



News:

Sedos New Member. Welcome to the Congregation of "Figlie di Maria e di Giuseppe (heretofore known as the Ladies of Mary) who have become members of Sedos. The Superior General is Sister Bernadette Lecluyse and the address of the Generalate is, Via Rivarone, 100-int. 9; 00166, Roma. Tel.623.72.29.

Sr. Mary Motte, FMM: The Sedos Executive Committee has asked Sr. Mary to act as a liaison person for Sedos at the forthcoming Plenary Assembly of the World Council of Churches which she will be attending as a member of the delgation from the Secretariate for the Promotion of Christian Unity in Rome. Sr. Mary has kindly agreed and will keep us in touch specially with the missionary dimension of the Assembly.

The W.C.C. is one of the signs of our times incorporating over 300 Churches throughout the world. The Editor of AFER, in a recent editorial points out the challenge that the very existence of the WCC is to the Catholic Church's ecumenical attitude:

"While the demands of truth are always paramount, we all have to ask if we are confusing our own understanding of the truth with the truth itself, and if at least some of our apparent certainties are not more the result of historical and cultural prejudices than of a self sacrificing of the truth".

The Roman Catholic representation at this Sixth Assembly will be the most considerable ever. At the Sedos General Assembly December 1982, there was solid evidence of a growing mutual understanding and a common concern in matters pertaining to mission between the CWME and the members of Sedos.

Delivery of Sedos Bulletin takes place before midday on the 1st and 15th of each month at two central collecting points in Rome (1) The Jesuit Generalate, 5, Borgo S. Spirito and (2) the Christian Brothers Generalate, 476, Via Aurelia. We sincerely thank the two Generalates for their help and co-operation in facilitating prompt delivery of the Bulletins. Members who have opted for delivery of their Bulletins to either of these collecting points should ensure the Bulletins are collected regularly. Now at the beginning (!) of the vacation period a special effort may be required to ensure that all Bulletins are cleared from these Generalates.

WCFBA (World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate; D.7000 Stuttgart 1, Mittelstrasse 12, Germany).

The Federation is a Catholic cooperative service organization, made up of organizations, dioceses, religious orders, publishers and movements which are directly involved in some aspect of evangelization. It now functions in over 100 countries. Experiences in pastoral creativity and new materials connected with the biblical apostolate are sent to the WCFBA for analysis. These initiatives and materials are published in Word-Event for the benefit of members throughout the world. The Federation would like to offer that service to Sedos and invites members to join the international dialogue by sharing their experiences and insights with them. Sedos members may request trial issues of Word-Event, the monthly magazine of the Federation and information material on the Federation.

Next Sedos Bulletin will appear on September 15, 1983.

Sedos Secretariate will be closed from July 26 to September 5, 1983. We wish all our readers a happy and restful vacation.

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 EMPTINESS
 

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Sr. Eileen O'Hea, C.S.J.

*(A feeling of emptiness is one of the signs of "burn-out". Emotional emptiness is a great void that we feel and try desperately to fill in by pouring down alcohol, consuming food, reincarnating some past "feel good religious practice," involving ourselves in relationships (sexual and non-sexual) in an effort to fill in, satisfy, assuage. Each of our attempts takes the edge off-soothes the disgruntled spirit, but not to the degree or duration we desire. Then the emptiness is intensified, accompanied by self-contempt, self-pity, guilt, self-abnegation. Sister Eileen examines the signs of Emptiness and proposes ways of dealing with it. This article is slightly condensed. Ed).*

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 WHAT DOES EMPTINESS LOOK LIKE?

The state of emptiness is like a huge conglomerate of feelings. It expresses itself in a variety of forms.

"Loneliness," A desperate desire for human contact. The feeling that I am unconnected-alone in the universe. It is a desperate desire for human contact, whether through touch or sound. It is the desire to reach out, to be held, to be understood. The friendships shared or the people around only intensify my loneliness. The lonely feeling endures and I live with the threat that this is what it will be like for the rest of my life.

"Bored," Mission has become routine. I have no enthusiasm for things in general, especially the things I thought were once important. Mission has become routine. I feel apathetic, without interest in anything and find it hard to relax. I feel tired and restless most of the time and keep looking for some excitement or distraction. Motivation is nonexistent and I am envious of others who seem to have maintained it. Life takes the shape of a series of losses. Death lurks in my unconscious and fear, terror, dread, are its constant companions.

"Despair," "I'm tired of trying." What I hoped for will never be. "There are not enough pay-offs for goodness." In fact, it seems to work the opposite way. What I hoped for will never be. I work at things-believe in the Church, the Society, the parish, my ability to transform structures, etc. and what happens? The person who replaces me let's everything I've built-up go into oblivion. Or, I'm not appreciated and asked to leave the mission, the people I've put my heart into. I begin to see myself as a pawn with everybody else "calling the shots."

"Failure." (Things that once gave me a sense of self-importance no longer do). A lack of affirmation highlights my life. Either nobody thinks I need it or there is nothing to give it to me for. I have the feeling I am always failing other people's expectations of me-Family-Society-Friends. Compared with other people, I don't seem to have grown. I feel inadequate and unaccomplished. All the things that once gave me a sense of self-importance no longer do. "I should have" becomes a recurring theme. I feel that no one really needs me or wants me.

"Overwhelmed." I feel that I can no longer control things or keep things in the neat categories that once made life and belief so simple for me. I feel helpless in terms of the evil and suffering in the world. The idealism of my youth, which had me believe that I could change structures or have a direct effect on the world, has dwindled. Lack of motivation has made my efforts in ministry half-hearted, uncertain and routine. I am plagued by doubts. Doubts about mission, priesthood, Church, God!

It is easily seen that "emptiness" is a conglomerate that is actually very "full" of feelings. But the emotional state of emptiness represents the absence of certain feeling. Either things longed for, or things noted as missing.

#### UNPRODUCTIVE APPROACHES TO EMPTINESS

1. Replacement. (Solutions are sought by filling in with something). Emptiness inside of self, and between self and others is vaguely sensed and acknowledged. Solutions are sought by filling in with something: A lonely wife fills it in by overinvolvement with her children; a husband by overinvolvement with work. Overinvolvement with alcohol, dependence in it, might be the easy way for the missionary. He finds it in a way to escape dread. "Buzzing off" compensates for the empty space inside him; a couple of drinks take the edge off life and lets him relax. (He has gotten to the point where he can never relax unless he has a drink.) He hasn't asked the question: relax from what?, yet. He begins to look forward to meeting "the drink," not people, at the end of the day. The drink-drinks s s s help him relate, be "himself," go to sleep, loosen-up, have some fun.

Alcohol is only one of the replacements used to fill in emptiness. Perhaps because of its availability and social acceptability, it is subtle in its role until, through constant and/or dependent overuse or misuse, it has dis-eased us away from life and away from our true selves.

Food, books, television, over-investment in causes, issues, activities, relationships may also represent attempts to fill in personal emptiness. Furious activity, increasing the rhythm of one's life, filling in and organizing each day's schedule so that there is no time to think or reflect frequently may look like "zeal for my father's house has eaten me up." However, the reason why many religious people cannot find time for reflection or for silent prayer is because they consciously or unconsciously are afraid of quiet time. It is then that the terror of emptiness raises its head.

2. Avoidance (A negative peace). Avoidance is a familiar way many of us have learned to handle life. We avoid people we don't want to meet, situations that will produce undue anxiety, or experiences that confront us with pain and suffering whether that be cosmic or personal. A negative peace, being undisturbed in body, soul or psyche become the modus operandi of our lives. Idealism, self-sacrifice, discipleship, deteriorate into egocentricity, self-serving, and an attitude that says, "if I don't watch out for me, nobody else is going to do it." These attitudes are reflected in my criteria for ministry: How much will I have to give up?; What's in it for me?: Is what I'm offered better than what I've got?

3. Adaptation. (Never to go too deeply inside myself again). The memories of past experiences of emptiness urge us to avoid a repeat of the "bad" feelings associated with it. Often my psyche interprets this as an injunction never to go too deeply inside myself again. Consequently, we begin to live lives that are controllable, superficial and/or mediocre.

#### PRODUCTIVE WAYS OF DEALING WITH EMPTINESS

1. Dealing with. (Likely candidates for other depression episodes). Simple procedures to help us learn from our experience include taking time to raise questions as simple and obvious as: What were the circumstances, events, people which preceded this experience? How did each contribute to the feeling I now have? What caused the feeling to go away? How did I get out of it? Can I learn anything from this experience?

Frequently people who "come out" of a depression are so glad to be free of it that they never reflect on what got them into it and what got them out. This no-learning experience leaves them likely candidates for other depression episodes.

3. Acceptance Of. (Not part of the expectation we have about life). Many of us, either through family patterning or through some cultural or social myth, believe that the feeling of emptiness should not be. It is not part of the expectation we have about life. Reflecting on our own humanity in particular and the human condition in general, puts this experience in context. Our finiteness, our limits begin to be appropriated, acknowledged and accepted.

4. Reaching Out. (To risk more intimate self-discovery). To seek spiritual direction, to go for counseling, to risk more intimate self-discovery with friends and to bring our imperfect self to each of these situations is a major means of helping ourselves. This involves erasing the mind-set that says: "wait-don't reach out until you've cleaned up your act," "wait, until you get back to praying more faithfully," "wait, until you cut-back on drinking," "wait, until you tidy-up your life." The "wait until" becomes months, or years, and what was heard as an inspired prodding is dulled into "someday I'll get around to it."

THE MISSING LINK

The Grace Mystery is the missing link in all this. Too often our human struggles are seen only as psychological or emotional realities that have no connection to the Grace Mystery. Jesus teaches us that the full integration of humanity takes place in and because of, the Grace Mystery operative in our lives. That is, the experience of our finiteness, our limitness, our helplessness which expresses itself in the psychological reality of emptiness can be the opportunity that brings us from "self" consciousness to self transcendence. Jesus, fleshes this out for us. He transcends terror, darkness, and death. It is too simplistic to say because he transcended them, we can also. That only leaves us as on-lookers, stuck in our darkness and emptiness, recognizing and admiring, as it were, our model-Jesus Christ.

The Grace Mystery articulated in and by Jesus Christ says far more to our experience of emptiness than this. It tells us that the same Spirit that was in Jesus, that led him through and beyond darkness, limitness and death, is operative in us. It is the Spirit of Jesus in us that allows us to confront, to enter into, our emptiness, knowing we will not be overwhelmed by it.

The same Spirit which empowered Jesus empowers us to face terror with confidence, darkness without fear. It is the Spirit of Jesus—that presence of God's light in the pit of cosmic and personal darkness—that transmutes darkness into light, self-consciousness to other consciousness, emptiness into the fullness of life. It is in and with this Spirit of Jesus that our emptiness can cause us to utter with St. Paul: I boast of my weakness, because in it I am made strong.

(Eileen P. O'Hea,, C.S.J., (M.S.W., C.S.W., A.C.S.W.), is a Psycho-therapist, Family Therapist, and a member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She is a consultant involved in formation and does therapy and/or spiritual direction with Maryknollers, is an assistant to the Director of Formation and Managing Editor of the Maryknoll Formation Journal).

Ref. Maryknoll Formation Journal. Spring 1983.  
(N.Y. 10545).

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GUTIERREZ REFLECTS ON  
15 YEARS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

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*(We received a question following the article of Segundo Galilea on Spirituality and Liberation reprinted in Sedos Bulletin, No.10/83: "Are we now turning away from the liberation theology which was such a dynamic influence in the Latin American Church?". In this interview Gustavo Gutierrez answers questions on changes in liberation theology to-day, and underlines the important themes which are now emerging fifteen years after the first explicit formulation of this theology. Ed.).*

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*(Faisant suite à l'article de Segundo Galilea "Spiritualité et liberation" qui a paru dans le bulletin de Sedos, No.10/85, nous avons reçu cette question: "Sommes nous, maintenant, en train de tourner la page, et de nous éloigner de la théologie de la liberation qui a joué un rôle dynamique dans l'évolution récente de l'Eglise en Amérique latine"? Voici donc un interview donné par un autre théologien de la liberation, Gustavo Gutierrez. Dans cette interview il répond aux questions posées au sujet des changements qui ont eu lieu dans la théologie de la liberation. Il souligne les thèmes importants qui émergent aujourd'hui, quinze ans après les premières formulations explicites, de la théologie de la liberation. N.D.L.R.).*

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Latinamerica Press. In your judgement, what fruits has the theology of liberation borne during these years in Latin America?

Gustavo Gutierrez. In the first place, I would say that the theology of liberation is itself the fruit of something. It is a fruit of the process of liberation, of a greater awareness on the part of the people of Latin America of the unjust situation to which they are subjected and of their capacity for changing it. Above all, liberation theology is the result of the church community's accompanying of an exploited but believing people in its entire process of liberation. The theology of liberation, like all theology, is an attempt to systematize the experience of a people and of the Christian community in the light of faith. So if we talk about the fruits of liberation theology, it must be in the context of a larger process.

I want to correct a commonly held notion that mistakenly supposes that liberation theology is a theoretical framework of theological concepts drawn up in someone's study and only later applied in the Christian communities. I would say the process is quite the opposite. The theology of liberation has rather been an effort at reflecting systematically on the actual faith of a poor people, in order to help them, as believers, to be clearer about the demands of their faith commitment. This has permitted liberation theology to play a role in showing how the unique experience of the Latin American people-while different from that of other peoples-is a no less valuable one.

This Latin American experience also allows for a faith reflection that nourishes personal experience. So it seems to me that the most important thing we can ask ourselves is how the process of liberation is taking place to-day and how the Gospel is present in that process. These are the major issues, and the question of the fruits of liberation theology is quite secondary.

Essentially, I am insisting that the theology of liberation is only part of a process-and that it is hardly the starting point of that process.

Has the experience of the church and the peoples of Latin America over these ten years suggested any change of focus or theoretical readjustment within liberation theology?

Yes, But let's be specific about the dates. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the first explicit formulation of what we call the theology of liberation (the first talk with that title was given in July 1968). Naturally, in those 15 years there have been many changes in Latin America, in our political and historical consciousness and in the Christian awareness of the Latin American poor.

A theology that tries to be a reflection based on and about praxis in the light of faith could not help but follow this process. As circumstances have changed the emphases of the reflection have changed too. I am not saying that we have always been faithful to that rhythm of change. There can at times be an erroneous tendency to hang on to set formulas, to feel drawn by the logic of a particular mode of theological expression, even though reality itself has changed. This is a constant danger, and no one is free from it.

I'd say the greatest changes in these years have been results of two factors. On the one hand, there is the scope of the liberation process in Latin America, the fact that more and more working class people and others committed to their liberation have become a part of the process. But this development has brought about a greater resistance to the liberation process, which in turn has inspired new themes for theological reflection. An important change has also occurred in the church. Since Medellin, the church has become increasingly sensitive to the process of liberation, and that has also given rise to new themes.

What I am trying to say is something we saw clearly almost 15 years ago: the upsurge of the poor as a force in Latin American society and in the Latin American church has created a very new situation. It has brought about a deepening of faith and of the realization that following the teachings of Jesus Christ in present-day Latin America leads down very specific and often difficult roads.

What do you consider to be the most important themes in the theology of liberation?

Ever since its inception, liberation theology has had two basic intuitions and one major concern. The first insight was the need to study the role the privileged people of God's Kingdom, the poor, play in the theological reflection. I think that taking on the point of view



of the poor, starting with their entry into history, was the start of our ongoing efforts to understand and define the biblical notion of the poor. The biblical concept is a very rich one, richer than, say, a purely sociological understanding of the poor.

The second key idea that emerged is that theology must be a reflection, in the light of faith on and about our concrete practice. Here we are reappropriating a way of doing theology that has existed in the church for centuries. Some people have apparently been taken aback by our using the actions of the poor as a basis for doing theology. There has been a great deal of concern and a good deal of misunderstanding about this. We have always said that our reflection is carried out in the light of faith-to do any thing else would be to fail to do theology.

One of the most absurd criticisms made is that we substitute the faith practice of Christians for the word of God. That has never been asserted in liberation theology. Our reflection follows a circular dynamic seen many times in church history: moving from the word of the Lord to experience and from experience to the word of the Lord.

Besides these two major insights, we have had one major concern: that of announcing the Gospel, of evangelizing. There are theologians who feel our theology is very "utilitarian," too much oriented towards pastoral work. And in a way are right. Ours is a theology that tries to place itself at the service of the church. We believe that theology has an ecclesial function and is oriented toward the proclamation of the Gospel message.

Finally, ours is a new theological perspective. We have only now begun to see some things more clearly, others we are still working on. It's a process.

Currently what are the most important themes in liberation theology?

Folk Religion. There are some themes that we were somewhat aware of from the beginning but have only recently begun to really work on. One is folk religion or "popular religiosity," which is viewed differently in liberation theology from the way it is seen in modern European theology or the theologies of secularization. We place emphasis on the experience of an exploited, religious people. From the outset, there was a concern for the religious experience of the poor, but in recent years we have developed the theme much more.

Women. Another theme is the perspective of women. I think that also was present from the start. Please excuse my quoting myself but I would like to note that in the first line of my book, *A Theology of Liberation*, I call it "an attempt at reflection, based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation." Some friends suggested "men committed to the process of liberation" would suffice, but I disagreed. At that time (1969-70) the question of women was much less talked about, but it seemed important to me to underline from the beginning the commitment of women. I don't want to overstate this point. What counts is that the viewpoint of women has been explored more intensively in liberation theology in recent years.

History. Another theme is history and Christian tradition. If the liberating dimension of faith were not present throughout the history of the Christian community, liberation theology would be impossible to justify. It is important for us to see how that liberating dimension has been present in history, in other contexts and using other terms-and above all, to see how it has been present on our continent. Hence the interest in a man like the 16th century Spanish missionary, Bartolome de las Casas, who reflected theology on the poverty and exploitation of the indigenous peoples of the continent, assuming their perspective.

Race. Another theme we have been working on-and still have to look at much more deeply-is the question of race, which arises necessarily when we assume the perspective of the poor. The poor are very specific persons, and belong to very specific races, just as they belong to a certain sex. As we begin to look at things more and more from the standpoint of race, we are at once confronted with the increasingly powerful cultural theme.

Besides the task of evangelization, which is our major concern, we are of course called to build church. To evangelize is also to call together church. Thus we quickly found ourselves dealing with what John XXIII called the church of the poor. That too has raised new questions for us.

In short, the theology of liberation is very much alive and continues to forge ahead. Theology is but a part of the life of a people; in no way can it be seen as the starting point or the first impulse. It must always be understood, as we have insisted, as a second act, as something that follows on the life of a believing people. Their life will always be much richer than all the systematizing and conceptualizing we can do.

Ref: Latinamerica Press. Vol.15. No.18, May 19, 1983.  
Apartado (P.O.Box) 5594, Lima 100, Peru.

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RWANDA: PASTORAL PRIORITIES IN BYUMBA DIOCESE:

In its history, evangelization in Rwanda has known periods of big crowds. It would be illusory today to still want to bank on crowds in order to show the success of Christianity in Rwanda.

Today we are living a period where religious practice is diminishing and where we need to think about deepening Christian faith based on small basic communities: communities small enough for the activities of daily life to unfold there and for the members to be able to experience real inter-personal relations and for a feeling of belonging to develop.

Ref.. From the Pastoral letter of Bishop Joseph Ruzindana, quoted in Petit Echo, bulletin of the White Fathers. No. 742

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## THE CHURCH IS A CREATOR OF CULTURE

EXTRACTS FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II'S ADDRESS TO  
THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

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Gaudium et Spes....The Second Vatican Council gave a new dynamism in the domain of culture, especially in the Constitution Gaudium et Spes. Today it is a demanding task to understand the extreme variety of cultures, of customs, of traditions. At first glance, the challenge may seem beyond our ability, but is it not proportionate to our faith and our hope? During the Second Vatican Council the Church recognized that a widening gap had been created between the Church and culture. The modern world is fascinated by its conquests, its scientific and technological achievements. But too often it gives itself over to ideologies, criteria for ethical practice, and behaviour which contradict the Gospel or which, at least, calmly set aside Christian values.

### TO LISTEN TO MODERN MAN AND REDISCOVER THE APOSTOLIC CREATIVITY

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It is then in the name of Christian faith that the Second Vatican Council committed the whole Church to listen to modern man, in order to understand him and to create a new kind of dialogue, which would make it possible to bring the originality of the Gospel message to the heart of today's mentalities. We must then rediscover the apostolic creativity and the prophetic power of the first disciples in order to face new cultures. Christ's word must appear in all its freshness to the young generations, whose attitudes are sometimes difficult for traditional minds to understand, but who are far from being closed to spiritual values.

Dialogue: Church and Cultures. On many occasions I have affirmed that dialogue between the Church and cultures has a vital importance today for the future of the Church and the world. May I be permitted to return to this point, in insisting on two principal and complementary aspects which correspond to the two levels on which the Church carries on its activity: that of the evangelization of cultures and that of the defence of man and of his cultural development. Both tasks demand that new means for dialogue between the Church and the cultures of our time be developed.

This dialogue is absolutely indispensable for the Church, for otherwise evangelization would remain a dead letter. Saint Paul did not hesitate to say, "Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel!" At the end of the twentieth century, as in the Apostle's time, the Church must be all things to all men, responding to today's cultures with understanding. There are still spheres and mentalities, as well as entire countries and regions to be evangelized, which presupposes a long and courageous process of inculturation in order that the Gospel may penetrate the soul of living cultures, responding to their highest expectations and inducing them to grow in faith, hope, and Christian charity.

The Church, through its missionaries, has already accomplished an incomparable work on every continent, but this missionary work is never finished, for some cultures have only been reached superficially, and in any event, as cultures continually change, they continually demand a renewed approach. Let us add that there is also a mission to be undertaken to those civilizations long marked by Christianity, but which are now threatened by indifference, agnosticism, or even irreligion. New sectors of culture are appearing, with various objectives, methods, and languages. Intercultural dialogue is thus necessary for Christians in every country.

#### ATTITUDE OF EXCHANGE AND COMPREHENSION

In order to evangelize effectively, it is necessary to adopt resolutely an attitude of exchange and of comprehension, in order to understand the cultural identity of peoples, ethnic groups, and the various sectors of modern society. Moreover, it is necessary to work towards a relationship between cultures, in such a way that man's universal values may be accepted everywhere in a spirit of brotherhood and solidarity. To evangelize, then, is a matter both of penetrating the specific identity of each culture, and of working for cultural exchange, of opening cultures to the values of universality, or one might even say of catholicity.....

Receiving: We must remember that Christians have a great deal to receive from this dynamic relationship between the Church and the contemporary world. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council insisted on this point, and it is important to remember it. The Church is greatly enriched by what it acquires from so many civilizations. The age-old experience of so many peoples, the progress of science, the hidden treasures of various cultures, are all means by which the Church may better understand human nature, means by which it may find new paths to the truth, which will certainly be to its advantage, as the Council recognized (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No.44). And it seeks this enrichment.....

#### TO LOVE MAN IN HIMSELF

In urging us to evangelize, our faith inspires us to love man in himself. Now more than ever, man needs to be defended against the threats to his development. The love which we draw from the spring of the Gospel, in the wake of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, leads us to proclaim that man deserves honour and love for himself, and must be respected in his dignity. Brothers must learn again to speak to one another, to understand one another, that man himself may survive and grow in dignity, freedom, and honour. To the extent it stifles dialogue among cultures, the modern world is heading for conflicts which risk being fatal for the future of human civilization. Beyond prejudices and cultural barriers, racial, linguistic, religious, or ideological separations, human beings must recognize one another as brothers and sisters and accept one another with their differences.

Biological being. The lack of understanding among men thus leads them to be exposed to a fatal danger. But man is likewise threatened in his biological being by the risk of genetic manipulations, by attacks on unborn life, by the torture which is still seriously rife in our time. Our love for man must give us the courage to denounce those conceptions which reduce the human being to a thing which can be arbitrarily manipulated, humiliated, or eliminated.

Moral being. Man is also insidiously threatened in his moral being, for he is subjected to hedonistic currents which aggravate his instincts and fascinate him by an illusion of indiscriminate consumption. Public opinion is manipulated by the deceitful suggestions of powerful advertising, whose one-dimensional values should make us critical and vigilant.

Economic being. Further man is humiliated in our time by economic systems which exploit entire collectivities. Man is also the victim of certain political or ideological regimes which imprison the soul of a people. As Christians, we cannot remain silent and we must denounce this cultural oppression which inhibits people and ethnic groups from being themselves in conformity with their profound vocation. It is through these cultural values that the individual man or collectivity lives a truly human life, and we must not tolerate a destruction of our very reason for living. History will be severe if our era suffocates, corrupts, and brutally oppresses the cultures in so many regions of the world.

#### MAN MUST BE AFFIRMED FOR HIMSELF - SOLELY FOR HIMSELF

It is in this sense that I was anxious to proclaim to UNESCO, before the assembly of all the nations, what I now take leave to repeat to you today: "Man must be affirmed for himself, and not for any other motive or reason: solely for himself! What is more, man must be loved because he is man; love must be claimed for man by reason of the particular dignity he possesses. The whole of the affirmations concerning man belongs to the very substance of Christ's message and of the mission of the Church, in spite of all that critics may have declared about this matter, and all that the different movements opposed to religion in general and to Christianity in particular may have done" (Address to UNESCO, 2 June 1980, no.10). This message is fundamental for making possible the work of the Church in the world today. This is why I wrote in the conclusion of the Encyclical Redemptor Hominis that "man is and always becomes the "way" for the Church's daily life" (no.21). Yes, man is "the Church's way", for without respect for man and for his dignity, how could one announce to him the words of life and truth?.....

#### NEW WAYS TO DIALOGUE

It is in remembering these two principles of orientation - evangelization of cultures and the defence of man - that the Pontifical Council for Culture will pursue its work. On the one hand, it is necessary that the evangelizer familiarize himself with the socio-cultural environments in which he will proclaim the Word of God; much more, the Gospel is itself a leaven for culture to the extent that

it reaches man in his manner of thinking, behaving, working, recreation - that is, it reaches man in his specific culture. On the other hand, our faith gives us confidence in man - in man created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ - in man whom we want to defend and to love for himself, conscious as we are that he is man only through his culture, that is, through his freedom to grow integrally and with all his specific potential.....

In your work you are called to collaborate with all men of good will. You will find that the spirit of good is mysteriously at work in many of our contemporaries, even in some of them who do not claim to have any religion, but who are trying honestly to fulfil their human vocation with courage. Think of so many mothers and fathers of families, of so many teachers and students, of workers dedicated to their task, of so many men and women devoted to the cause of peace, the common good, justice and international cooperation. We are thinking also of all those seekers who dedicate themselves with consistency and moral strictness to their useful work for society, the eager artists and creators of beauty. Do not hesitate to enter into dialogue with all of these men and women of good will, many of whom may perhaps secretly hope for the witness and support of the Church, in order better to defend and promote man's true progress...

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#### INTERDEPENDENCE

(From Pope John Paul II's Message  
to Unctad VI, Belgrade, June 6, 1983)

"Everyone is aware of the domestic problems that for some time have beset all the nations of the world without exception. Great as these are, it would be a pity if the internal difficulties of a developed nation were to be used as an excuse to avoid responsibilities in the international sphere. Thus one can see that in the area of development the fundamental step must be the initiation of a dialogue that accepts the other as an equal partner and that seeks to find the ways through sincere and honest negotiations to resolve real and concrete problems. There can be no substitute for this dialogue. There is no nation which has a right to exempt itself from the demands that such a dialogue presents."

"Interdependence", he said, "is a fact of life; it is expressed in a variety of ways, from simple bartering to the most complicated of international economic and trade agreements and shows us that no one nation is able to live solely by itself, looking only to its own interests". "It must be fostered in the renewal of the North-South dialogue: the quality of the dialogue must be improved. The vision of a world living together in harmony must be emphasised. Esteem for the values of one another's cultures must be deepened. Above all, the full dignity and value of the human person in society must be protected and fostered".

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## PREPARATION DES JEUNES A LA PRETRISE

Michel Boisseau

*(The pastoral situation in some African local churches to-day calls in question the traditional place of the Junior Seminary in formation programmes for priesthood. Basic ecclesial communities are now the declared pastoral priority of many local Churches and Conferences of Bishops. This widens the possibility of new ministries and calls for a clarification of the present pastoral responsibilities of the priest. In response to this new situation Fr. Boisseau calls attention to some alternatives to the Junior Seminary, offers some criteria for assessing the value of these new methods and proposes some guidelines for the future. Ed.).*

### A. RECHERCHE DE FORMULES NOUVELLES

Formation du clergé et pénurie de prêtres: Dès le début de l'Évangélisation, les missionnaires ont eu le souci de former des Prêtres africains... Les instructions du Saint-Siège étaient d'ailleurs formelles. Alors, on a ouvert des petits séminaires. C'était le seul moyen, à une époque où n'existait aucune école secondaire. Pendant de longues années, ces petits séminaires ont été les seules écoles à dispenser un enseignement d'un niveau supérieur au primaire.

Maintenant, le problème se présente d'une façon bien différente. La Chrétienté d'Afrique s'est développée beaucoup plus vite que le presbytérium qui est à son service. Un peu partout, on trouve des paroisses sans prêtre tandis que beaucoup de prêtres actuellement en service s'épuisent au détriment de leur santé, afin d'assurer un "service minimum" aux chrétiens dont ils ont la charge. Partout on ressent vivement la pénurie, et il ne paraît plus guère acceptable aux prêtres de maintenant de faire encore " la classe", alors que de nombreux collègues chrétiens sont en mesure de faire ce travail, aussi bien et souvent mieux que des prêtres qui n'ont été ni préparés ni ordonnés pour cela.

Foyers-séminaires: Aussi la sagesse nous a-t-elle amenés à remplacer de nombreux petits séminaires par des "foyers-séminaires". Ces foyers sont des internats accueillant des garçons qui pensent au sacerdoce. On leur y donne une formation qui les prépare au grand séminaire, mais ils vont suivre les cours aux collèges chrétiens voisins où ils se trouvent mêlés aux autres jeunes de leur âge.

Groupes de vocations: Enfin, à côté de ces foyers, nous voyons se multiplier des "groupes de vocations" qui cherchent à préparer les jeunes au sacerdoce en dehors de tout cadre d'internat. Ces groupes existent surtout dans les villes, grandes ou petites, partout où existent des établissements secondaires. Beaucoup de ces jeunes sont externes et habitent dans leur famille, mais certains sont internes dans l'internat local, car ils n'ont pas de famille en ville. Ces groupes assurent actuellement une part de

plus en plus grande dans le recrutement des grands séminaires. Ainsi, pour les 8 diocèses du Shaba, le grand séminaire de Lubumbashi a accueilli, en 1981, 37 nouveaux dont 10 seulement venaient des foyers séminaires de la Région. Cette proportion importante de jeunes qui ne passent plus dans les institutions traditionnelles pose le problème de la formation à donner " en externat", de ses avantages comme de ses inconvénients.

Groupes de formation: Dans la ville même de Lubumbashi, 2 formules assez différentes sont expérimentées depuis 6 ans:

Un premier groupe de vocation se réunit chaque mois pour un week-end au "Prieuré d'Emmaïus". C'est un groupe mixte préparant aussi bien au sacerdoce qu'à la vie religieuse. Il regroupe des jeunes venant de toutes les paroisses de la ville. Ces jeunes sont envoyés par leur curé et doivent être engagés dans le travail de leur paroisse. Ils suivent le groupe pendant 2 années correspondant à la 5<sup>o</sup> et à la 6<sup>o</sup> du secondaire.

A côté de ce groupe, fonctionne le "groupe de formation au service de Dieu" (GFSD) avec ses 3 "pro-séminaires" (il y en a 4 autres en dehors de Lubumbashi). Dans ce groupe, on cherche plutôt à réaliser un "petit séminaire en externat" avec une formation très intégrée à la vie paroissiale. Il accueille des garçons de toutes les classes du secondaire (il y a même quelques universitaires). Tous les garçons doivent être engagés à la paroisse ou dans les CEB, chacun selon son âge. Tout un système d'équipes paroissiales et de feuilles de formation permet de simplifier le travail au maximum pour le prêtre qui s'occupe de ces jeunes.

## B. ESSAI D'EVALUATION

L'expérience faite dans ces groupes permet déjà de tirer quelques conclusions, et de déceler les avantages et inconvénients de ce type de formation.

Avantages: Les groupes de vocation ne comptent que des jeunes vraiment motivés. Ceux qui y viennent sans motivation profonde ne persévèrent pas. Il n'y a pas de ces "fausses vocations" qui empoisonnent tant de petits séminaires où des jeunes sont tentés de venir, souvent poussés par leur famille, pour faire "de bonnes études". Cet avantage est énorme; il permet de créer un climat de ferveur et de bonne entente entre le groupe et le prêtre qui s'en occupe.

2. Le prêtre qui dirige le groupe est appliqué à 100% à la formation spirituelle. Engagé lui-même dans le travail pastoral, il est l'exemple vivant de ce qu'il enseigne; il est bien placé pour engager les jeunes dans le travail paroissial et les y suivre.
3. Les "frais de fonctionnement" sont minimes: quelques dépenses pour les retraites et recollections, des feuilles photocopiées pour la formation doctrinale et spirituelle.
4. Les jeunes qui y passent sont déjà familiarisés avec le travail pastoral qui sera plus tard le leur. On peut d'ores et déjà les orienter vers le service des Communautés de Base comme on le fait au GFSD où beaucoup de garçons sont catéchistes dans les CEB, d'autres sont secrétaires, d'autres encore appelés pour commenter l'Evangile.



La formation donnée est très vite "opérationnelle". Plus tard, au grand séminaire, quand ils recevront le cours de pastorale, ils sauront de quoi on parle, et le cours rejoindra toute une expérience déjà acquise.

Inconvénients 1. Tous ces avantages comportent quelques inconvénients qui en sont la rançon. Le prêtre qui s'occupe d'un groupe est le plus souvent chargé d'une paroisse; il est un exemple vivant, mais aussi, il ne dispose que d'un temps limité, ce qui l'empêche de suivre tous les jeunes comme il le souhaiterait; en fait, il s'occupe surtout des plus grands. Comme les jeunes sont externes, toute une partie de leur vie échappe au prêtre. Aussi est-il nécessaire que les responsables, surtout ceux des CEB s'intéressent à la formation de ces jeunes.

2. La plus grande difficulté, surtout à l'heure actuelle, concerne la formation intellectuelle. Beaucoup de garçons de ces groupes font leurs études dans de écoles plus que médiocres; Aussi, beaucoup d'entre eux n'arrivent pas à "passer la barre" des 55% exigés par les grands séminaires. Certains présentent pourtant tous les signes d'une vocation sérieuse, et il serait dommage de perdre ces vocations au moment où l'on manque dramatiquement de prêtres.

Il ne faut pourtant pas surestimer cette difficulté, car l'expérience a aussi montré que ces garçons, quand ils sont intelligents et travailleurs, rattrapent très vite ce handicap dès qu'ils sont placés dans des conditions normales de travail. Ainsi, au grand séminaire de philosophie des Pères Blancs, on a décidé, il y a 4 ans, de se défaire du "fétichisme de diplôme", et d'accueillir tous les candidats valables ayant achevé leurs études secondaires. Cette année, après 4 ans d'expérience, une évaluation a été faite et l'option maintenue intégralement. C'est la qualité humaine et chrétienne qui compte avant tout.

### C. SUR QUELS ASPECTS INSISTER?

Formation spirituelle: C'est la raison même des groupes de vocation.

Elle comporte essentiellement une formation à la prière, surtout la prière personnelle, et une initiation concrète à l'esprit du Christ. "Mes pensées ne sont pas vos pensées"...(Is 55). Habituer les jeunes à penser "à contre-courant" du monde où ils vivent, ce n'est pas chose aisée dès qu'on passe du terrain facile des principes pour aborder celui de la vie concrète. Gardons-nous d'une tendance trop facile à "dogmatiser" sur l'évangile, alors qu'il faut d'abord le "vivre" dans la vie de chaque jour.

Formation communautaire: Elle est nécessaire en raison du caractère "individualiste" de la formation scolaire héritée de l'Occident. Ici encore, il faut aller à contre-courant du monde où vivent nos jeunes. N'avons-nous pas remarqué partout l'extrême difficulté à faire rentrer dans le cadre des CEB des gens qui ont reçu une formation scolaire un peu poussée? Ils sont aussi incapables de s'intégrer à une CEB ordinaire que de former entre eux des CEB d'un modèle ou d'un autre. Cet individualisme déteint sur nos jeunes aspirants au sacerdoce, et, à la limite, on risque d'avoir des prêtres incapables de s'intégrer dans une pastorale d'ensemble, des prêtres qui feraient passer leurs idées, leurs projets avant ceux de l'Eglise qu'ils sont censés servir.

Authenticité africaine: Ne faudrait-il pas, dès maintenant, faire comprendre à nos jeunes, par l'enseignement comme par des exemples vécus: - que le sacerdoce est un service. S. Jean Chrysostome y voit même la plus grande preuve d'amour que l'on puisse donner au Christ; - que ce service, c'est celui du "peuple de Dieu", que le prêtre doit vivre avec ce peuple, très proche de lui, profondément entré dans sa culture, malgré l'impact de la culture, occidentale où il a été formé.

Formation à la responsabilité: Les plaies dont souffrent tant de pays aujourd'hui montrent, à l'évidence, que la grande carence de nos systèmes éducatifs actuels se situe à ce point névralgique: le sens des responsabilités.

Formation à la simplicité de vie et à la pauvreté: En Afrique, le style de vie actuel du clergé, européen ou africain, l'assimile à la bourgeoisie beaucoup plus qu'aux classes populaires. Il y a plus grave: le sens de la pauvreté religieuse avec le témoignage qu'il comporte est très mal perçu.

Formation à la Pastorale des Communautés de Base: Oui. Mais réalise-t-on le bouleversement que vont opérer ces communautés le jour où elles existeront vraiment? Il faudra passer alors complètement d'une pastorale d'encadrement facilement paternaliste à une pastorale de "service" des communautés chrétiennes, beaucoup plus exigeante pour le prêtre.

#### CONCLUSION

Les groupes de vocations, présentent de gros avantages, mais ils ont les inconvénients de toutes les initiatives nouvelles: une certaine anarchie, un manque d'organisation au détriment de l'efficacité. Voici quelques propositions:

1. Donner à ces prêtres un plan général de formation tenant bien compte de l'éducation que reçoivent, de fait, les jeunes. Il faut chercher les lacunes de cette formation reçue et travailler à la compléter.
2. Organiser ces jeunes en petites équipes de 5 à 10, et prévoir pour ces équipes des plans de réunion de formation, afin qu'ils puissent par eux-mêmes, se former, même en l'absence du prêtre et, au besoin, avec l'aide d'un chrétien adulte.
3. Serait-il déraisonnable de consacrer un prêtre, même à temps partiel, à suivre les groupes de vocations d'un diocèse, à aider et conseiller les prêtres qui s'en occupent?

Jusqu'ici, ces groupes de vocations ont été plutôt marginaux, car l'habitude d'envoyer au petit séminaire les jeunes pensant au sacerdoce nous a fait croire que, seule, la formation donnée en internat est valable. Alors, on a négligé ou dédaigné les autres possibilités qui ont pourtant des avantages réels, en particulier celui de coûter peu. Un vieux prêtre m'a dit un jour, peu après mon ordination: "Tu verras, dans les problèmes de l'Eglise, ce sont toujours les solutions les moins coûteuses qui sont les meilleures. N'est-ce pas d'ailleurs conforme à l'esprit du Christ"?

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