

The second part of the Conference (see next Bulletin) examines the possibility of and need for ongoing dialogue.

The January 15th, issue of SEDOS Bulletin contained an edited English version of Mgr. Sanon's reflections on the recent Synod. In this issue is the complete French text.

NEWS NOTES

SOME COMING EVENTS Please note the following meetings.

SOLIDARITY IN CRISIS: February 28; 16.00 hrs; SVD Generalate. Under the auspices of SEDOS and J & P Commission of UISG/USG. Fr. Fechenova CSSR will illustrate the topic by presenting the kidnapping of Rudy Romano CSSR. in the Philippines. Other cases will also be discussed.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY - WHAT SPIRITUALITY? March 13; 16.00 hrs.; SVD Generalate. Fr. Fuellenbach's first conference on "Liberation Theology and Marxism" on January 23rd, 1986 was very well attended and appreciated. The text in this and next SEDOS Bulletin.

ONE GOD IN THREE RELIGIONS: February 25; 9.00 a.m.; Fratelli Christiani. A full day seminar organised by the Jerusalem Home Center.

THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIES: Villa Cavalletti, 6-10 May, is now only a little over two months away - Don't forget to mark these dates in your calendar.

JUSTICE AND PEACE: The Church's teaching on this 20 years after Vatican II was the theme of a talk given by Donal Dorr SPS under the auspices of the J & P Commission, UISG/USG. The talk at the Fratelli Christiani had an overflow audience and was much appreciated. Text in this and next SEDOS Bulletin.

CONGRATULATIONS to the new Superiors General: Sr. Mary Ann Buckley of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus; Sr. Ramona Mendiola, of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary re-elected, and to Fr. Juan Manuel Lasso, of the Redemptorists.

COMUNIDADES ECLESIAIS DE BASE E INCULTURAÇÃO DA FÉ: Our attention has been drawn to this work of Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo SJ which has already appeared in Portuguese. A Spanish, French and an English edition (Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC) are in preparation. Fr. Azevedo makes an original contribution to Latin American theology by this study of inculturation in Basic Communities and the unavoidable link between inculturation and liberation.

A NEW APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT: There may be an opportunity of holding a meeting with an expert on this topic who will be in Rome for 10 days beginning February 22nd. Watch out for details of time and place. The meeting would be very useful if it can be arranged.

"HOW SHALL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AFFECT
OUR PLANNING FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION?"

Christian - Muslim Dialogue

William T. Knipe, M.M.

(William Knipe, après avoir été pendant plusieurs années au Soudan, est maintenant Directeur du Service de Recherche et de Planification de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Maryknoll, à New York 11.

Il conteste l'idée que le dialogue serait un stade préparatoire à la Mission, comme si l'on acceptait un délai d'attente pour le plein exercice de l'apostolat. Le dialogue vise à créer une saine ouverture pour la recherche et la découverte de Dieu et de la mission dans le monde: le souci et l'amour de Dieu pour toute la famille humaine. Cela implique une meilleure compréhension, sans pourtant exiger l'acceptation ou la conversion. Cela n'entraîne pas nécessairement l'entrée dans une nouvelle communauté de foi, bien que cela puisse être, en certains cas, une conséquence authentique du dialogue.

Des exemples de missionnaires travaillant en dialogue illustrent et corroborent les vues du Père Knipe concernant une approche chrétienne de l'Islam. NDLR)

On June 2, 1985 Fr. Douglas Venne, in Tangail, Bangladesh wrote back to Fr. Raymond Nobiletti, on the General Council at Maryknoll:

You know the story of my stay with Mazam Ali's family after his son Rahim died. I really learned to love the boy and in a short span he also taught me something of love. When I brought him to the hospital he was too weak to walk. He rode on my back. As we sat on the steps of the out-patient clinic he would say to just anyone passing, "This is my friend, Brother Doug." It was so genuine. He was admitted to the hospital where he stayed for 6 weeks.

For some reason or other he got a stroke which paralyzed his left side. Yet to the other patients he would say when I came to visit, "Here's my friend, Brother Doug." My heart welled up. When I took him from the hospital, he was so frail and had no balance. Yet he was happy to be going home. Getting off the bus at the village I carried him piggy-back across the school yard. You would have thought he was a king returning home from victory. All the kids greeted him, he bowed left and right. I could feel importance surge through him. At home he still couldn't eat well. His mother tried to massage some life back into his limbs.

On his second day home I went to Dhaka to see a physical therapist, a friend of mine, to get help. When I returned, the neighboring kids shouted, "Rahim is dead." I felt I had lost a member of my family.

On July 29th Fr. Nobiletti told me the rest of the story of Doug Venne's stay with the family of Mazam Ali after his son Rahim died:

After Rahim's death, Fr. Doug spoke to Mazam Ali and said, "I will take Rahim's place in the rice field." Mazam Ali and his family were very poor, but he said, "I can't pay you anything." "That's O.K.," Doug answered, "I will work for you for nothing."

(Note here that Doug himself was free and open to such a commitment, and knew that his Maryknoll community in Bangladesh would support him morally in such a decision.)

For the next year and a half, Fr. Doug squatted down in the rice paddies, working full time each day all week just as if he were a member of Mazam Ali's family. He received no compensation nor did he ask for any remuneration. At the end of each day he returned to his little shack in the village where he lived alone, often lonely.

Never during all that time did Fr. Doug make any attempt to speak of Christianity or mention Christ. He simply worked in the rice paddies and lived alone in the shack.

On a certain day after a year and a half had passed, a group of local leaders came to Fr. Doug to say, "We are going to ask you, please, to leave this area. You must go away from here." The reason for his leaving, the leaders said, was that Mazam Ali's family and several other families had announced their intention of becoming Christians!

What had happened was that by his example of self-sacrificing love Fr. Doug had proclaimed the gospel more effectively than if he had built a cathedral or preached Christ with spoken words.

Doug packed up his few belongings and quietly left the village. He went to work in a similar fashion elsewhere.

Originally in 1975 the local Catholic bishop and his clergy - had opposed living and working among the Muslim poor without exercising any formal ministry or gospel proclamation. As a result of the Mazam Ali affair, the bishop has assigned his seminarians to spend some time living with the Maryknollers. Moreover, the bishop recently said to all his clergy, "I hope some of our clergy can do this kind of mission work, too."

VATICAN II - THE CALL TO DIALOGUE

"Upon the Muslims too, the Church looks with esteem...this Sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding." With these words of Vatican II, the Church gave a call to the Muslims of the world for what has been institutionalized in the word: "dialogue."

Anyone who is familiar with the history of Christian-Muslim relations recognizes that until recently our relations were characterized by mutual ignorance, prejudice and hostility. The second Vatican Council itself did not lose sight of the "many quarrels and hostilities (that) have risen exhorting them "to forget the past and strive sincerely for mutual understanding." It is evident that the effects of the hostilities of centuries which are lingering on in our communities cannot possibly be wiped off overnight.

We should not be surprised that many Catholics and many Muslims do not see any value in inter-religious dialogue. For many Muslims, inviting others to embrace Islam is the only reason to approach people

of other religions. For many Catholics, the term "dialogue" is a convenient word loaded with its own agenda; it refers to the immediate, but temporary, task. It means for them that, working in the limitations of the present, we must be open to discussions with Muslims, until such a time when we can once again take up the full apostolate leading to conversions.

In the Catholic Church the idea and practice of dialogue is of a very recent origin, or at least had been neglected since the time of the early Church Fathers. It is true that in principle it was contained in the scriptures and traditions of the Church. However, the formal explicitation and commitment to its propagation have been only since the second Vatican Council.

MISSION VERSUS DIALOGUE

There is a seeming - perhaps, real - contradiction between the purpose of dialogue and the purpose of Christian mission in the ways these are usually expressed in church documents. While quoting now from Vatican II, document on mission, I recognize that these statements impress us as static, formulated as they were at a time when it was assumed that Europe and North America were Christian.

"Missions" is the term usually given to those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the gospel are sent out by the Church and go forth into the whole world to carry out the task of preaching the gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ.

(Ad Gentes, 5).

The specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root.

(Ad Gentes, 5).

Similarly, let me make a brief quote from Pope Paul VI's letter, "On Evangelization in the Modern World:"

Evangelization will always contain a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy.

(Evangelii Nuntiandi, 27)

It would seem from such statements that the traditional understanding of mission is completely different from the meaning of dialogue, honestly and properly understood.

"Mission", traditionally, looks to belief in Christ, conversion of heart and mind to Christ, acceptance of Jesus Christ of the gospel, together with entrance into the believing and worshipping Christian community. It implies forsaking all that is contrary to that faith.

"Dialogue" looks to a healthy openness to a common search and discovery of God's mission to the world; God's concern and love for the whole human family. It implies increased understanding without necessarily involving acceptance or conversion. It certainly does not

demand entrance into a different faith community, although this might be an authentic result in some cases.

Now, the real problem! Both Christianity and Islam encounter each other (-I purposely avoid using the term "confront-") in the modern day with an equally determined and convinced sense of mission or *da wah*, toward each other.

An ardent Muslim missionary might say: I call you to Islam, and invite you to enter Islam in accordance with what God has ordered, and in harmony with what Jesus has ordained, and all the Prophets before him which we commonly accept. It is my duty to ask you to embrace the *diin* (religion) of Islam. The only purpose Muslims can have in dialoguing with Christians is to invite them to Islam and to save them from the anger of God for falsely ascribing divinity to Jesus.

For the Christian side, I borrow again from the words of Pope Paul VI:

Having been sent and evangelized, the Church herself sends out evangelizers. She puts on their lips the saving word, she explains to them the message of which she herself is the depositary, she gives them the mandate which she herself has received and she sends them out to preach. To preach not their own selves or their personal ideas...but a Gospel of which they are the ministers, in order to pass it on with complete fidelity. (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 15)

Two determined and convinced notions of mission meet head on, frequently to clash, with little possibility of compromise or movement. Often, in practice, reverence and respect for each other's faith traditions are lost. Sometimes, hateful acts and words ensue, and thus the world is still less a peaceful place for the realization of the Kingdom of God.

Add to that the fact that many Muslim and Islamic countries will not permit either the entry of missionaries or their efforts to proselytize. Shari'a law, I believe, forbids the conversion of Muslims. So, if countries don't want missionaries, if the door is already closed, mission in the traditional sense is at an end.

How can we remain faithful to Christ's command to continue to make the Good News known to all peoples, while not failing in our reverence and respect for God's act of revelation through the Mohammed-event?

MISSION IN DIALOGUE

I propose that we must re-define the goal and scope of mission in the context of a non-Christian culture where God's act of self-revelation is through a major world religion. In this context, I believe, we should be doing MISSION IN DIALOGUE, what mission should have been all along! Not dialogue as a "preparation" for mission, as if we were accepting a temporary delay in exercising the full apostolate. But mission-in-dialogue, i.e., mission made up of equal parts of mission of witness and mission of dialogue.

What bonds Christians and Muslims together is THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT AMONG ALL HUMANITY: the inarticulate movement of men and women, transcending themselves and their condition, towards some ultimate and lasting meaning by a pattern of life lived in faith, hope and love and the construction of a community of service and love together.

In the context we make a MISSION OF WITNESS: the church called to manifest and enact in a concrete manner the vision of human life which it has received from Jesus Christ, choosing among the relative options of history to incarnate itself in the world, in service to a reality larger than itself;

And a MISSION OF DIALOGUE: the church learning from, acknowledging and receiving the rich insights arising from the cultural and religious traditions and lives of people. Through these insights the gospel message is clarified and known more profoundly.

In situations where Christianity will remain a believing minority among a believing non-Christian majority, we are to do mission by providing an evangelizing presence engaged in a mutual, open exchange of witness, experience, listening and cross-questioning, without proselytizing. In situations where a believing non-Christian minority dwells among a Christian majority, we are to do mission in the very same way.

LIVING DIALOGUE IN MISSION

Let me give you another brief example from Pakistan where in a population of over 75 million, the Christians number about 1 million.

If we look for examples of Christian communities where openness to Islam really plays a role, one would be the religious community of Darakhshan (Light), a small community of young Franciscan friars, from four to eight members, under training in Karachi, which has been in existence for 10 years. There the students are formed into Franciscan life through living and working in a Muslim Housing Society. They describe their community as a way of building up a deeper Christian and religious life within the context of Islam.

They felt the need to move away from their safe Catholic surroundings, and so chose to live on the third floor of a whole block of flats in a new housing complex. Slowly their fears disappeared when they found themselves well received by their neighbors. In fact, much of the encouragement they got for their way of life also came from their Muslim neighbors who respected and trusted them. There was never any objection to their presence, even though they sang and prayed aloud in that completely Muslim area. The people appreciated the regularity of lives and the regularity of their prayers.

One of the reasons why they were accepted so well was that, precisely because they were small, they posed no real threat to anyone. They came without any show of power or prestige.

No precise plan of action had been made before they first came to the area, except that they wanted to be closer to their Muslim people, and to learn from that experience. They cared for the children in the compound. They began giving lessons, helping rich and poor children who sat together for an hour a day at their place. They helped the students

who came to them to reflect on some of the values which were missing in the education they received.

The novices and the professed students in their house were made to work and earn something for their own running expenses, or for some particular need outside. Having no servants and living from their work brought them closer to the lifestyle of many families around them.

They were strict about their times of prayer in the mornings and evenings, and about meals together. Guests joined them for prayer and meals. Theirs was an open house. Rooms were reserved for needy guests, mostly young people who had emotional problems or who needed refuge or lodging and had no other place where to go.

Their closeness to Muslims was further developed by their own study and reflections on Islam. Everything that would offend Muslim sensitivities was avoided. A great deal of talking, listening and reflecting was first required for an attitude of openness to Islam to develop.

Another means for building up their religious community was the celebration of Muslim feasts. They prepared themselves mentally and spiritually for the big feasts by reading about them, by asking Muslims about their own feelings about those feasts, by prayer services on the theme of the feasts, by posters and slogans in the house which sharpened their awareness of feasts about to be celebrated. They observed the fast of Ramadhan in the Muslim way. Their experience was that the more they involved themselves in those celebrations, the more the Muslims accepted them.

Their presence there, their witness, their dedication to the life they had chosen did have its impact on their surroundings. Parents did come and ask them to pray for them or for their children, and they did pray very regularly for their neighbors. All that deepened their lives and filled them with a sense of mission.

LIFE WITNESS & DIALOGUE AS PROCLAMATION

From this example we can see that mission-in-dialogue is the search for the ways we can learn from others how God operates among them, share with them our own Christian faith experiences, and journey together towards the ultimate truth. In living together Christians and Muslims can challenge one another to live their respective faiths more fully, and through contact with Muslims, Christians can become more aware of the fullness of Christ's salvific work.

In this light, the purpose of mission-in-dialogue is to mediate the love of God to the world.

The proclamation of the gospel would depend for its credibility on being alive in the lives of the Christians. The witness of their love, their neighborliness, the simplicity of their lifestyle, their self-sacrifice would lend weight to the gospel they proclaim in deeds and behaviour, more than in the words and teaching.

Mission-in-dialogue would involve the totality of the life of the local Christian community, and not be a task relegated to just a "little group" of people. Every Christian would be a missionary, and

the total life witness of the local community would be the proclamation of the gospel.

In a predominantly Muslim cultural situation the local church must try to live, think, feel, speak and worship in ways which spring from faith and the religio-cultural heritage of the people. Only in such a community can those Muslims who come to visit or to join us feel at home. In our attempts at inculturation (contextualization) we should always keep in mind the legitimate sensibilities and religious feelings of the Muslims.

The doing of mission would always include the proclaiming of the gospel in witness and in dialogue, but together with the ministry of reconciliation, the doing of justice with people, the loving of one another as people, the creation of a peaceful and harmonious world, the realization of the Kingdom: all of this by Christians and Muslims together.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

Can we accept that dialogue is not an alternative to mission nor a preparation for it, but an intrinsic element of mission?

Can we accept that increased understanding through dialogue may not lead to acceptance, but that we will continue to disagree?

Can we believe that the purpose of dialogue is to grasp more fully God's concern and love for the human family, manifested through different revelations?

Can we accept that no religious experience of individual or community is complete unless it be open to complementary elements in the faith experiences of others?

Can we accept the co-existence of the particular religions, each one cherished in its particularity: the decisiveness of the Christ-event and the finality of the Mohammed-event?

Can we believe that the proper witness to God is not exclusivist but shared and contemplated together?

THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON JUSTICE AND PEACE
- TWENTY YEARS AFTER VATICAN II

Donal Dorr, SPS.

(Cette conférence a été donnée le 28 janvier 1986, à Rome, lors d'une session organisée par la Commission "Justice et Paix" des Unions des Supérieurs Généraux et des Supérieures Générales. Père Dorr a identifié huit principes fondamentaux de base dans l'enseignement de l'Eglise sur la justice et la paix, avant Vatican II. Il a vérifié ensuite comment ces principes ont été développés ou modifiés durant le Concile et après. Le Pape Jean XXIII, dans "Mater et Magistra", avait déjà mis en route ce processus, avant même le Concile. Dans la dernière partie de sa conférence (qui sera publiée dans le prochain Bulletin de SEDOS) il a parlé de la nécessité d'une justice structurelle dans l'Eglise et attiré l'attention sur l'heure de vérité dans laquelle l'Eglise se trouve maintenant quand son témoignage concret en faveur de la justice et de la paix est plus important que ses déclarations et son enseignement. NDLR).

INTRODUCTION

The title of this talk presupposes a close relationship between Vatican II and the teaching of the Church on justice and peace. It also suggests that the present moment, just twenty years after the end of Vatican II, is of particular significance in regard to the stance of the Church on issues of justice and peace. In this talk I hope to show that these two assumptions are correct.

I: PRE-VATICAN II

In this first part of my talk I want to present a list of the main principles of the Church's teaching on issues of justice and peace; and I shall indicate briefly the historical roots of this body of teaching. The following eight items form the core of Catholic social teaching as it emerged between the time of Leo XIII and the time Pope John convened the Vatican Council:

- 1) The dignity of each individual human person must be respected and defended; and the individual must not be subordinated to the State.
- 2) The individual has a right to own private property.
- 3) Society is not just a collection of isolated individuals; it is rather an organic whole, a community composed of diverse elements where all are called to cooperate together for the common good.
- 4) The authorities in society have the God-given task of promoting the common good and they have a God-given right to the obedience of the citizens.
- 5) Citizens have a right and duty to use lawful means to resist serious misuse of power by a government.
- 6) Sedition or violent resistance to an established government is unjustified; class warfare is quite unacceptable.
- 7) Under certain stringent conditions a State is entitled to go to war against another State, in defence of its legitimate interests.

- (8) Those who hold power in society must show particular concern for the poor and other categories of people who are vulnerable to exploitation; those who have wealth and influence must renounce exploitative practices and attitudes; governments have the duty of modifying systems or mechanisms that foster injustice by giving undue power to certain groups.

These eight elements in traditional social teaching were not deduced in an abstract a priori way. Rather they were given prominence in reaction to the errors and aberrations of Western society over the past century as these were perceived by the popes and some other influential thinkers in the Church. These Church leaders saw two main errors. On the one hand there was economic liberalism and the political individualism to which it was linked; these played down the organic nature of society and misunderstood the nature of human authority. On the other hand there was collectivism which was linked to a State absolutism; it could take the form of socialism or of fascism: but the crucial error was the subordination of the individual to the State or the collectivity.

If we look at the list given above we can see that the first, second and fifth items on the list are mainly a defence of the individual against collectivism and State absolutism. The third, sixth, seventh, and eighth items are a defence of the organic nature of society in reaction to individualism and liberalism. The fourth item represents the Church's attempt to keep a balance between individualism and State totalitarianism.

Once we realize that these eight elements emerged historically rather than systematically it is easy to understand that they are not all equally absolute. We can look more closely to see which of them are concerned with fundamental values and which are only means to attain these values. We may find that a changed situation calls for a change in emphasis. The list may have to be filled out by making explicit what had been only implicit. Furthermore, it may be necessary to add new items to the list. Such a revision took place very rapidly in recent years. So now I move to the second part of my paper to examine that process or revision.

II: VATICAN II

I think it is clear from the list we have just looked at that there is quite a large measure of continuity in the social teaching over the past century; but there have also been significant changes over the past twenty-five years. In this second part of my paper I want to look at some of the key moments of change and to see what part was played by the Second Vatican Council.

1. PRE VATICAN II: MATER ET MAGISTRA

It would be wrong, I think, to attribute all the changes directly to Vatican II. But the key changes took place in the period between 1961 and 1971, that is, in the time immediately before and after the Council as well as during it. Already in 1961, the year before the Council, Pope John XXIII had issued his encyclical Mater et Magistra. It was the first major step in a new direction. When he issued it, Pope John was making a definite option: he was deliberately setting out to change the thrust and the effect of the Church's social teaching.

Why did Pope John change the emphasis in this way? Part of the reason was that his own peasant background made him more sympathetic to the views of working class people. But a more profound reason was his openness to the Spirit and his understanding of the Gospel. This enabled him to realize that something had gone wrong with Catholic social teaching. He saw that secondary elements in the body of social teaching were taking priority over primary elements. Concern for the rights of property owners was taking precedence over concern for the poor; and concern for stability was taking precedence over concern for justice.

The result of this distortion was that the social teaching of the Church - particularly its emphasis on the right to private property - was being used ideologically. To illustrate this point we can take two examples. In Italy it was being invoked by some senior Vatican cardinals as a basis for their opposition to the 'apertura a sinistra', the opening to the left, which was taking place at the time in both Italian and international politics. And in the USA the social teaching of the Church had been used by right-wing Catholics to justify their support for the witch-hunt led by Senator Joseph McCarthy against communist sympathizers.

Pope John wanted to distance the Church from such entanglements with right-wing political forces. He also wanted to distance it again (as had been done by Leo XIII and Pius XI) from the ideology of economic liberalism which provides the theoretical underpinning for crude capitalism. The theory of economic liberalism laid down that the so-called 'laws of economics' should be allowed to operate freely with little 'intrusion' by that State. Pope John's predecessors also wanted as far as possible to keep politics out of the economic sphere. This gave the impression that the social teaching of the Church had a good deal in common with the ideology of economic liberalism and capitalism. This impression was mistaken; for economic liberalism allowed the State to intervene mainly to safeguard the privileges of property owners; the popes, by contrast, called for State intervention mainly to protect the poor and underprivileged. Pope John wanted to ensure that Church teaching could not be invoked in support of economic liberalism any more than it could be invoked in favour of right wing politics.

He was well aware that he had a big struggle on his hands. And he was at a disadvantage; for he could not even rely on the obedience of the heads of the Vatican curia. The seventieth anniversary of the publication of Leo's Rerum Novarum offered him an ideal opportunity. He issued a new social encyclical, the first since Quadragesimo Anno in 1931. In it he celebrated and reaffirmed the basic thrust of Catholic social teaching. But he also set out 'to determine clearly the mind of the Church on the new and important problems of the day' (par 50). In this context he introduced a shift of emphasis or direction in social teaching.

What was this new emphasis? One element was that Pope John spoke out in favour of something that sounded rather like 'the Welfare State'. A second element was his strong affirmation that the right to own private property is subordinate to a more fundamental principle, namely, that the goods of the earth are intended for the use and benefit of all. Although this had been accepted in mediaeval times, Leo XIII had played it down because of his fear of socialism. Pius XII, in his

1941 broadcast commemorating the fortieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum, spelled it out clearly. But this had made little impact. It was now given prominence by John XXIII. The effect was that the right to private property became a matter of relative importance rather than a fundamental principle, as it had become in practice in Catholic social teaching.

One effect of this change of emphasis was an outraged reaction by right-wing Catholics. Their attitude was summed up in the phrase: 'Mater si, Magistra no.' It was their reaction perhaps more than the content of the encyclical that brought about the most significant change of all, namely, that for the first time in at least a hundred years the stance of the Church seemed to lean more towards the left than towards the right. It was at this moment that the Church began to have new allies and new enemies.

2. THE CONTRIBUTION OF VATICAN II

Where does Vatican II come into all of this? If the Council had not taken place it is quite likely that Pope John's new emphasis would not have lasted; it would have been watered down or played down by a later pope. But almost as soon as the Council opened in 1962 it rejected the reactionary views of those who opposed Pope John. And when it issued its own teaching on issues of justice and peace three years later, these followed his new line. In fact the Council went further than Pope John by insisting that the goods of the earth are destined by God not only for all people but also for all peoples (GS 69.1). This opens up the whole major issue of a just international economic order, and provides a solid theological basis for the Council's teaching on this issue (GS 85). After the Council it would be almost impossible for any pope to reverse this new direction. Pope Paul's encyclical Populorum Progressio, issued in 1967, spells out in great detail the Church's new understanding of international social justice.

The Council also added some other important elements to the emerging new synthesis of social teaching. Here I shall simply note four points:

- a) In the very title of this talk the words 'justice' and 'peace' are linked together. This linkage is now so taken for granted that the phrase has become almost a cliché; and we forget that it is relatively recent. In fact it was Vatican II that provided its basis. Gaudium et Spes firmly linked the political issue of peace between nations to the issue of a just international economic order (GS 83-87). When Pope Paul set up the Vatican Justice and Peace Office he was following this Council line.
- b) Vatican II proposed a concept of human development which underpins the present synthesis of social teaching (GS 63-66). I must add that in recent years the Council's teaching has had to be modified considerably, particularly by toning down its unwarranted optimism. But this does not lessen the contribution of the Council to the theology of development.
- c) The Council insisted that it is not merely the superfluous goods, the left-overs, of the rich which are to be given to the poor (GS 69.1);

rather the poor have a right to a fair share of the earth's resources. Applying this principle in practice the Council envisaged the expropriation of under-utilized 'latifundia' or large estates (GS 76.6)

d) Finally, the Council affirmed that the Church is willing to relinquish the exercise of legitimately acquired rights where holding on to them would compromise its witness (GS 76). This is one of the most important acts of Vatican II, for it opened the way to a major change of approach in Latin America, in Spain, and even in Italy.

We may note in passing that there are some gaps in the teaching of the Council. One of the most notable of these was deliberate: there is no treatment of the question of the lawfulness of wars of liberation. An early draft of *Gaudium et Spes* included a passage which would have recognized a parallel between a just war and justified resistance to oppression. When this met with some criticism it was simply deleted on the grounds that such a sensitive issue would have required a more nuanced treatment. The Council Fathers and theologians did not take time to work out a consensus statement on the topic; this was in sharp contrast to the time and energy given to re-working the Council statement about war between States.

From what I have said it should be clear that, while Vatican II does not have the final word on the new justice and peace agenda, it did have a major influence on it. The contribution of the Council may be summed up under three headings:

- Firstly, as regards what had gone before it: the Council supported and counterbalanced Pope John's distancing of the Church from the right wing.

- Secondly Vatican II made its own distinctive contribution; this consisted mainly in providing a theology of human development, an enriched theology of peace, and a firm linkage between the two.

- Thirdly, Vatican II provided the foundation for a radically new approach in the future, a future that was not explicitly envisaged by the Council Fathers themselves, but which nevertheless springs directly from the Council. I want to complete this section of my paper by developing this point more fully.

3. THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION

At the conference in Medellin in 1968 the Church leaders of Latin America set out to implement and apply the Vatican Council in their situation. This conference made a decisive contribution to the new justice and peace agenda - not merely for Latin America but for the whole Church. No significant statement about peace or justice made after 1968 could fail to take account of the Medellin documents. They introduce a new approach, a new language, and a new option:

- a new approach, because they begin from an analysis of the concrete situation;

- a new language, providing us with a set of terms and concepts which nowadays we can scarcely imagine being without, e.g. 'structural injustice', 'institutionalized violence' 'marginalization', 'liberation', 'conscientization', and 'participation';

- a new option because, having carefully clarified the different senses of the word 'poverty', the bishops deliberately commit themselves, (a) to being in solidarity with the poor, (b) to giving an effective

'preference to the poorest and most needy sectors' of society, and (c) to seeking true peace not by promoting stability but by arousing the consciousness of oppressed groups and helping them organize to become agents of their own development.

In the years that followed Medellin the approach, the language, and the option of that conference became a sign of contradiction both in the Latin American Church itself and almost everywhere else in the world, including Rome. In order to understand the real meaning of various subsequent papal documents and statements one has to understand them as at least partly a response to what was said at Medellin. So a very large part of the present justice and peace agenda springs from Medellin rather than directly from Vatican II.

However, there can be no serious doubt that without the Council the Medellin Conference would have had a very different outcome. There are three main ways in which the Council gave rise to Medellin: (a) It opened up the Latin American bishops to the notion that the Spirit might be calling them to a radical change of approach; so they were able to hear the prophetic voices of people like Helder Camera and several of the emerging theologians. (b) It ratified the option of Pope John to disengage the Church from right-wing and ultra-conservative regimes. (c) *Gaudium et Spes* put forward a new model of Church-State relationships, one that specifically envisaged the relinquishment by the Church of privileges granted by the State. One can conclude that Vatican II made Medellin possible, even though much of the approach, the language, and the commitment of Medellin are a major advance on the Council.

4. OPEN-ENDED AGENDA

I have said that a large part of the present justice and peace agenda springs directly from Medellin. However, there are some justice and peace issues which find deep roots outside the Latin American scene. Here I shall mention five such issues:

Disarmament I need hardly say that the arms race is a global issue.

Nevertheless, the disarmament question is experienced with greater vividness and urgency in Europe situated as it is between the two superpowers. Those Europeans who stop to think must be quite certain that they and their families have little hope of surviving a war between East and West - even a war that breaks out by accident.

Ecology. Once again it is one that concerns the whole world. But again it has arisen with particular vividness in Europe, where the people of some nations see their amenities of forests, rivers, and lakes destroyed by the industrial poisons of other countries.

Structural Unemployment - the chronic inability of the modern economy to create new jobs for those displaced by the use of ever higher technology. This problem affects both the so-called 'developed' countries and those Third World countries which put their hopes in industrialization and the mechanization of agriculture. It has become a burning issue in Western countries where workers have trade unions to fight their cause. In the third World, trade unions are often ineffective and social security systems are minimal. So the situation may be objectively more severe in these countries than in the West, although there is less outcry about it.

Debt: It is all too easy to forget to mention it as one of the most pressing issues of international and national social justice. Yet we all know that the economies of African and Latin American countries are utterly crushed and distorted by burden of debt. In order to keep up their interest payments, the governments of these countries have imposed intolerable sacrifices on their people, and above all on the poor. For many countries the pressure to deal with their debts has wiped out any serious possibility of genuine development in the foreseeable future. An easing of the burden of debt is a sine qua non for any advance towards justice and true peace.

Culture: This too is of global concern. But in Africa its urgency can be experienced with a special vividness. The model of development adopted all over the world makes a mockery of the fundamental right of thousands of ethnic groups to a development that respects their traditions and cultural values. Millions of people are deprived of their heritage without any consultation, or forced to abandon their most precious values if they want to survive economically. Anybody who is concerned about issues of justice and peace must be concerned about this issue.

There is a sixth and final issue - structural justice within the Church itself. The key break-through on this question came with the document 'Justice in the World' issued by the 1971 Synod of Bishops. I shall have more to say on this topic in the final part of this paper.

(The second part of Donal Dorr's talk will appear in the next issue of SEDOS Bulletin).

THE APPROPRIATION AND REJECTION OF MARXISM
IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

John Fuellenbach, SVD

(Cette première partie d'une conférence donnée à Rome, le 28 Janvier 1986, aux membres de SEDOS, traite des relations entre la Théologie de la Libération et le Marxisme: quels sont les emprunts de cette théologie au Marxisme? Ces emprunts sont-ils légitimes? Le désaccord dans la compréhension de la Théologie de la Libération est en dernière analyse un conflit entre deux modes de pensée: entre le personalisme, l'existentialisme et le néo-thomisme d'une part, et la pensée de Hegel et de Marx d'autre part. Peut-on surmonter ce conflit? Pour le moment, il semble que non. Mais l'important est que les deux parties restent en dialogue et disposés à écouter les arguments de chacune d'elles. La conférence du P.Fuellenbach vise à favoriser ce dialogue. Le texte est légèrement abrégé. La seconde partie apparaîtra dans le prochain numéro de SEDOS. NDLR).

INTRODUCTION

I hope to show what Liberation Theologians appropriate from Marxism, and whether what is appropriated is legitimate. The recent Vatican document makes it appear as if liberation theologians were buying marxism lock, stock and barrel. It repeatedly accuses them of borrowing marxist concepts uncritically, concepts which are in its judgement "perhaps impossible to purify" in any event.

But liberation theologians have been critical of Marx and Marxism. They accept the validity of many of the standard criticisms leveled by Western intellectuals both Christian and non-Christian. They also reject, quite contrary to the Vatican document's accusation, Marx's tendency to reduce all forms of alienation to an economic source. And they agree with the Document that "Sin" is the "most radical form of slavery", - "the source of all evils", from which derive other forms of slavery: also that salvation is not simply reducible to historical liberation. As Gutierrez puts it - the process of liberation will not have conquered the roots of oppression without the coming of the Kingdom - which is above all a gift. Liberation Theology does require trans-historical faith for its justification. (Min. 443).

WHAT DID THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION TAKE FROM MARXISM?

The answers are diverse and depend on what one's attitude is towards Liberation Theology in general. Liberation Theology itself contains relatively little socio-economic analysis. Neither have its theologians made Marxist analysis an exclusive or necessary privileged tool for analysis.

Any unbiased analysis today will reveal the following facts:

- there is a vast majority of people who live in a state of unjust dependence and oppression:

- the Gospel unmask this situation as "sinful":
- Christians have the duty to commit themselves to overcoming this situation.

However Liberation Theology approaches this SEE, JUDGE and ACT method from the faith commitment of the christian. It presupposes an experience of reality which receives its ultimate understanding from one's faith and is an experience that leads to a "liberating praxis" as the only correct response to the present situation.

This experience of reality is described in four steps:

- 1) There is the christian horizon with its values of love and justice, concern for each other and the knowledge of Jesus' preferential love for the poor. All this enters into the way we perceive and look at reality. It is our frame of reference our christian worldview.
- 2) Recognition of the presence of massive oppression and exploitation and the urgent need for liberation is regarded as a "sacramental recognition" which enables the christian to grasp the events of history correctly as 'signs of the time.'
- 3) The christian grasps intuitively in a PROPHETIC way that such a situation contradicts God's plan. The poverty and the oppression is seen as an offence against God and the human person; it is SIN. Therefore, one has to become actively involved in creating justice and fighting for the rights of the poor.
- 4) The commitment to justice and to a liberating praxis for the poor and the oppressed follows almost spontaneously. No reflection on structural mechanisms or systems of oppression has taken place yet. (Boff: 38-42).

The simple description of this situation as "dependence and oppression" is, for the Theology of Liberation, the result of faith experience and not of Marxist analysis.

The True Causes of Oppression: In the disillusionment of the 'development decade' (1955-65) the Church came to some new insights concerning the true causes of oppression and dependence. These are often seen as based on a Marxist analysis:

- a) Seeing that the main root of the inhuman situation is the 'unholy trinity' in power: neo-colonialism; feudalism; national oligarchies. If social change is to occur at all, it has to begin with changing these structures.
- b) Awareness that the official Church is closely linked with the 'unholy trinity'. Theology has often served as the 'ideological cement' of the present situation without any clear awareness of it.
- c) Adoption of 'social analysis' as a tool to arrive at an adequate understanding of what is going on in society has to become part of any theologizing.

Basic Elements of Social Analysis:

- It examines causes, probes consequences, delineates linkages and identifies actors.
- It unfolds the context within which a program for social change can be outlined, but does not provide a blueprint for action.
- Social analysis is to social strategy what diagnosis is to treatment.
- It is the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships.

One should not forget that Liberation Theology's effort to analyse a situation more broadly and deeply is not an end in itself. It is done in the light of living faith, scripture, the Church's social teaching and the resources of tradition. The ultimate question is always: "In view of our lived experiences of oppression and dependence, analysed and reflected upon in the light of our faith, what response is called for by individuals and communities in order to change this sinful situation?"

MAIN AREAS WHERE LIBERATION THEOLOGY
SEEMS TO TOUCH ON AND APPROPRIATE MARXISM

(See Bonino 91-94)

1. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SUBSTRUCTURE ON THE SUPERSTRUCTURE

It was Karl Marx who, through a rigorous analysis of social and economic structures of society discovered that this substructure conditions to a considerable degree all our thinking, judging and acting—the so-called super-structure. History is regarded as an organic process and not just the unfolding of human consciousness and human ideas. In the process of becoming human, consciousness is formed. Thought or reason is not totally autonomous or separable from the concrete totality of human existence. Human life is not an aspect of thought: thought is an aspect of human life. We as Christians hold firmly to the fact that it is free will determines the flow of history but we recognise also the influence of the organic process of history as a factor that conditions all human actions. If we can admit a "kingdom-process" and concede that it is in some sense incarnated in human history, then the use of sociological analysis of the human situation as an interpretative tool for understanding this incarnation seems to be justified.

Theology cannot be done independently of society and history. We have to analyze society and understand history as the place where God reveals himself if we want to discover and to talk about God in a meaningful way today. From such a perspective of history, truth is conceived as historically mediated and dependent both on the situation of society and the interests of human beings in a particular epoch. Marx, the great master of suspicion, stressed the second part of this understanding of truth and viewed all human interests through the eyes of class distinctions. Liberation Theologians have insisted that this holds true for theology as well. Before we can start theologizing at all, we must first critically reflect on our pre-

suppositions and critically examine how far our own theological concepts are conditioned by socio-economic factors. We have to uncover our 'selective inattentions'.

2. HUMAN BEINGS AS SOCIAL BEINGS

Human beings are first of all social beings. They are not single individuals. They form a communal unity, a concrete social entity with its structures, relationships and selfunderstanding. This need not deny that persons have a transcendent dignity or that they are the subjects of their own thought. It does mean that such dignity is necessarily bound up with concrete social structures which may promote or oppress it and that the thoughts which are indeed our own are also conditioned, positively or negatively, by social environment.

"Structural Sin"

Theologically we speak today in this context of "structural sin" meaning the social objectification of sin. The Medellin and Puebla Conferences specially, put the stress on this aspect of sin. They described the dreadful situation in their countries as a "situation of sins", the product of the economic, social, and political situations and structures that gave rise to this state of misery. These structures of relationship between economic and social classes, sexes, ages and races favor the freedom of some persons to astonishing degrees; others they deprive.

We all know (if only dimly) how all our thoughts, feelings and actions are extensively and tightly controlled by economic "principalities and powers", the very powers that we create and sustain. In a factual sense, we are the enemies of freedom. We wish that we had never settled into these comfortable structures of inhumanity even though they come about through our own wills.

The question constantly raised is: What lies at the root of "the situation of sin"? Is it individual egoism or is it the autonomous structures that foster egoism? If our focus is egoism, we will emphasize the forming of conscience; if we stress sinful structures, social change will have priority.

Of course, the answer will not be either/or but might be dialectical: There is a 'sin' that individuals and groups imbibe from their environment, that precedes and conditions every conscious choice; and there is the ratification of this sinful situation when individuals and groups become aware of such sin yet opt to maintain the situation or to do nothing about it. (Moser:29).

The Need for Political Action: While Liberation Theology pays special attention to eradicating the structural sources of injustice and oppression it does not deny the existence of personal sins or the need for personal conversion. It only highlights the impact of structural sin, both the contextual origin and the consequences of personal sins. It thus recognizes the basic limitation and finitude of personal freedom which is subject to the pressures, challenges, and temptations of existing structures. Structural sin and personal sin are not two co-equal realities; rather, structural sin functions as a totalizing context or condition within which personal

sins occur, far outweighing the latter in its scope, duration, and penetration. This also means that individuals as such in their separate existence cannot eradicate structural evil; what is required is political action in its classic sense, i.e. action undertaken by individuals in their organized solidarity and aimed at creating liberating social structures (Min: 451-52).

The question has to be asked not only in the traditional way: "What impact does personal sin have on social sin?" but instead, "What impact does social structural sin have on personal sin?" Puebla puts it this way:

"To preach the gospel without its economic, social, cultural, and political implications may well mean that the church has been reduced to an instrument that functions as part of the established order."

The failure to recognize structural sin can lead to acceptance of the grossest violations of dignity, making those who deny its existence, unconscious, uncritical defenders of ideologies.

3. CLASS SOCIETY AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Liberation Theology accepts the fact that society is divided into classes. This is an historical reality. Class struggle is seen as something neither Marx nor Liberation Theology invented or advocated. It has been a fact of life throughout history. Those with privileges will not voluntarily share their privileges with those who do not have them. This is not necessarily because they lack "good will" as individuals but because the weight of reified structures which are based on a division of classes will overrule such good will.

Liberation Theology does not advocate revolution in order to overthrow an existing social order. It insists that society must change but this does not occur automatically. All papal social encyclicals as well as Medellin and Puebla insist on the need of a radical change of society if the lot of the oppressed is ever to be converted into a just society. If the ruling class will not voluntarily change then the agent of change and social transformation can only be the oppressed majority. It is they who suffer from the basic social conflict in its most degrading form and who have the strongest motivation for organizing their own emancipation. In this perspective Marx defined the oppressed class and not the ruling one as the true agent of social change.

THE CONCEPT LIBERATION IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY: Liberation Theologians hold that we have become aware today of something that was always there but of which we were not conscious: that the world and human history is to be interpreted and understood as a gigantic process of liberation from dependence and that an adequate reading and understanding of the whole process can only be done from this new awareness. There were historical epochs which presented other readings of history: the metaphysical or the mythical. In these epochs liberation did occur but it was not thematized nor was there an awareness of history as a process of liberation. A new insight, a new awareness has emerged in the history of humankind,

namely that history has to be conceived in terms of conflict into which the process of liberation explodes. What we are experiencing today is that humankind is becoming aware or conscious of this dependence - liberation process and we are starting to read history for the first time from such a point of view. (Boff: 13-33).

Marx's theory of class conflict and of class-consciousness is thus affirmed but in a more subtle way since the Liberation Theologians do not restrict the dialectic of "conflict - rupture - progress" to classes only but apply it more generally.

Linked with this process of liberation is, of course, the process of becoming human. But no one claims that humanization automatically creates more freedom. It only creates the conditions for a greater space for freedom and creativity. It does not guarantee the possibility of exercising the newly possible freedoms. What we do with the opportunities which would allow greater freedom is in no way determined beforehand. It is quite correct to say that savages in the jungle may have more freedom today in relation to their environment than do those who live in "developed" countries in relation to theirs.

If the twin words DEPENDENCE - LIBERATION are understood adequately then a new historical awareness appears. If this historical awareness creates a lens or a focus through which we can see certain phenomena and dimensions which were there before our eyes but not seen, it is important to identify what that lens is. Why did it appear precisely in our time? Why did people not wake up before to the awareness that history is a process of liberation?

THE ROLE OF THE POOR IN HISTORY: Liberation Theology originates from a simple question which thousands of sincere Christians have to ask themselves: What does it mean to be a Christian in a world that is marked by massive injustice? What is the biblical meaning of the immense movement of the poor who do not ask for anything except the right to live? What is the significance of organizations of the poor that fight for their lives? What theological meanings emerge when we enter into such movements of love? What spirituality?

The true background to Liberation Theology is based on discoveries made mostly by sociologists and people actively involved in search of answers to these questions:

- on the discovery of the hopeless state of the poor in Latin America and the impossibility of their ever getting out of such a situation;
- on the immense influence of the revolution of Cuba (1959) which, in spite of all the critique of communist society was able to provide a more decent living for all its citizens;
- on the realization that the main cause of misery was structural and due to society at large rather than to anything else;
- on the sincere and often agonizing predicament of Christians who were asking the question: How can one be a Christian in such a situation? They saw the Church leading people to a commitment to christian charity but quite unable to accompany these people when the interpretation of their faith was that society needed to be radically changed.

And so arose the question of the role of the poor. Liberation Theology, however, argues more from a biblical than from a Marxist point of view concerning the role of the oppressed class in society. It shows how the God of the Bible chose the poor, whom he treats as his favorites, to become his agents of salvation for humankind. The 'mystery of the poor' in the Bible consists precisely in their being the chosen instrument through which God wants to redeem the world. There is a similarity but also a marked difference between Marx's proletariat that will lead the great revolution and bring about a classless society and the oppressed and exploited poor whom God chose to accomplish his salvation for all-the exploited as well as the exploiters. (Gutierrez: Power 9-10).

"God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to put wise men to shame, and what the world considers weak in order to put powerful men to shame. He chose what the world looks down on, and despises, and thinks as nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important." (1 Cor. 1:27)

What the world considers "nonsense" and "weak" in this passage is identified with the powerless and exploited of the present world, with concrete people in history. The whole of scripture is re-read from such a perspective. The Exodus story in particular is seen in a new light.

Zacheus had to come down from his perch in the tree and join the people around Jesus in order to understand the Good News. This vantagepoint was the only one that could enable him to see and to understand what Jesus was all about.

Liberation Theology is to be understood as the effort to think of an grasp our faith from a concrete commitment made out of love in solidarity with the poorest, walking with them and affirming that on this road the Lord is present. (Alvarez: 15).

Liberation Theology is considered dangerous not so much because it contains Marxist elements but because it creates a fundamental insecurity. A Church that has installed itself over centuries among the 'established' will find it extremely difficult to welcome a message that comes from the people involved with the poor and oppressed who question the Church's commitment to supporting the status quo. The reaction quite naturally will be one of anxiety, fear and insecurity because such a message is dangerous for society as well as for a church that is part of such a society.

(The second and concluding part of Fr. Fullenbach's article will appear in the next issue of SEDOS Bulletin).

 HERTIERS DU CONCILE

Mgr. Anselme Titianma Sanon

(SEDOS Bulletin 1986/No.1 contained an edited version in English of this talk given by Bishop Sanon at the SEDOS General Assembly Seminar on December 10, 1985. We are happy now to present the complete text in French. NDLR).

 INTRODUCTION

a - Les premières annonces officielles sur le Synode Extraordinaire convoqué par le Pape Jean II. nous sont parvenues à Lomé (Togo) lors de l'Assemblée Générale des Archevêques et Evêques de la Région, - Conférence Episcopale Régionale de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. C'était en fin janvier, début février.

L'accueil à cette nouvelle fut d'un enthousiasme mitigé. Célébrer le Concile, 20 ans après Vatican II, cela était accepté et la Commission de catéchèse et liturgie venait de le faire à Rome.

Evaluer, vérifier la mise en application du Concile, cela était juste, mais vu le délai prévisible, nos diocèses risquaient d'être laissés pour compte.

Promouvoir l'esprit et la lettre du Concile, cela semblait normal pour nous.

Les textes du questionnaire nous sont arrivés en retard. Pour nous, Evêques de la Conférence Episcopale du BURKINA - NIGER, nous les avons eus le 6 juin, et le 23 juin, il fallait tenir la rencontre nationale pour faire la synthèse avec les délégués de tous les diocèses.

Le texte fut envoyé en septembre et comprend 19 pages soulignant comme points forts: les bienfaits du Concile, l'Eglise particulière, la liturgie et l'inculturation.

b - Entre temps des courants pessimistes très violents s'élevaient de l'autre côté de la Mer. Heureusement le Pape revenait toujours sur la même intention dans ses interventions faites à Rome et lors de ses voyages en Afrique.

c - Nous sommes arrivés quelque peu perplexes au Synode. Dans quel sens irait ce Synode?

Mais dès le départ la joie eut le dessus, Il était donné à chacun de constater le souffle de l'Esprit conciliaire dans la plupart des interventions.

Un moment difficile fut la première présentation du message qui ignorait la dynamique du Synode.

Par contre dès le départ le rapport du Cardinal DANNEELS mit le Synode sur orbite ou rail:

Je le comprends comme ceci:

- l'Eglise de Dieu sous l'effusion de l'Esprit à la lumière de la Parole de Dieu,

célébrant les mystères du Christ
 au service du salut pour le monde.
 C'est l'Eglise du Père,
 habitée et animée par l'Esprit
 placée sous la lumière de la Parole révélée et écrite,
 continuant la liturgie des Saints Mystères
 pour assurer aujourd'hui sa mission de service (diakonia) dans le monde.

I - ACCOIS DU SYNODE EXTRAORDINAIRE

Au terme des échanges en ce Synode Extraordinaire, quelques traits saillants n'apparaissent:

- 1) Les pères du synode ont fait l'expérience de la communion fraternelle dans la rencontre, l'écoute mutuelle, la prière, les échanges à différents niveaux. Ils ont vécu l'Eglise comme une expérience concrète de communion.
- 2) Le but du Synode s'est dévoilé clairement: continuer le dynamisme spirituel, pastoral et doctrinal de Vatican II en lien avec toute la tradition de l'Eglise.
- 3) Les erreurs, déficiences, abus et exagérations enregistrés partout d'une manière ou d'une autre ont été soulignés avec discernement. Ils sont à enrayer à partir de leurs causes internes et externes par fidélité au Concile lui-même. Sur ce point, les évêques comme pasteurs, ont eu à faire leur propre examen de conscience.
- 4) Après vingt ans de citations partielles sinon partiales et parcelaires des textes conciliaires, une lecture et une diffusion globales des documents conciliaires sont à poursuivre.

On veut dire par là une lecture intégrale de tous les documents autour des quatre fondements qui sont:

- a - l'Eglise comme expérience, signe et moyen de salut, de communion de réconciliation et d'unité (Lumen Gentium);
- b - l'Eglise placée sous l'inspiration de la Parole de Dieu (Dei Verbum);
- c - l'Eglise au service du Père dans la prière, l'adoration, la célébration de la liturgie, notamment les sacrements dont l'Eucharistie (Sacra Liturgia);
- d - l'Eglise au service du monde sur les chemins du dialogue par une relation évangélisatrice au monde (Gaudium et Spes).

Le tout d'ailleurs est à situer sous une lumière unique: la Communion.

- 5) Des points de non-retour ont été acquis. La réception du Concile en lui-même par les Eglises et en relation avec toute la tradition Vivante, selon un va-et-vient entre Ecriture - Eglise - tradition vivante et magistère en est un.

II - CONVICTIONS PERSONNELLES

De ce Synode, je retiens que tous, Evêques, laïcs, prêtres, religieux et religieuses,

- 1) Nous sommes des héritiers légitimes du Concile Vatican II. Ce Synode était extraordinaire par son caractère spécifique, celui d'avoir pour thème la mise en application du Concile. Il a rassemblé des Pères synodaux dont un tiers était des témoins authentiques du Concile, les autres héritiers en tant que successeurs des Apôtres.
- 2) Nous accueillons Vatican II comme un trésor à exploiter et non un musée à conserver ou à visiter.
- 3) Nous adhérons à la collégialité affective et effective comme une des meilleures traductions des relations au sein de l'Eglise, communion du Christ, famille de Dieu.
- 4) Nous attendons le Synode de 1987 sur "Vocation et Mission des laïcs dans l'Eglise et dans le monde, vingt ans après Vatican II", comme un complément et un couronnement du Synode Extraordinaire.
- 5) Toutes les Eglises et Conférences locales se sont trouvées dans l'unanimité autour du Concile avec Pierre.
- 6) Les Eglises particulières ont été confirmées dans ce qu'il y a de positif dans leurs expériences et expressions depuis le Concile Vatican II.
- 7) Ainsi le problème et la conception de l'inculturation ont fait du chemin: l'inculturation de l'Evangile apparait pour la première fois dans un document synodal et comme une exigence pour toutes les Eglises particulières.
- 8) Le renouveau spirituel pour tous les baptisés et particulièrement les instituts de vie consacrée.
- 9) Le Synode de 1987 sur "vocation et mission des laïcs dans l'Eglise et dans le monde, vingt ans après Vatican II", viendra en complément, couronner le Synode Extraordinaire. Finalement même si le message s'est adressé plutôt aux catholiques et aux situations de l'Occident, le Document dans sa rédaction finale laisse suffisamment de place aux préoccupations de chaque Eglise.

III - VERS L'AVENIR?

Nous mentionnerons en vue de l'avenir des manques, des acquis et des interpellations pastorales.

1) Les manques

De tous les textes, le monde de l'enfance est absent, lui qui aura vingt ans en l'an 2000. Si la jeunesse a été mentionnée, peu d'éléments se rapportent à elle.

Les défis du monde sont signalés sans plus.

La mission d'évangélisation n'a pas pénétré avec toute sa dynamique dans le déroulement du Synode.

Le laïcat, les ministères et le rôle apostolique des femmes sont effleurés et reportés au prochain Synode.

Des points difficiles ont été cités:

- la confiance entre la Curie et les Eglises particulières;
- l'évangélisation et les mass media;

- le dialogue au sein de l'Eglise à tous les niveaux dans la collaboration pastorale, notamment le dialogue Evêque - Prêtres - Laïcs;
- le statut des théologiens fait à la fois pour le service de la doctrine et pour une recherche créatrice;
- la fiabilité d'un catéchisme ou compendium s'inspirant de Vatican II.

2) Acquis

A part cela, nous enregistrons des acquis incontestable sur la base des quatre grandes constitutions:

- la Parole de Dieu prend sa place fondamentale et fondatrice;
- puis le Renouveau liturgique;
- l'Eglise comme Communion ou famille de Dieu;
- l'ouverture au monde comme relation évangélisatrice et mission d'espérance;
- les démarches plurielles de la théologie (ex. Libération, inculturation);
- la possibilité suggérée à chaque Eglise particulière de se mettre en Synode;
- enfin un critère pour lire et approfondir les documents du Concile d'une façon plus méthodique.

3) Interpellations pastorales

Venus presque pour faire l'examen de concile, en ses conséquences et fruits, les Pères synodaux n'en ont pas fait le procès, mais au contraire ils ont dû faire leur propre examen de conscience en se laissant interpellé en profondeur.

La dernière partie du Document final alloue ainsi un certain nombre de paragraphes qui sont des interpellations à toute pastorale post-conciliaire: elles se rapportent à la conscience missionnaire de l'Eglise du Christ:

- Tout d'abord, la fraternité chrétienne et le témoignage d'unité pour ceux qui annoncent l'Evangile (oecuménisme);
- puis la relation évangélisatrice dans l'ouverture au monde (Eglise et Monde, sécularisation, sécularité et sécularisme, Eglise et mass media);
- enfin la relation de l'Eglise vis à vis de ceux du dehors non-chrétiens et incroyants.

A cet effet sont requis:

- a) Un effort permanent pour diffuser les Documents de Vatican II (quatre Constitutions, neuf Décrets et trois Déclarations, messages d'ouverture et de clôture);
- b) il en découle un devoir d'information, d'inter-formation et de formation pour tous;
- c) il faut y ajouter aussitôt les Décrets d'application et les textes synodaux parus depuis 1969;
- d) la suggestion pressante de programmes pastoraux et de mise en synodalité des Eglises particulières et diocésaines est à prendre en compte.

- e) le Renouveau liturgique, catéchétique, spirituel et biblique comme sources vitales de la vie et de la praxis ecclésiales post-conciliaires est un acquis irréversible.

4) Des questions à approfondir

La pédagogie du Rapport DANNEELS comporte adroitement des suggestions et des renvois pour examen et approfondissement. Ainsi le Synode n'est pas devenu le lieu de débats théologiques.

Parmi les questions qui le mériteraient, nous soulignerons ici:

- a) la communion ecclésiale, fraternelle et hiérarchique, sacramentelle et "sociétale" (principe de subsidiarité);
- b) la pratique de la collégialité affective et effective au niveau des sentiments et des institutions;
- c) l'expérience des communautés chrétiennes ou ecclésiales de base en relation avec les structures traditionnelles (paroisses et diocèses);
- d) pour toute Eglise, la signification des théologies de la libération et de l'inculturation ainsi que l'option préférentielle pour les pauvres;
- e) l'exercice concret de la mission prophétique dans les situations présentes.

5) Des concepts opératoires

Chaque époque vient avec ses mots et ses concepts, ses modes d'expression et ses méthodes d'approche.

La période post-conciliaire draine ainsi tout un éventail de concepts opératoires plus ou moins universels et familiers tels: l'Eglise sacrement et peuple de Dieu, l'Eglise mystère de Communion ou l'Eglise famille, la collégialité, la subsidiarité appliquée à l'institution ecclésiale.

De même des prises de conscience neuves se font jour: par exemple l'autonomie du temporel apparaît plus ou moins dans les contextes de sécularisme, sécularité; ou encore dualité et dualisme, uniformité et pluriformité.

On note également des déplacements des champs de conscience: telles l'affirmation d'identité confessionnelle et la volonté d'un œcuménisme concret, la désaffection vis à vis des structures.

Ce qui est sûr, plusieurs courants traversaient l'Assemblée du Synode qui fut peu sensible à la pression des courants extérieurs. Au sein de notre Assemblée on pouvait relever la double tendance toujours à équilibrer entre ceux qui veulent la maintenance des acquis et ceux qui sont surtout enclins à la créativité.

En définitive, sans multiplier citations et références, les Pères synodaux ont montré qu'ils avaient assumé Vatican II. Ils s'en sentaient les héritiers légitimes, en successeurs des Apôtres. Mais surtout nous repartions tous, forts d'avoir prié ensemble, d'avoir communiqué dans les liens inexprimables de la charité fraternelle, affective et effective, sûrs que "comme aux Apôtres dans le Cénacle avec Marie, l'Esprit Saint nous a suggéré ce qu'il veut dire à l'Eglise, s'acheminant vers le troisième millénaire" (Document final).