à cette double nécessité de notre être chrétien, l'Esprit de Dieu nous convoque en Eglise. Nous accueillons l'amour, nous vérifions notre authenticité, nous réfléchissons et assurons notre participation à la vie de l'Algérie, ensemble, Il n'y a là aucune distinction entre évêque, prêtres et laïcs, religieux et religieuses. Devant Dieu nous sommes tous et toutes également responsables. Il nous revient de rendre plus effective l'action créatrice et libératrice de l'Esprit de Jésus-Christ. Et pour cela, nous sommes appelés à faire Corps dans le même Esprit.

Comment pourrions-nous prétendre rendre présent Jésus ressuscité si nous nous entredévorons les uns les autres comme le dit l'Apôtre Paul? Si chacun considère détenir seul et sans partage les clés de la foi? Si les pasteurs divisent le troupeau et se dressent les uns contre les autres au nom d'un passé, d'une manière particulière de concevoir la nature et la mission de

l'Eglise? Si les chapelles s'excommunient? Quelle pierre apportons-nous à l'édification d'un monde nouveau en Algérie? Ne serions-nous pas alors des menteurs, des hypocrites?

Je sais les efforts dépensés par mon prédécesseur, Henri TEISSIER, pour mettre en communication les groupes si divers que vous formez dans ce diocèse. Divers par la langue, la culture, le degré d'attachement ou d'intégration à l'Algérie. Divers par les niveaux de vie, des plus riches aux plus démunis. Divers par les origines sociales, politiques, raciales. Dans ce petit diocèse se sont donné rendez-vous tous les continents. Nous poursuivrons ensemble cette oeuvre d'unité, de compréhension et d'accueil mutuels. Et s'il reste encore des motifs de division ou d'incompréhension, des barrières ou des murs qui séparent, je vous en prie, au nom de Seigneur Jésus, expliquons-nous, essayons de nous entendre et de faire ensemble un bout de chemin sur la route qui mène à l'unité. Il ne s'agit pas de gommer les différences, de supprimer les tensions fécondes...Mais de créer une communication en sorte que les malentendus disparaissent et que les différences se complètent et s'épaulent mutuellement, stimulant chacun dans sa vocation propre au service de l'unique mission reçue du Christ.

Un temple dont les pierres sont vivantes: Notre Eglise est assez petite et assez légère pour que nous puissions exister sans appareil administratif excessif ni organisation pesante. C'est un Temple dont les pierres sont vivantes, c'est une communauté humaine, à taille humaine. Ne l'alourdissons pas par notre passivité, par la dureté de nos coeurs. N'oublions pas que la communion est, par elle-même, signe de la présence et de l'action de l'Esprit Saint. Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de créer un ghetto de plus dans un monde déjà suffisamment déchiré, pas davantage un club où les étrangers se retrouveraient entre eux pour recréer leurs habitudes et leur monde familial. Cette communauté humaine est ouverte à la fois sur Dieu, sa Présence, Sa Parole, Sa mission, et sur l'Algérie au service de laquelle elle met ses ressources humaines et spirituelles. Et c'est la raison pour laquelle nous voulons demeurer légers et nous alléger encore. Les seules structures qui vaillent, dans l'Eglise, sont celles qui favorisent la communication entre personnes et communautés. Nous nous efforcerons de les développer ensemble.

L'humanité devant Dieu, chrétien, musulman ou athée: Et cela, nous le vivons dans un pays majoritairement musulman. En Islam comme ailleurs, ce qui compte c'est l'humanité devant Dieu. Cette humanité, la nôtre et celle des autres, n'est ni pire ni meilleure que d'autres. Elle est seulement prisonnière de tant de chaînes qui la retiennent et l'empêchent d'être fraternelle, que nous n'aurons jamais fini de nous libérer mutuellement. Nous libérer de nos préjugés, de notre ignorance, de notre suffisance, de notre soif de dominer. Nous libérer du mépris de l'autre, de ces jugements hâtifs qui traduisent un manque d'intelligence plus qu'un véritable discernement. Nous avons à nous libérer mutuellement des slogans creux, du piège des mots qui prennent la place de la réalité. Revenir sans cesse à l'homme tel qu'il est, tel que nous le connaissons parce qu'il est notre voisin, notre collègue ou notre ami, y revenir sans masque et avec la passion de le comprendre, de mieux le connaître pour mieux le servir et l'aimer, c'est là notre chemin vers Dieu. Qu'il soit chrétien, musulman ou athée, qu'il soit proche par la culture et la langue ou étranger, c'est avec lui que nous construirons un monde nouveau.

Danger des mouvements intégristes: C'est pourquoi je ne crains rien tant que le sectarisme et le fanatisme, surtout religieux. Notre histoire chrétienne en porte de nombreuses traces et nous ne pouvons pas voir sans inquiétude se développer des mouvements intégristes. Ils divisent déjà l'Eglise. En Islam, sous le nom de Frères Musulmans, ils semblent étendre leur influence. Je connais assez d'amis musulmans qui sont mes frères, pour penser que l'Islam sait être tolérant, fraternel et pré-occupé d'humaniser le monde en lui rendant une âme et un coeur. Eux aussi souffrent de voir défigurer l'esprit de la mission de leur Prophète par la violence aveugle des ignorants et les manipulations politiques. Frères et amis, sachons souffrir avec eux. Ne rejetons pas l'Islam parce que des fanatiques le servent mal.

Des millions d'Algériens vivent humblement de cette foi, y puisent le courage de vivre une existence souvent difficile, l'espérance d'un jugement de Dieu et de lendemains meilleurs, la force de lutter quotidiennement contre tous les asservissements. Ils sont nombreux parmi ces milliers de pèlerins qui vont bientôt regagner le pays après avoir, hier, sacrifié le mouton en signe de l'abandon de leur vie entre les mains du Tout-Puissant, à la suite d'Abraham. Faisons confiance à ces milliers d'anonymes qui souffrent plus que nous de tous les excès.

Quant à moi, et non sans craindre pour l'avenir des moments difficiles, j'ai la conviction que le fanatisme se condamne par ses excès mêmes. Nous en faisons la triste expérience dans l'Eglise catholique, quand elle se fait persécutrice, tombe au pouvoir de Docteurs de la Loi aveugles et sans intelligence, ou lorsqu'elle est utilisée par les pouvoirs.

La religion peut être le lieu des pires fanatismes car les hommes habillent du manteau divin leur soif de toute-puissance ou, plus simplement, leur bêtise. Toutes les religions sont sans cesse exposées à devenir des instruments d'oppression et d'aliénation. Ne laissons pas l'Esprit étouffé par la lettre. Nous pouvons lutter contre ces dénaturations de la foi, la nôtre comme celle des autres, en maintenant le dialogue malgré les remous de surface et les apparents durcissements. Le dialogue est une oeuvre sans cesse à reprendre: lui seul nous permet de désarmer le fanatisme, en nous et chez l'autre. C'est par lui que nous sommes appelés à exprimer notre foi en l'amour de Dieu qui aura le dernier mot sur toutes les puissances de division et de mort.

Frères et amis, voilà notre mission; elle est aussi vaste que notre vie: elle se fera prière, dialogue, parole, action, mais toujours pour recevoir la Bonne Nouvelle de l'amour de Dieu et la communiquer. Aucune de nos activités ne lui échappe: en elle, pas de distinction entre le religieux et le profane car il s'agit d'abord de vivre, simplement vivre, mais vivre pleinement, selon l'Esprit de Jésus-Christ.

Nous allons poursuivre ensemble cette aventure, laissant Dieu conduire notre pèlerinage...

AMEN I

DECLARATION OF THE MSC GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

NOVEMBER 20, 1981

This General Administration of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart cannot pass over in silence the various world situations in which the basic human rights of our fellow human beings are systematically ignored and viciously violated. Our "love for justice and concern for all" urge us to speak out (1981 MSC Constitutions no. 13; cfr. also nos. 6 and 7).

Ours is not an abstract, theoretical concern. There is not a single MSC province which does not live in a country where human rights are often and in various ways ignored or violated. Some of our provinces and some of our members live in daily circumstances where such rights are constantly violated, where standing for justice runs the risk of imprisonment, or where there is an endless and careless taking of human life.

This General Administration wishes, in particular, to acknowledge the heroic fact that several of our Spanish confreres, in the past few years, have given their lives in the service of some of the most voiceless and powerless people of Central America. These, and other living MSC sacrifices for such people, are a source of instruction and inspiration for MSC throughout the world.

A mere verbalization of concern or a simple repetition of slogans will not relieve us of our obligation to work for peace and justice in our world of today. We must seek to understand the true causes and roots of these situations and make sure that we do not, even unconsciously, contribute to them. Only an informed concern can lead to effective action, in keeping with our christian faith and our religious vocation, to work for a change of those attitudes, prejudices and structures which contribute to all violations of human rights.

As human beings and even more so as baptized christians, we are called to this concern for peace and justice. As religious, we must carry out this common obligation in our own particular way. This way is expressed for us in the MSC ideals of our new Constitutions. In many respects, this expression may still be an ideal. We wish at least to affirm that ideal and to pledge ourselves to work for its realization.

(We publish this declaration which is addressed primarily to the members of the MSC Society by their General Administration in the belief that it is of interest to many of those involved in similar situations. Ed).

See also Sedos Bulletin 81/No. 4: "*Lettre D'un Missionnaire en Afrique*".

OPEN LETTER TO BISHOP CASEY AND *TROCAIRE*, IRELAND

FROM THE IRISH HOLY GHOST FATHERS IN BRAZIL
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR
ANNUAL ASSEMBLY, OCTOBER 1981

As Irish missionaries working here in Latin America, it has become clear to us the tremendous exploitation of the "third world" countries by the "first world". In the name of national security and of a war against Communism oppressive regimes are kept in power and the most basic rights of the individual are denied. What appears at first sight to be a fight against subversion, on a second analysis is often not more than an effort by national and international economic groups to promote their own interests.

The case of El Salvador is a very clear example of this. President Reagan insists on bolstering up an unpopular regime by sending in enormous quantities of arms and army advisers. A regime that needs to kill indiscriminately and torture its own citizens is presented as defending "democracy" and "liberty".

We are aware of your visit to El Salvador, accompanied by a team from Trocaire and your subsequent exposition in Ireland of the cruelty being perpetuated there and your support for the French-Mexican stand that any permanent political solution must include participation by the opposition groups.

We support wholeheartedly your stand and that of Trocaire. In fact, if we are to be faithful to the social teaching of the Church and the gospel message of truth, liberty, justice and love we don't have any other option. "The Church has the duty of announcing the liberation of millions of human beings, many of them being her spiritual sons (EN 30)".

In international affairs we would hope to see the Irish government speak out clearly, placing herself on the side of the oppressed, even if this means losing material advantages which the powerful have to offer.

Your public stand encourages us in our work here. Our hope is that in Ireland and in the northern hemisphere in general, Trocaire will continue being a witness to a Church that believes in the liberating forces of the gospel message and makes concrete options on behalf of the great mass of oppressed poor in the so-called "third world" who have neither voice nor opportunity.

John B. Doyle, C.S.Sp. (Principal Superior)
On behalf of the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers in Brazil.

(Bishop Eamon Casey is the President of *Trocaire*, the Irish Bishop's Lenten Campaign Fund. He represented the Irish Bishops at the funeral of Archbishop Oscar Romero, sj, and gave an eye-witness account of the events there which flatly contradicted the "official" account. Ed).

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