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EDITORIAL

In our first article of the issue, we are able to offer you a very interesting evaluation of the Asian Synod held last spring. Fr. JOHN M. PRIOR, SVD, 20 years a missionary in Asia and Asian-coordinator of mission for his Congregation, was called to work in the secretariat of the Synod. He tells us of a Church who is willing to accept the manifold vocations to witness to Christ in Asia. —

Fr. PETER H. KOLVENBACH, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, reflects in his conference given in Holland on the important role of the Christian Churches in the construction of a human face for a new Europe.

Mgr. PETER K. SARPONG, the bishop of Kumasi in Ghana and a recognised specialist in inculturation, shows in his collaboration how much the social, religious and political realities of Africa need today the forceful proclamation and witness of the Good News. —

In our contributions from Latin America, FR. FRANCIS CHAMBERLAIN, SJ, insists that one of the imposing needs in the local Church and Liberation theology within it, is to re-examine what we understand as 'mission'. —

RUBENS RECUPERO studies the possible 'human aspects' of globalisation. He believes that you can combine: stability with economic growth and flexibility in work with guarantee of employment. —

In our last article, MARIA DENNIS points to the still delicate situation of Human Right in Latinamerican countries. —

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A TALE OF TWO SYNODS: OBSERVATIONS ON THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR ASIA

John Mansford Prior, SVD

A Synod in Rome

St Bridget of Kildare (452-524), the feminine counterpart to **St Patrick** (387-461), commenting on those who wound their way from Celtic Ireland to distant Rome in the early sixth century, is reputed to have composed the following acerbic couplet:

One who to Rome goes,
Much labour, little profit shows;
For God, though long you sought there,
Won't be found unless you brought there!

Eleven Asian Cardinals, six Patriarchs with 23 Bishops from Eastern Rite Oriental Churches, 15 Presidents of Episcopal Conferences with 65 other Latin Rite Bishops, 10 Superior Generals of clerical orders, together with 58 auditors and experts, five ecumenical delegates and 25 Heads of the Departments of the Roman Curia gathered in Rome in Synod from 19 April - 14 May 1998. The Bishops, presbyters and laity came to Rome and witnessed to the God “they brought there”, that is, to the faith of the people they represent. The Asian delegates brought with them the myriad images of the living God who has taken root in the hearts and bodies of Asian Christians and Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists, during the past 2,000 tumultuous years.

Why hold a Synod for Asia in Rome? The most beguiling answer given by the Bishops themselves was: in order that the Church of Europe see for itself, if only for a moment, a little of the vitality of the ancient-yet-ever-new Churches of Asia. While the Churches of Asia form a statistically insignificant, scattered minority (a mere 2 per cent among over half of humanity), they are numerically large. There are more Catholics in India, for example, than the whole of the population of Australia; more Christians in Muslim Indonesia than in their former coloniser The Netherlands. Ancient Apostolic Churches are found in the Near East and South India. While Latin Rite Churches were founded during the past 500 years in the wake of Western piracy and colonialism, the Oriental Churches are indigenous, and are accepted as such by the Muslim and Hindu majorities.

Who Came to Rome?

It was a Synod of Bishops, and so participation reflected the number of Dioceses rather than the number of church members. This explains why the Philippines with over 70 million Catholics had just one less Bishop than India with less than 20 million. However, it does not explain why about 10 per cent of participants came from Kerala, South India. Of the 58 auditors and experts there were 12 laymen, eight laywomen, eight Sisters, five priests and two Brothers. A single youth spoke for two-thirds of the Asian Church membership, while 16 women — among 236 men — stood for over half of those active in the Church! **Bishop George Punnakottil** of Kothamangalam pointed out, in the ancient Synods of the Syro-Malabar Church Bishops, presbyters and laity were elected delegates, and a majority were lay.

Which Asia Came?

Few, if any, generalisations fit Asia. Adjectives about the continent usually begin with the qualifier “multi-” — multi-linguistic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-ritual. Asia is pluralist to the very fibre of its being. It is the one continent where Christians stubbornly remain a tiny minority, where the languages and cultures, philosophies and theologies are not European. Latin Christianity is struggling to escape from its five-century Western cocoon and come to life as inculturated, local ecclesial communities, authentically Asian. One of the most poignant ongoing encounters during the Synod was between these culturally and politically alienated Latin Churches and the indigenous, Apostolic Churches of the Near East and South India. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Asian Churches is to accept pluralism as a source of enrichment and creative catholicity (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23). If this is to be the case, then the Asian Churches, like the societies in which they live, will have to learn to work with, and resolve, conflict without regressing back to bland conformism or recourse to unevangelical authoritarianism. However local autonomy and creative pluralism are the polar opposites of globalisation.

Asia is the scene of rapid socio-economic change, with growth rates over 6 per cent a year for the past 20 to 30 years in Japan, Southern China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. This global capitalist bubble has now burst, destroying the livelihood of hundreds of millions in its wake. As the Synod took place a **Kim**, Catholic dissident, had recently been elected President of Korea. Indonesian cities were going up in flames as the military Dictator **Suharto** after 32 years was pressured into retirement by students, intellectuals and the unemployed. In Pakistan **Bishop John Joseph**, after a lifetime of courageous witness and struggle, sacrificed his own life for the sake of persecuted minorities. In the one Catholic Asian country of Asia, Filipinos were electing **Estrada** as their new president in a campaign devoid of hard issues. What impact would Asia have on the Synod in Rome? The Synod did not begin — FABC style — with an analysis of the Asian context. Each Bishop brought his own Asia with him and no composite picture was drawn up.

Whose Agenda?

I experienced two distinct Synods, for two quite different agendas were in play. The first informal “Asian Synod” was that of a majority of the Asian Bishops themselves. This agenda is found in the Bishops’ responses to the initial Guidelines (*Lineamenta*), in their 191 interventions during the first seven days of the Synod itself, and in their group reports during the third week. The Bishops were calling for the authority to become authentic communities of witness in a pluralist world. This agenda also finds an echo in the Synodal Message.

The official “Synod for Asia” is found in the formal agenda prepared by the General Secretariat in close cooperation with the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. This agenda is contained in the *Lineamenta*, in much of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, in most reports to the plenary sessions, and in both the framework and first section and general wording of the propositions. The official theme is doctrinal: a re-affirmation of Jesus Christ as the one and only saviour. This theme also decided the methodology of the four-week gathering. Both agendas, and the interaction between them, are of interest.

Success or Failure?

By which criteria are we to judge success or failure? Bringing the top management of a whole continent together for an entire month is unknown in any other global organisation. Incredibly enough these

month-long synods do not produce any concrete results. Fifty-nine secret propositions have been handed over to the General Secretariat. We now have to wait for a year or so before Rome publishes its Apostolic Exhortation drawn from the various synodal documents. As one Japanese Bishop put it: Rome decides the topic and the process and then a year later informs us about what we were discussing! Was it, then, a success or failure?

The Asian Bishops brought with them the faith of their people, who apart from the Lebanon and the Philippines, are minority communities living vibrant lives in extremely difficult circumstances. The great value of the Synod, according to the Bishops I consulted, was in the month-long encounter with fellow Bishops from other parts of Asia. Friendship and fellowship was created or renewed. At their residences, in the coffee bar down from the hall and whenever opportunity allowed, Bishops heard each others’ stories. In such encounters, horizons opened up and local problems were put into a broader perspective. Of particular note was the encounter between the Bishops of the Near Eastern Churches (from Palestine to Iran), those of Central Asia (the southern states of the former Soviet Union) with those of the FABC (Pakistan to Japan, China to Indonesia). While FABC Churches meet regularly and did not see the necessity of holding a synod, the ancient Apostolic Churches of the Near East, the diaspora communities in Central Asia and those of FABC had never met together in assembly before. Perhaps this incipient pan-Asian awareness will prove to be the most notable accomplishment of the 1998 Synod.

A Growing Convergence

Remarkably, a convergence, if not a consensus, was in the making during that first week of individual interventions. The aspirations of the Oriental and Latin Rite Churches of Asia, with such different histories, almost seemed to coalesce. They listened to each other and became aware of a growing consensus among themselves. They have returned knowing that the Churches of Asia, both Latin and Oriental, are working for extensive autonomy for the local Church and greater justice in society. I myself came away convinced that the Asian Bishops, whether consciously or not, have been working out an agenda for the next pontificate, perhaps, even for the next Ecumenical Council.

The Agenda of the Asian Bishops

During the first seven days, 191 interventions were made by the synodal members and auditors. There

was no particular ordering, thematic or otherwise. We darted across Asia, from issue to issue, a little like tuning into CNN world headlines during breakfast. I was numbed by seven days of such 5 and 8 minute presentations, without either discussion or pause for reflection. There was no attempt at analysis, no drawing out of central threads or strands, no paralleling of contrasting viewpoints. The report to the assembly after the interventions returned to the official theme. Then there was the problem of language. If I, a native English-speaker, found it increasingly difficult to absorb what was being said, how about the participants? For virtually all participants, neither English nor French is a commonly used language in their Church. The Bishops did not even receive the full text of the interventions; they received summaries only.

Despite problems of methodology and language, from day one it was clear that the Bishops would speak their mind frankly and critically, though lightly and with a touch of humour. To make sense of what was being said, I made a quick thematic analysis of the 191 interventions. This analysis is not the only one possible; others might well categorise the presentations differently. It is, however, a rough indication of what was happening on the synod floor.

Seventy-six per cent of the interventions dealt with four main topics. At the top of the list comes the mission of the Asian Churches to *dialogue with other faith traditions* (43 interventions, or 22.5 per cent of the total). Second in frequency comes *dialogue with living cultures* by which the Church becomes truly Asian (41 interventions, or 21.4 per cent of the total). At number three comes the *dialogue of the Churches with the poor* (33 interventions, or 17.2 per cent). At fourth place, the interventions characterised the Asian Churches as *churches of the laity* (29 interventions, or 15.2 per cent).

Frequency is not the only criterion of importance. Nevertheless, it is interesting that for the Asian Bishops and the other participants, at the heart of the mission agenda lies the three-fold dialogue with other religions, with cultures and with the marginalised. In this three-fold dialogue, Christ will become all-in-all, “*that they have life, and have it abundantly*” (Jn 10:10). A few phrases from the presentations give the flavour of the whole.

Dialogue with other faith-traditions

For me personally, the most moving testimonies on inter-faith dialogue in life and witness came from Bishops in the Near East. More ancient than the Mus-

lim majorities, sharing the same language and cultures, the Christian communities are day by day patiently re-learning the meaning of the gospel: “where there is no love plant love and you will reap love” (John of the Cross quoted by **Armando Bortolaso**, Apostolic Vicar of Aleppo, Syria). **Archbishop Fernando Capalla** of Davao, Philippines, outlined the pioneering collaboration between Muslims and Christians in war-stricken Mindanao. The work continues, “inspite of the brutal murder of the Oblate **Bishop Benjamin de Jesus**, and the kidnappings of Columban Prelate **Monsignor Desmond Hartford** and the CICM missionary **Bernard Moes**; inspite of resistance from our own Christian people and from the small segment of Muslim fundamentalists”. Franciscan **Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar** of Jayapura, spoke of learning to live amidst the Muslim majority in Indonesia: “we need to accept ourselves as a minority. We cannot walk alone or do big things alone while confronting the majority. Competition does not help to create peace and harmony. Whatever we do to promote human dignity we must do as an honest transparent service to humankind and not to gain strength and power for our own religious group”. **Bishop Bunluen Mansap** of Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand, spoke of his contact with Buddhist colleagues: “I feel inspired by their simplicity of life, their openness, their humane relationships, their unassuming ways; these are values I recognize as values of the Kingdom or of the Gospel”. The Bishop added: “Could it be said that this is the Good News that the Buddhist can offer us?” No official statement on inter-faith dialogue should be made without first listening humbly to such experiences. In standing up together for the deepest human values, the dialogue of faith and witness becomes evangelically prophetic.

Dialogue with living cultures

While the Apostolic Oriental Churches of the Near East are fully indigenous, they are, except for the Lebanon, small minorities. Perhaps their challenge is to dialogue with contemporary culture, with the social, political and economic dynamics of the Muslim societies in which they live.

In Central Asia the Churches are remnants of non-indigenous people, struggling to survive a steady migration accentuated since the demise of the Soviet Union. **Wens Padilla**, Head of the Catholic Mission in Mongolia, spoke of a new beginning, “by becoming living witnesses to God’s liberating presence especially to the poor, as pilgrims journeying with the people in discerning where God is at work in their culture and present day realities. In this process we

are ourselves enriched and transformed". The Oriental Churches from Kerala, India, are working to remove Latin traits and influences from their liturgy and synodal government. Maybe, they have yet to face the challenge of contemporary inculturation.

The Latin Rite Churches of FABC were planted in colonial days and have to live with this burden of history and the foreignness it has bequeathed them. "The faith has never flowered; the message of the Gospel has not really sunk into Asian society", claimed **Leo Jun Ikenaga**, Archbishop of Osaka, Japan. Representative of a great many interventions is that of **Bishop Berard Oshikawa**, of Naha: "It seems to me that the norm for Christian life, for Church Discipline, for Liturgical Expression and Theological Orthodoxy continues to be that of the Western Church. The language of our theology, the rhythm and structure of our liturgies, the programmes of our catechesis fail to touch the hearts of those who come searching". He concluded: "Graduality means that the Holy See redefine its role and with prudence, flexibility, trust and courage mediates a new dialogue of all the Churches in the common pilgrimage to the fullness of Christ. Moving away from a single and uniform abstract norm that stifles genuine spirituality; working for a new harmony where the gifts of the Spirit to the Churches become the new treasure of the whole Church". Inculturation has barely begun; the Latin Church in Asia is just commencing its quest for authenticity.

A Participative Church

Linked to the question of inculturation — becoming authentically Asian Churches — is the need to become participative, collegial Churches. Time and again the FABC ecclesiology of the Church as "a communion of communities" was referred to by the Bishops: at Basic Ecclesial Community level, in the Parish as a communion of BECs, at Deanery meetings and Diocesan Synods. An enhanced role for the Episcopal Conference was sought, even the gradual establishment of contemporary Asian Patriarchates (South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia were mentioned as possibilities) with similar autonomy as the Patriarchates of the Near East — who are themselves seeking greater freedom of movement. **Bishop Francis Hadisumarta** of Sorong, Indonesia, requested a "radical decentralisation of the Latin Rite". While Vatican computers erased all these requests from the propositions (see below), these statements were made, over and over again by Bishops from both the Oriental and Latin Churches. Surely, somebody is listening.

Solidarity with the Marginalised

Given the crisis of globalised Capitalism, the commitment of the Asian Churches to be with and for the poor did not receive the centrality that it might have acquired. **Bishop Stephen Hamao** of Yokohama spoke movingly of Japan as both aggressor and victim. **Bishop Camilo Gregorio** of the Philippines urged the Asian Churches to influence the Churches of the First World. Global problems need global solutions. Each "Asian problem" has to be set within its global context. Asia has its own resources in tackling the root sin at the heart of global capitalism. Bishops referred to ecological resources from Asian cultures, from Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. **Brother Anthony Rogers** of the FABC, quoted the very first statement by Asian Bishops 28 years ago: "The Church cannot set up islands of affluence in a sea of want and misery". **Bishop Carlos Belo** of East Timor, quoting Popes and the Vatican Council, underlined that, "for the Church, defending human rights and the cultural dignity of the person is directly linked to spiritual mission". From India **Archbishop Paschal Topno** of Bhopal, **Archbishop Toppo** of Ranchi and **Bishop Maria Callistus Soosa Pakiam** of Trivandrum, spoke up for tribals among whom are found the largest numbers of Asian Christians. Unfortunately, none of these individual interventions were taken up in any meaningful way in the group discussions.

Three interventions on women pointed to a serious marginalisation in the life of the Asian Churches themselves. **Filomena Hirota**, in the name of the Japanese Religious Leadership Conference, spoke of the need for, "a new way of being Church in solidarity with the cry of women in a prophetic way", and then spelt out practical steps to ensure greater participation of women in Church decision-making. Ecumenical delegate, **Agustina Lumentut** of Indonesia, asked: "There is a 'syn-odos', a 'walking together' with women from the same religion, but also from other religions. These shared experiences become a primary source for theological reflection, for re-reading the Scripture, a new perspective. As long as Asian women find the courage to tell each other their stories and share their experiences, they have hope". Then she challenged the Bishops: "Women are walking together. But is the Church walking with them?" **Bishop Peter Remigius** of Kumbakonam was one of a number who recalled that the first witness (and therefore 'apostle') to the Resurrection was Mary of Magdala: "In the sad plight of the deplorable and oppressed condition of women in India, they should be motivated to rise up as the announcers of the Good News as Mary

Magalene; they should be given preference in working for the upliftment of women; they should be given the first place in the Church to carry out evangelisation”.

An Agenda for FABC

When these interventions of the first seven days are taken together with the pre-synodal responses of the Bishops' Conferences to the original Guidelines (*Lineamenta*), we come across the “synod-that-might-have-been”. Unfortunately, during the remaining three weeks these issues were neither clarified nor sharpened; there was no attempt at clustering, analysing or prioritising. Perhaps, during the next FABC General Assembly (within the next two years) these issues can be discussed at some depth. The vision of a serving Church in dialogue with a hurting and violated world is there; what is lacking is the courage to implement it more consistently.

The Official Agenda

As is clear from the *Lineamenta*, the official theme of the Synod was both doctrinal — “Jesus Christ as the one and only saviour” and evangelical — “that the world have life in abundance”. Doctrine about Christ was chosen because of a feeling (mainly though not exclusively in Rome) that the Asian Churches are in danger of slipping into relativism. According to this view, relativism is the result of an incorrect approach to inter-religious dialogue. Linked to this concern was anxiety with some developments in Asian theologies expressed in a few curial interventions. Interestingly enough, these concerns were not accepted by the discussion groups, despite the fact that each group but one had its quota of curial Cardinals and all had their appointed court theologians. Indeed, towards the end of the Synod when the final amendments were being made to the propositions, some curial Cardinals were seen rushing from group to group vainly looking for at least one that would accept their proposals on theology or seminaries. Thus, while the Bishops' agenda on the three-fold dialogue and their request for more autonomy to become authentically Asian were either watered down or filtered out by the synodal machine, the Bishops' themselves put aside much of the curial agenda. Indeed, for much of the Synod, the Bishops were nimbly side-stepping the official agenda, calmly returning their concerns to the centre whenever possible. Because neither the secretariat nor the methodology was decided upon by the Bishops, they were not always successful. The response of the Bishops to the evangelical theme was to speak, time and again, of proclamation through an authentic dialogue of life

and witness.

While the authors of the *Lineamenta* were concerned with doctrine, the Bishops spoke of God-experience, authentic witness, living out the radicality of the Gospel. In the words of **Cardinal Ricardo Vidal** (Philippines) on the first day: “Accepting Jesus as Lord of one's life should be accompanied by an emphasis on the social dimension of conversion, necessarily seeking to dismantle the structures of sin”. **Bishop Benedict Osta** (India) added: “it is not enough to repeat doctrinal or theoretical formulas; personal witness to a personal experience is called for”. Also from India the Syro-Malabar **Bishop Gratian Mundadan** stated boldly: “In the religious ethos of Asia mere doctrinal, legal and institutional power does not have any appeal. Further, the image projected by the Church of power, riches, institutional, influential, is looked upon as a threat”. The Asian Bishops did not see doctrine *per se* as a major concern; their anxiety was with authentic experience and witness. Jesus and the Bible are welcomed in Asia; a rich, foreign Church is not.

Yet to be Discussed Openly

One quip going the rounds during the Synod was about the Vatican computers. Which software programme are they using? Clearly not “Windows 95”, perhaps “Windows Jubilee 2000”! Whenever the computer came across a proposal from one of the Bishops' groups urging for more autonomy, for freedom, for true collegiality, for trust, or was critical of the Roman Curia, or praised the work of Asian theologians, the proposal was automatically erased by an anonymous computer! The term “Asian Churches” became “the Catholic Church in Asia”; “other Christian Churches” was changed to “other Christian confessions”. Words deemed untheological like “subsidiarity”, “decentralisation”, “deregulation” and “democracy” were all erased without discussion. The final propositions move from local Church (Diocese) directly to Universal Church (Rome). All proposals on enhancing the authority of Episcopal Conferences disappeared. The one form of collaboration between local Churches that survives is mutual help through prayer and finance (No.14). It, surely, would have been extremely rewarding if the different theologies of the curia and the majority of Asian Bishops were brought out into the open and discussed. That was not to be. Without a word, FABC theology was subsumed into official ideology.

Vision without Strategy

One question that arises is: why did the Bishops

come to Rome without a strategy to implement their vision of becoming authentic, local Churches in Asia? True, the Working Paper (*Instrumentum Laboris*) was published too late for any meaningful discussion prior to the Synod. However, they might have insisted on the first day that the various committees be elected by the assembly — as did the Bishops at the commencement of Vatican II. At the very least they could have left aside the 16 questions presented to the discussion groups, and taken up key issues presented on the floor. However, they did neither. They left the synodal apparatus in place. If any discernable strategy emerged it was the wish to avoid confrontation. They came, they spoke, they returned home. I am sure the age and health of the Pope was one important consideration. Session by session he sat in our midst, physically frail but with undiminished will power and determination. We are, it seems, a Church-in-waiting. The Bishops played the synodal game according to Rome's rules, following every protocol. Yet, we should not read too much into this. In most Asian languages the word “yes” means “I have politely heard you”; it does not necessarily connote agreement, let alone acquiescence. If many Asian Bishops and theologians are still enjoying an open and honest intellectual life for the sake of the Gospel, the fact that they think, speak and write in languages unknown in Rome must have something to do with it. One Cardinal wryly remarked: “Yes, they have filtered out our proposals, but why become over-excited? When we return home, we shall continue to filter theirs”.

Theologians and Bureaucrats

Given the doctrinal theme of the Synod, many asked why there were no prominent Asian theologians invited as experts. One fascinating outcome from this absence of internationally known figures, was the prominence thereby obtained by a number of Asian Bishops themselves. They proved themselves able practical theologians. Obviously, not a few Bishops are used to doing theology with the people. The contrast here is between the living theology of these pastoral Bishops and the dry shallowness of some of the curial Cardinals. What struck me most about the curial contributions was their overall mediocrity. I suppose any closed bureaucracy must find it difficult to attract talent. Having said that I must also state that I found **Cardinal Ratzinger's** presentation on the Church as sacrament rather elegant; **Cardinal Cassidy's** on ecumenism was truly courageous; **Cardinal Cheli's** on migrants was forthright and challenging; **Cardinal Poupard's** on faith and culture had depth; **Cardinal Stafford's** on the laity was genuinely cultured. Other obviously capable Cardinals seemed

to be holding back; perhaps we are too near the next conclave for openness on everybody's part. The tone of the rest was somewhat reminiscent of the quality of the curia during the last days of the long reign of Pius XII. The Cambridge historian, **Eamon Duffy**, speaks of, “compliant nonentities” who, “discouraged all originality ... parroting the party line”. Are we back to obedience rather than enquiry as the badge of Catholic thought?

Final Observations

Another Synod is over. Perhaps we have gone as far as we can with this particular model. It is time to look at alternative synodal patterns from the Apostolic Churches which once had full participation of laymen; today demands both women and men. It is time to accept ecumenical delegates as active partners, and to listen to delegates from other religions. Is it really possible to have an Asian Synod without the active participation of the majority faith traditions of the continent?

Much is possible; however ecclesial reform is needed. Key areas for reform pointed out by Bishops are the Roman Curia, the enhancing of the role of Episcopal Conferences, returning the selection and appointment of Bishops to the local Churches, giving canonical weight to Regional Federations such as FABC (an embryonic cluster of Patriarchates?).

If this agenda sounds too clerical, then we must bring out clearly the evangelical context of and motivation for such ecclesial reforms. Ecclesial change is for the sake of the Gospel, of God's mission, for the promotion of life in its abundance in the face of the forces of mammon and death. We need to trust and accept what the Spirit is saying through the Asian Churches.

EUROPE: LE RÔLE DE L'ÉGLISE

Peter Hans Kolvenbach, SJ
Supérieur Général de la Compagnie de Jésus

Conférence donnée aux Pays-Bas en 1997; traduite du néerlandais par les soins du P. R Hostie S.J.

L'Europe évoque bien des problèmes. Certains sont primordiaux. S'agit-il de redécouvrir l'unité de ce continent ou de la créer de toutes pièces? Dans la seconde hypothèse, l'Europe n'aurait jamais existé; dans la première, il s'agit de découvrir ce que nous avons toujours été: des Européens. L'idéal européen se présente tout autrement si nous pouvons nous inspirer d'une histoire et d'une culture communes. Sinon, nous prenons comme point de départ la conviction qu'une Europe unifiée à contre-gré est capable de se défendre contre les puissances économiques qui partout dans le monde se liguent contre elle.

De fait, chacun de nous a appris l'histoire de nos contrées comme un enchaînement ininterrompu de guerres et de conflits, d'invasions et d'occupations. La crise des Balkans n'est pas terminée. L'Europe en tant que telle n'a pas pu y jouer un rôle. La solution provisoire a été imposée par les Etats-Unis. Malgré la pacification, l'Europe rencontre nombre de foyers de discorde: le Kosovo, les minorités hongroises, la Moldavie, la Bessarabie et la moitié turque de Chypre. La confédération des Etats russes (l'Arménie et la Bessarabie) est menacée. Le Pays basque espagnol a affaire avec le terrorisme. Des minorités refusent de faire partie d'un ensemble national: la Catalogne en Espagne, la Corse en France, la Padanie lombarde en Italie. Et ce ne sont que quelques exemples. Il y a plus. En lisant les journaux ou en regardant la télévision, on constate que chaque pas vers un renforcement de l'Europe se heurte à des contre-courants.

Par delà les divisions

La non-unité de l'Europe se reflète dans les rapports entre les Eglises. Bien sûr, les responsables religieux se rencontrent dans de nombreuses organisations ecclésiales européennes. Les autorités politiques font de même. Mais dans la réalité quotidienne, un nouveau Yalta n'est aucunement exclu. Le rideau de fer idéologique entre l'Ouest et l'Est risque d'être remplacé par une frontière religieuse. Elle sépare l'Orthodoxie, qui considère l'Europe de l'Est comme son territoire inaliénable, de la chrétienté, plus ou moins ébréchée, enracinée à l'Ouest. Le dialogue entre les

Eglises de la Réforme s'orientent vers une reconnaissance mutuelle de la diversité dans la foi plus que vers une unité dans le Christ. Le concile Vatican II a découvert l'œcuménisme comme un vœu du Christ; aussi des rapprochements se sont-ils opérés. Pouvons-nous dire, pour autant, que, après mille ans de séparation et de méfiance, nous abordons l'an 2000 avec plus d'unité, au sens fort du terme? Les désunions qui se manifestent à l'intérieur des Eglises semblent l'emporter.

De plus, en Europe, les chrétiens ne sont plus seuls. Dans de nombreux pays, l'islam est devenu la seconde religion: il y compte des millions de sujets. Ce que l'Europe a toléré et organisé à Auschwitz reste une plaie douloureuse pour la Synagogue, aux effectifs réduits. Chaque décision de l'Europe concernant le Proche-Orient la revivifie. L'islam de l'Afrique du Nord et des pays du Levant ne fait pas partie de l'Europe. Mais ce qui se passe à Jérusalem ou en Algérie affecte inévitablement l'Europe. Les religions peuvent être perçues comme fautrices de troubles et de guerres, comme en témoignent les Balkans. La politique, pas plus que la religion, n'est un appui automatique pour l'unité de l'Europe.

Cette esquisse négative et sombre démontre que l'unité de l'Europe ne peut se construire sur la base d'une communauté naturelle. Le chemin vers l'unité et vers la réunification exige la réconciliation et la collaboration délibérée. Sinon, l'Europe se ruinera dans ses contradictions internes. Nous ne nions pas ces éléments de fait: ils sont négatifs. Mais l'image retracée jusqu'ici resterait partielle si nous omettions ce qui unifie indiscutablement l'Europe. Appendice relativement restreint du continent asiatique, elle est nettement délimitée par trois plans d'eau et par l'Oural. La plupart des langues appartiennent aux groupes indo-européens. Les spécialistes sont à même d'y découvrir les paroles et les pensées des habitants de l'Europe. Le tout est devenu une communauté culturelle: elle est marquée par le droit romain et par la pensée grecque; elle a été baptisée avec l'annonce de l'Evangile; elle a été portée vers toutes les parties du monde

grâce à l'aventure dans le Nouveau Monde...

A quoi il convient d'ajouter les idéaux de la Révolution française, la Déclaration des droits de l'Homme, et même les deux guerres mondiales, déclenchées en Europe et pour elle ! Le mur de Berlin a fait prendre conscience qu'une Europe divisée est contre nature.

Sans une économie de marché établie d'un commun accord, l'Europe est dans l'impossibilité de se maintenir face aux pressions économiques qui se développent dans le monde entier.

Le résumé succinct d'une histoire millénaire met en évidence le côté positif: les Européens ont plus en commun que ce qu'ils veulent bien croire. Quoi qu'il en soit, ils sont acculés à la collaboration, en ces temps où tous les pays et tous les peuples sont interdépendants.

Le rôle historique des Eglises

Le rôle des Eglises dans cette évolution est indéniable. C'est l'Eglise catholique qui a enseigné aux peuples d'Europe ce que l'homme et l'humanité peuvent et doivent être dans les perspectives révélées par le Créateur et le Sauveur. Peu à peu, l'Europe a pris conscience des valeurs qui s'articulent à la justice et à la paix, à la liberté et à la charité. L'homme européen se tient à distance d'une Eglise qui se veut *Mater et Magistra*, pour reprendre ces valeurs à son propre compte. Mais il se laisse encore éduquer et inspirer par l'Evangile. Il vit la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité comme des acquisitions personnelles. L'empire romain, informé par l'Eglise catholique, devient culture chrétienne.

Actuellement, l'Europe est tentée de cultiver les valeurs humaines indépendamment de l'Evangile et hors des Eglises, en ne s'appuyant que sur ses propres forces. Ce processus est désigné par le terme « sécularisation ». Après l'effondrement du nazisme et du matérialisme historique, deux systèmes totalitaires et athées, l'Europe se reconnaît comme un seul ensemble. Pour le dire en termes bibliques: est-il possible de bâtir la cité de l'Europe sans faire appel à Dieu? Ne risquons-nous pas de construire en vain, si nous refusons de prendre appui sur l'inspiration évangélique pour ressourcer nos forces? La question s'impose: la gestation de l'Europe n'est-elle pas la conséquence de l'affaiblissement de la chrétienté européenne ? Quoi qu'il en soit des aspects négatifs et positifs de l'Europe, il est évident que son avenir dépend de la volonté délibérée des Européens. Personne ne peut contraindre l'Europe à s'unifier, même si l'échec signifie sa perte. Le rôle des Eglises n'est pas de définir les formes politiques de l'Europe de demain. Mais les

Eglises sont conscientes que la détermination à vivre en Europe d'une façon européenne fait partie de leur responsabilité, au nom de l'Evangile.

« Agapè »

Une première contribution à la recherche de la motivation est *l'agapè*. Cet apport, radicalement nouveau, situe l'amour du prochain à un niveau tel, que seul un mot nouveau parvenait à le circonscrire. Au Proche-Orient, les trois religions qui appartiennent à « la famille du Livre » essaient de vivre ensemble. Aujourd'hui encore, le judaïsme est admiré pour la patience et l'espérance de l'attente du Messie. L'islam y est respecté pour le caractère radical de sa foi, quotidiennement vécue en public. Les chrétiens y sont à l'honneur à cause de leur pratique de la charité. Leurs initiatives sociales et leurs œuvres de charité n'ont de sens que portées par une propension au pardon, une recherche à faire le premier pas vers la réconciliation, jusqu'à l'offrande personnelle de sa vie pour que le prochain en détresse puisse vivre. Cette *agapè*, typiquement chrétienne, comporte une responsabilité qui dépasse les considérations familiales et affairistes, de même que les préjugés nationaux et sociaux. Elle considère l'homme et la communauté humaine à travers les yeux du Christ. Le Samaritain de l'Evangile nous est bien connu. L'homme qui se meurt au bord de la route est avant tout un homme qui a besoin de l'aide d'un autre: c'est ainsi qu'il devient son prochain. Qu'il soit juif ou romain, palestinien nanti ou étranger démuné, malfaiteur ou juste, est secondaire. Toute douleur humaine invite à *l'agapè* dans la personne du Christ. Car c'est Lui qui est servi quand le prisonnier, le malade ou l'immigré sont accueillis.

L'histoire de l'humanité a toujours été marquée par le désir d'accomplir la charité. La stèle d'Hamourabi (1750 ans avant notre ère) en témoigne. Le Christ fait de la charité un précepte nouveau: donnez votre vie sans discrimination, sans contrepartie, sans attendre l'initiative de l'autre. Dans le continent européen, les occasions de pardon et de réconciliation abondent, de même que les raisons pour remédier aux besoins proprement nationaux. Cependant, tant d'éléments étrangers demandent à être intégrés ! Humainement parlant, l'unification ne pourra se faire qu'à partir d'une adhésion ferme à *l'agapè* du Christ. Ce n'est pas un hasard si des chrétiens convaincus, comme De Gasperi et Schuman, Adenauer et de Gaulle, ont été aux origines de l'Union européenne.

Un problème spirituel

Une seconde conviction, inhérente à la foi, peut

promouvoir l'unité européenne. Elle est encore plus difficile à accepter, car elle comporte un regard critique sur les progrès techniques et scientifiques dont notre monde moderne s'enorgueillit. Nous vivons une période de macro- et micro-découvertes sensationnelles. Celles-ci se reflètent dans la vie quotidienne. Elles ont transformé les soins de santé, la répartition du bien-être et les moyens de communication. Ce progrès n'a pas atteint son point culminant. D'autre part, la technique en tant que telle appelle un contrôle. L'évolution technologique risque d'aliéner l'homme et de détruire son environnement. Nous connaissons tous la menace nucléaire: l'homme doit maîtriser la technique. Mais l'orientation qu'il lui imprimera dépend de sa vision du monde, de sa conception de la communauté et de l'image qu'il se fait de l'homme. Tout cela s'applique aussi à l'économie. Actuellement, c'est elle qui façonne l'image de l'Europe.

Deux questions mettent en évidence le problème. Les pays européens préfèrent-ils laisser la bride sur le cou au marché économique, ou acceptent-ils de l'orienter de telle sorte que le chômage ne soit plus considéré comme une fatalité économique et que la jeunesse puisse se libérer de l'angoisse de l'avenir? Par ailleurs, les pays de la Communauté sont-ils prêts à sacrifier quelques aspects du bien-être social, afin de procurer aux pays de l'Europe de l'Est les moyens économiques permettant le développement de leurs capacités économiques?

Ces pays veulent-ils articuler une distribution adéquate à la production économique? Cette distribution ne visera plus seulement un petit nombre de privilégiés; tous en profiteront, afin que les riches ne deviennent pas plus riches encore et que les pauvres ne s'appauvrissent pas davantage.

Dorénavant, l'humanité peut intensifier sa production: la faim et la pauvreté peuvent être bannies. Mais la distribution des biens indique clairement qu'on ne cherche pas un partage équitable. Il faut sans cesse souligner qu'on ne peut abandonner l'économie à elle-même ou la laisser dériver vers le consumérisme. Il s'agit de l'orienter vers l'homme et l'humanité: non pas telle ou telle personne, mais tous les hommes, en particulier ceux qui sont dans la misère. Il faut donc reconnaître quelle conviction est à la base des décisions économiques. Bien sûr, il n'incombe ni à l'Évangile ni aux Églises d'imposer des programmes techniques ou des structures de bien-être — ce sont là des initiatives que les hommes ont en main. Mais les mains peuvent distribuer. Une telle option dépend de la foi et d'une orientation spirituelle.

Il se pourrait donc que l'unification de l'Europe soit, en dernière instance, un problème spirituel. Le rôle des Églises est de nous le rappeler, au nom de

Celui qui vise notre bien suprême, individuel et communautaire

La tâche des Églises

Nous avons analysé deux convictions de base. Dès lors, que signifient les Églises pour l'Europe?

Par référence au mystère pascal, les Églises et les croyants sont convaincus que le monde n'est pas voué à la dispersion. L'Europe, elle aussi, est capable de réaliser son unification. Pour le croyant, l'avenir comporte le rapprochement, la réconciliation et l'union. L'homme de foi n'est pas porté par sa certitude personnelle ou par une naïveté, encore moins par le refus de voir la réalité en face. Il est intimement convaincu que l'histoire de l'union humaine peut être écrite en collaboration avec le Seigneur de l'Histoire. L'échec de la Tour de Babel n'est pas fatal. Le monde se meut vers un nouveau phénomène pentecostal où chacun, avec ses particularités, se fait communion dans l'Esprit. Il s'agit de ne pas se laisser abattre par le poids du passé et de soupeser avec lucidité les obstacles actuels. Il s'agit d'accepter les imprécisions de l'avenir. Voilà des tâches à mener à bien. Les Églises, qui tirent leur origine du Dieu, un et trine, doivent s'y employer.

Une seconde tâche est liée aux convictions. La Communauté européenne est née du charbon et de l'acier. Elle s'est étendue au fromage et au poisson, au lait et au vin. Elle s'oriente vers une monnaie unique, en supprimant les frontières douanières. Les partisans de l'Europe jugeront qu'une telle description frise la caricature. Mais ils ne peuvent nier que les aspects politiques, sociaux et culturels se heurtent à un mur d'indifférence, voire d'opposition. Les contacts sporadiques entre Bruxelles et les Églises mettent cette lacune régulièrement en évidence. Dernièrement encore, le Vatican s'est adressé à une Conférence européenne, en répétant que la création de l'Europe ne se limite pas à la suppression de frontières ou à l'ouverture de marchés. Il prône la création d'un espace commun de liberté et de solidarité, de justice et de paix. La lettre dit explicitement: « L'organisation de l'Europe du troisième millénaire sera à la fois éthique et politique ». Les spécialistes de l'Europe s'opposent à de telles vues. Leur argumentation s'appuie sur l'introduction du système monétaire unique. L'euro apportera de soi une politique unifiée et provoque déjà des changements sociaux dans les pays européens. De plus, l'économie est en danger. Elle doit s'opposer aux politiques libre-échangistes des États-Unis, du Japon, des tigres de l'Asie du Sud-Est et de nombreux pays d'Amérique latine et de l'Asie,

qui se posent en concurrents dans le marché mondial. Si l'Europe disparaissait de la compétition économique, les conséquences en seraient désastreuses au niveau social et entraîneraient une marginalisation politique. L'expérience démontre que la force économique permet de jouer un rôle substantiel dans les processus de paix dans les Balkans, au Proche-Orient ou dans les contrées africaines des Grands Lacs.

Enfin, chacun tend à promouvoir les valeurs humaines. Or ces valeurs comportent la spiritualité et la religiosité, même aux yeux d'une Europe sécularisée. De fait, le spirituel suscite de l'intérêt. On croit à quelque chose qui transcende le pain quotidien et à un mystère divin, bien qu'on se détourne des formes institutionnalisées des religions. Un tel besoin du spirituel risque de se limiter au niveau d'une conscience élargie, d'un enrichissement de l'expérience globale et d'une ouverture à ce qui dépasse l'homme. Un tel enrichissement peut se limiter au plan individuel et celui-ci à une préoccupation narcissique. Dans la Communauté, la tentation se fait jour de créer une union ouest-européenne visant son propre bonheur. L'humanité ne vit pas seulement de son pain quotidien. Elle vit de la parole du Christ qui se soucie de l'autre. En fin de compte, l'humanité ne connaîtra pas le repos tant qu'elle n'aura pas redécouvert son sens ultime: donner le pain de la vie aux autres.

L'appel des Eglises est indispensable; sinon, la Communauté européenne risque de se replier sur elle-même et de se couper des autres peuples. La pensée chrétienne ne peut se limiter à quinze pays: elle englobe tous les pays, de l'Atlantique à l'Oural. Nous connaissons tous la parole d'un éminent politicien russe: l'Europe est une maison commune. Elle offre plutôt l'image d'un gratte-ciel. Certains étages connaissent la prospérité, d'autres sont ravagés par l'incendie. Et les ascenseurs ne fonctionnent plus ou se bloquent, quand il s'agit de s'entraider. En s'organisant comme communauté, l'Union européenne risque l'introversion. La conviction chrétienne a été imprégnée du sens de sa responsabilité: découvrir partout dans le monde l'humanité; offrir à tout homme l'Evangile; contribuer à l'expansion des autres continents par des initiatives charitables et économiques. L'aide au développement des pays du tiers monde et la contribution personnelle de volontaires sans nombre restent impressionnantes. Par contre, l'intégration en son sein de non-Européens s'avère difficile. Les Eglises aussi se sentent démunies et, en tout cas, frustrées. Au nom du Seigneur, elles souhaitent la bienvenue aux étrangers et accueillent les immigrants. Mais l'Europe ne réussit pas à s'ouvrir aux non-Européens qui veulent avoir part à son bien-être. Les partis politi-

ques qui s'opposent à l'immigration obtiennent des scores électoraux imposants. Les Eglises sont accusées à une tâche ingrate. Elles défendent les principes et talonnent la conscience de l'Europe. Il ne leur appartient pas d'imposer des solutions concrètes qui tiennent compte de tous les éléments d'une situation complexe.

Unification de l'Europe et œcuménisme

Abordons maintenant une dernière question. Les Eglises disposent-elles des forces vives permettant de pousser les Européens à l'Union? En effet, la pratique religieuse s'effrite dans bien des pays européens. Mais il y a plus. Ces Eglises sont-elles crédibles en annonçant l'Evangile, même en s'abstenant de faire la leçon aux autres? Ne demandent-elles pas à l'Europe ce qu'elles ne parviennent pas à réaliser entre elles? La situation devient inconfortable quand elles prêchent l'union sans être à même d'y aboutir elles-mêmes. Les Eglises d'Europe disposent d'un organisme de coordination: la Conférence des Eglises européennes. Les évêques catholiques se rencontrent au niveau européen. N'empêche que la question s'impose: la recherche de l'union est-elle suffisamment intense et délibérée pour être un exemple de rapprochement, de conciliation et d'unification? Si ce n'est pas le cas, l'Eglise est-elle en droit de parler? Le dialogue dépend largement des relations entre l'Orthodoxie, qui domine l'Europe de l'Est, et l'Eglise catholique, qui aujourd'hui encore prédomine en Europe centrale et occidentale. Les Eglises ont compris que si elles acceptent désunion et discorde, elles font scandale et percent tout crédit dans un monde qui, malgré tout, avance vers l'unité. Bien souvent, les Eglises considèrent l'œcuménisme comme un mal inévitable de notre temps, même si leurs aspirations restent vivaces. Bien sûr, personne ne peut prédire où, quand et comment l'union des Eglises se réalisera dans le Christ. Parfois, la honte s'empare d'elles. Elles constatent comment la diplomatie mondiale parvient à réaliser une paix provisoire ou durable, dans des situations inextricables. Elles se rappellent en même temps que ceux qui prêchent l'Evangile de la charité ne parviennent pas à se réconcilier après 2 000 ans de discorde. Nous en convenons: l'œcuménisme suppose un engagement plus radical que l'unification de l'Europe.

Les pays d'Europe ignorent, eux aussi, quel visage aura l'Europe de demain. Ils ne savent pas quel modèle d'unification —une fédération, une intégration ou une alliance—l'emportera. Leur itinéraire peut aboutir à des résultats communs en passant par d'innombrables arrangements et compromis. Ils peuvent se permettre un relativisme poussé à l'extrême. Même

si peu de membres croient fermement à l'union, il suffit d'être conscient de son intérêt propre pour prendre des mesures communes. Des dispositions bureaucratiques sont capables de provoquer des comportements sans exiger une adhésion fondamentale. A l'aéroport, on peut prendre la sortie destinée à la Communauté européenne sans être obligé de porter celle-ci dans son cœur. Les Eglises ne peuvent jamais se satisfaire d'une telle procédure. Mais l'Europe pourra-t-elle se faire sans la volonté délibérée, sinon même l'enthousiasme, des Européens ? Ne serait-ce pas un contresens que de s'engager dans une Europe unie qui se contente de savourer du fromage hollandais, du vin italien, du parfum français, du pain allemand, dans un pub anglais, aux sons de rythmes espagnols ? Une Europe sans engagement est une chimère au vu de la longue tradition dont les Eglises sont les témoins et les héritières.

Le pape Jean-Paul II a proposé que les Eglises demandent pardon pour les aspects négatifs du passé. Ses paroles ont été accueillies avec réticence, même par certains de ses collaborateurs. L'Europe a connu des guerres de religion. Le patriarche œcuménique Bartolomé s'exprime :

Le nationalisme est la force la plus destructrice de l'Histoire. Des conflits nationalistes ne peuvent en aucun cas être légitimés par la foi. Hélas, un tel abus s'est fréquemment présenté au cours de l'Histoire. Quant à la Yougoslavie, nous pouvons être bref: tout méfait qui se réclame de la religion est un méfait contre la religion.

Le Patriarche, comme le Pape, reconnaît que les Eglises en Europe de l'Est sont coupables de s'être laissées prendre par leurs intérêts et par des critères qui n'ont rien d'évangélique. En reconnaissant les aspects négatifs d'un passé parfois sombre, les Eglises ouvrent la voie aux témoignages positifs. Lors d'une rencontre avec la Commission européenne, en 1994, le Patriarche a précisé les objectifs: « L'Orthodoxie peut, doit et veut contribuer à la réalisation du but généreux et vital, une vision spirituelle qui oriente l'Europe. » Le rapport du Synode général de l'Eglise Réformée des Pays-Bas formule les mêmes aspirations, à sa façon: « Les motivations originelles de la recherche de l'unification, qui s'est concrétisée dans l'Union européenne—la réconciliation, la paix et la justice—, restent d'actualité. Les Eglises se doivent de les favoriser de tout cœur. » Il exprime son souci que l'homme européen maintienne son authenticité. Ensuite, il conclut que l'apport de l'Eglise à l'unification européenne ne vise aucunement le rétablissement d'une « Europe chrétienne ». Cette unification

se réfère à la signification de l'Évangile et de son poids dans les problèmes de fond que l'Europe aborde.

L'œcuménisme sera signe de réconciliation en Europe. Les Eglises n'offrent pas de solutions toutes faites. Elles proposent un témoignage, se référant à la personne du Christ et s'inspirant des choix qu'il a vécus jusque dans sa propre chair. Elles seront le levain pour l'élaboration progressive de l'avenir que l'Europe se donnera.

Aux yeux de l'Union européenne, l'Eglise se range techniquement et légalement dans la catégorie de la culture, qui est laissée à la discrétion des quinze Etats membres. Il serait malencontreux de faire reconnaître les Eglises par l'Europe comme cela se fait pour les syndicats et les partis politiques. En fin de compte, l'unification et la réconciliation du monde, même sous sa forme européenne, sont des dons de Dieu: ils demandent prière, souffrance et coopération. Les Eglises n'ont rien à imposer. Mais elles peuvent être mises à contribution, tant qu'elles respectent les caractéristiques propres de l'Europe et qu'elles considèrent le dialogue comme un facteur de croissance indispensable. Jean-Paul II prône sans cesse la nouvelle évangélisation: elle n'est pas croisade, mais évangélisation qualitativement nouvelle. Laissons-lui le dernier mot: « Notre société pluraliste met régulièrement ceux qui croient au Christ en face de défis. Elle nous incite à chercher résolument de nouveaux chemins pour cette évangélisation. Elle nous stimule à prendre des directions nouvelles qui répondent aux changements socio-culturels. »

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THE GOSPEL AS GOOD NEWS FOR AFRICA TODAY

Keynote Address at the Symposium: *The Gospel as Good News for African Cultures*.
16 February 1998 — Nairobi, Kenya

Bishop Peter K. Sarpong of Kumasi

1. Preamble

The accounts of the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded by the four evangelists draw our attention to quite a few basic truths about discipleship of the same Lord. St Mark in Chapter 3, verses 13-15 of his Gospel clearly defines who an apostle is. Jesus, he writes, “appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message, with power to drive out devils”. The apostle, therefore, is chosen to know Jesus intimately and to savour his goodness. He then has to proclaim that goodness.

This was made even more explicit when Jesus, about to leave his Disciples, told them: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes to the end of time” (Mt 28:19-20). Here is yet another truth. In carrying out this work of proclaiming the Good News the disciple is assured of the perpetual presence of the Lord with him inspiring him and supporting him.

The third truth confirmed by the Lord in the Acts of the Apostles is that the proclamation of the Good News is bearing witness to Jesus himself, and that this must reach every part of our globe: “You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the earth’s remotest end” (Acts 1:8).

The fourth truth is that it is the duty of a disciple of the Lord to see to it that all hear the Good News and that in the process of proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ and his goodness, one cannot but deliver people from the shackles of iniquity and oppression. The Good News, therefore, has power and irresistibly urges those who receive it to share it with others. One cannot accept it without passing it on as it were.

Often when the Lord healed a sick person of an infirmity and forbade him to tell others, the healed person would do just what the Lord had told him not to do. This happened to the man with leprosy, the story

of the healing of whom we find in Mark 1:40-45. The Lord had told him “Mind you, tell no one anything”. Yet “the man went away, but then started freely proclaiming and telling the story everywhere”.

All this is a clear indication that the Lord’s Gospel has a liberating mission for all human beings and the Lord intends it as such.

2. John the Baptist

His own preaching of this Gospel of liberation from sin, resulting from a true conversion of hearts, was preceded by that of John the Baptist, who “went through the whole country bordering the Jordan River proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...”. “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not start telling yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our Father’” (Lk 3:1-4,8). He went on to advise those who had two tunics to share with those who had none and anyone who had something to eat to do the same. The tax collectors were to exact no more than the appointed rate. Soldiers were to stop intimidating people, extorting money and be content with their pay (Lk 3:3-14).

The Gospel is indeed Good News of repentance, justice and compassion.

3. Core of Christ’s Message

Jesus’ own words are clear on this. When he began to proclaim the message of God he talked of a Kingdom of God. “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Gospel” (Mk 1:14-15). Matthew recalls the same thing in only slightly different words, “From then onwards Jesus began his proclamation with the message, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand’” (Mt 4:17).

Hence Jesus could justifiably sum up his whole mission in the words of Isaiah when he went to his own town of Nazareth. “He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the Prophet

Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord’... This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening” (Lk 4:16-19,21).

4. The Kingdom of God

The Gospel then is a message about the Kingdom. The preface of the Feast of Christ the King makes it clear that God the Father anointed Jesus Christ, his only Son, as Eternal Priest and Universal King. As priest, he offered his life on the cross and redeemed the human race by his perfect sacrifice of peace. As King, he claims dominion over all creation so that he may present to his Almighty Father “an eternal and universal Kingdom: a Kingdom of truth and life, a Kingdom of holiness and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace”.

Jesus founded the Church to be at the service of this Kingdom. The Kingdom, in the words of Pope Paul VI, is so important “that, by comparison, everything else becomes the ‘rest’, which is ‘given in addition’. Only the kingdom therefore is the absolute, and it makes everything else relative” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 8). The Church serves the Kingdom as its sign and instrument and as a means to it. She is there to preach, promote, establish and nurture the Kingdom and, by the character and quality of her life, to tell the world what the Kingdom is all about.

This Kingdom of God is the reign of Christ in our hearts and comes into being whenever and wherever human beings love one another and accept one another’s burden with the spirit of compassion, concern, generosity and sensitivity.

5. Good African Values

A look at the African culture and life with special reference to the concept of the ideal African family reveals that its values could come in useful in the announcing of the Good News of Christ in Africa. The African family is based on the clan or lineage system. Its members are believed to be relatives, irrespective of the degree of relationship or length of distance separating them. But the clan is not closed in on itself. Strangers, even slaves and prisoners, can be absorbed into it.

The cardinal value of the African family is religiosity, common allegiance to some spiritual overlord. The African family exhibits the values of collectivity and togetherness. Ownership of property is corporate.

Succession, inheritance, status and rank are determined by one’s lineage. Kinship terms do not refer only to biological relationships but equally importantly to sociological relationships. My father’s brother is my father and his children are my sisters and brothers. My father’s brother treats me as my father would.

In my language there is no word for “paternal” uncle or cousin different from that for “father” or “brother”. In the family, individualism has no place, the significant principles being related to solidarity and the collective consciousness. There is a spirit of sharing and caring. Both blessings and difficulties are handled collectively. There is love and affection especially for the sick, the disabled and the aged. In the course of the years members of the family may disperse. They may not even know one another; but let there be a common danger to be expelled or a common good to be achieved or maintained or a common duty to be performed or a right to be enjoyed or a blessing to be shared, and members of the lineage will flock together from everywhere and nowhere almost automatically. The family provides a point of reference for the individual; it gives security to the individual, it gives him dignity. Theologically the family is a gift of God.

In the family there are checks and balances to control authority and regulate life in general. There are mechanisms to reconcile members who may be at loggerheads and tend to disrupt the unity that should exist among family members. Support is offered to the downcast, punishment is meted out to the aberrant. A dominant value in the family is love for life. Everybody wants to communicate life.

6. Counter Values

In spite of the fact that in the ideal situation the African family exhibits the qualities of the Kingdom of God, however, attention must be drawn to the warning note sounded by His Holiness the Pope to the Church in Africa, namely, that in our attempt to build up the Church as Family, we should try to avoid “all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism” and “instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among particular Churches, without undue ethnic considerations” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 63).

The Pope’s words are particularly apt and opportune today in Africa because, whereas members of an ethnic group may cater well for themselves, they may exclude others from their consideration. Members from other ethnic groups are not treated with the same respect as those belonging to it. One protects and supports one’s people against others even when one’s

people are wrong.

How often do Africans not lie or resort to violence to protect their people?

Community solidarity, which creates strong social, economic and religious bonds, is often turned in on itself so that outsiders receive no justice and no compassion. While providing for the welfare of close relatives and friends and ethnic comrades, one may refuse to see beyond one's group and to work sufficiently for the common good. The love of children when absolutised becomes a non-value since it regards childless people as cursed and is one of the main causes of polygynous alliances. The commendable emphasis on personal rather than impersonal values is unfortunately often interpreted as loyalty to one's relatives at any price. Magnanimity is a value.

But this is often understood to mean engaging in the most cruel inhuman activities to gain honour. Too much dependence on the family can easily result in parasitism and engender laziness.

For all its excellent qualities that have convergences in the Gospel, therefore, African sociocultural life is full of serious ambiguities and could be counterproductive to the Good News, if not well directed.

7. Dominant Worldly Values

In this connection four worldly values that are clearly contrary to the values of the Good News, but which appear to be on the ascendancy in Africa, need to be mentioned.

The Lord deplored *prestige* as a value which is opposed to the aspirations of the Kingdom. "As he was teaching, he also said to them, 'Beware of those teachers of the Law who enjoy walking around in long robes and being greeted in the market place, and who like to occupy reserved seats in the synagogues and the first places at feasts. They even devour the widow's and orphan's goods while making a show of long prayers. How severe a sentence they will receive'" (Mk 12:38-40).

Unfortunately not infrequently, many an African ethnic group has sought to gain or maintain its pride through the most ruthless acts of brutality.

Jesus condemned *power* for the sake of power. For him power must be for service. "Jesus then called

them to him and said, 'As you know, the so-called rulers of the nations act as tyrants and their great ones oppress them. But it shall not be so among you; whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you shall make himself slave of all. For the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many'" (Mk 10:42-44).

Alas, Africa is unceasingly subjected to the humiliation of witnessing individuals and their fellow tribesmen not only seeking power by all means, foul

or fair but, also trying to keep it for as long as possible.

A cursory look at the African scene reveals that megalomania and tyranny are some of the principal causes of the bloody conflicts raging over it.

Jesus often had to denounce the false *solidarity* of

the scribes and the pharisees who at the last minute assembled in the palace of the High Priest to conspire together against him (Mt 26:3-5). He minced no words in condemning them for their unholy alliance that made them collectively impose senseless hardships on the simple people, scandalise them, deceive them with meaningless regulations and oppress them without qualms. "Alas for you, scribes and pharisees" (Mt 23:1 ff.). "The teachers of the law and the pharisees occupy the seat of Moses. Listen and do all they say, but do not imitate what they do for they themselves do not practice what they teach. They prepare heavy burdens that are very difficult to carry, and lay them on the shoulders of the people. But they do not even raise a finger to move them" (Mt 23:2-7).

How often, alas, do Africans, in fidelity to a group they belong to, not heartlessly deprive others of their rights?

Money and Possessions, which result in unacceptable avarice, have become what amounts to a pathological concern among African leaders. But the Good News could not be clearer on the harm they do to the building up of the Kingdom. "Then Jesus said to his Disciples, 'Truly I say to you: it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Mt 19:23). "Alas for you who are rich; you are having your consolation now" (Lk 6:24).

It is obvious that these destructive values account in no small measure for the violence with its attendant woes that erupts with such alarming frequency all

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over Africa.

8. Justice and Peace

Indeed often in view of the avid pursuance of these values everywhere in Africa one wonders whether the words “justice” and “peace” can be found in the lexicon of the African.

This is what made His Holiness the Pope join his voice “to that of the members of the Synodal Assembly in order to deplore the situations of unspeakable suffering caused by so many conflicts now taking place or about to break out...” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 117). The Synod Fathers had not only admitted that: “For some decades now Africa has been the theatre of fratricidal wars which are decimating peoples and destroying their natural and cultural resources” (*ibid.*); but also that the catastrophic situation has “internal causes such as tribalism, nepotism, racism, religious intolerance and the thirst for power taken to the extreme by totalitarian regimes which trample with impunity the rights and dignity of the person” (*ibid.*).

9. New Forms of Social Ills

The types of injustices that have been mentioned can be termed as culturally structural injustices. They are a tip of the iceberg. Many others such as acrimonious fights within the same family for leadership positions, the disposal of abnormal babies born with one deformity or another, the discrimination against strangers even when they are absorbed in the family, have not even been broached. And yet new forms of atrocious phenomena have reared their monstrous heads in Africa today. In fact Africa today is fast losing her cultural identity. It is beset with almost insurmountable problems too well known to warrant full enumeration.

Many Africans suffer starvation. The majority of African nations lack basic health requirements. The infant mortality rate in Africa is unacceptably high. The illiteracy rate leaves a great deal to be desired. The situation of man-made hostilities has created a refugee situation whereby Africa has more than half of the world’s homeless. The crippling poverty that has gripped Africa today is frightening.

The love for life is giving way gradually to what Pope John Paul II calls the Culture of Death. Human life appears not be respected any more as is evidenced by the incredible massacre of human beings in Algeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Republic of the Congo, just to name a few, that has become daily news.

The African woman toils and struggles to win the bread for the family. But she is generally not respected

or in any case treated on equal terms with men. Hence the Pope had no choice but to deplore and condemn, wherever they are still found in Africa, “the customs and practices which deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them” (*ibid.*, n. 121).

We were all elated when the evil system of *Apartheid* finally gave way to common sense. It can only be described as tragic that one of the first laws that liberated South Africa enacted was to legalise abortion. It is reported to be on the verge of legalising euthanasia. Political crime may have ceased in South Africa but social crime has quickly replaced it and indeed surpassed it in intensity, magnitude and cruelty.

However, in deciding to give up power, President Mandela has given a unique example of political wisdom which one hopes other African leaders would imitate to save our continent.

Africans were happy when they gained political independence from their colonial masters. Little did they realise that the leadership of African countries would, in the main, soon turn out to be corrupt, power drunk, oppressive and discriminating. The words “bribery and corruption”, “nepotism”, “intimidation” have become so common that they have lost their odium. Everywhere in Africa fundamental human rights are flouted. The phenomenon of devil worship is fast gaining ground, competing with some of the barbaric and sadistic practices of some traditional secret societies.

The youth in Africa are fast losing their sense of identity and purpose. For fulfilment in life, many of them have recourse to drugs, alcohol and other forms of illusory satisfaction. In search of greener pastures, millions of African youth flock from the villages into the cities in search of non-existent jobs and from the cities to every part of the world, especially Europe and America, where they are not wanted and where many of them become criminals.

Rural dwellers continue to be held in contempt, treated unjustly and looked down upon by urban dwellers and yet in most cases they produce the materials that are the mainstay of the national economy.

We cannot talk about Africa today without mentioning, however casually, the AIDS pandemic. Prostitution, armed robbery and other types of crime are causing pandemonium in many African cities and plunging citizens on to the verge of despair. The phenomena of child combatant and street children are destroying the African young girl and boy. We could go on, but to what purpose? We all know it all.

10. Civilisation of Love

There is no doubt that this gloomy picture has

only one cause: sin. Sin in turn is expressed in various ways, notably pride, selfishness and greed. And this is where the Gospel comes in. It is an emancipating news. It is a Gospel of Life and life is a direct antithesis of hatred, which is death. The Gospel, therefore, should help Africans to build what Pope Paul VI calls the Civilisation of Love in order for them to truly live.

Love, that weapon against which there can be no defences, is the only key to the solution of the manifold problems of injustice and slavery to sin in Africa. The Good News of Jesus Christ creates the Civilisation of Love because it preaches the truth, and the Civilisation of Love thrives on truth, and truth is not co-existent with victory for, as a sage has rightly observed: “victory cannot tolerate truth, and if that which is true is spread before your very eyes, you will reject it, because you are victor. Whoever would have truth itself, must drive hence the spirit of victory; only then may he prepare to behold the truth”.

It is my belief that much of the scourge of Africa stems from the African’s desire, nay craze, to be victorious by all means. Yet the Good News does not talk about victory. It utilises the power of Christ himself. Christ is the Truth whose power lies in the cross, and unless we are prepared to follow the Truth right up Calvary rather than pursue victory, we cannot be disciples of the One who said, “I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice” (Jn 18:37). “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross daily and follow me”.

The Good News makes it clear that the transformation of a person into a thing is evil and that the refusal to respond to one afflicted is a denial of his humanity, turning him into a corpse. The Gospel compels us to heed the Word of the Lord: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). The Gospel reminds us of what the spokesman of God said years before the coming of the Messiah. “Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me — it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks — to break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, to clothe

the man you see to be naked and not turn from your own kin?” (Isaiah 58:6-7). Jesus would say the same in other words: “as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

11. Evangelisation

Evangelisation, the proclamation of the Good News of Christ, and human progress therefore converge. It is the acknowledgement and acceptance of the liberating mission and grace of Christ which he has entrusted to the care of his Church.

Christ liberates us from all forms of bonds. He it is who restores us to our former dignity and sets us on the course of salvation. He makes us members of his universal family, the Church, which is his Body. That family is not restricted to any ethnic group, race or continent. It extends the length and breadth of our globe. Accepting Christ, therefore, means being part of one global community without boundaries, after the fashion of the Most Blessed Trinity, the source of true love, unity and peace. It means accepting everybody as one’s brother and sister, helping them when they need help, and treating them justly and living in peace with them. This is the Gospel, the Good News of which Africa today is in dire need.

12. The Need for the Gospel

Africa needs that Good News today to destroy the pernicious spirit of vendetta that is becoming its daily bread and butter. We have become incapable of forgiving, let alone of forgetting. That group has disgraced us; that group has deprived us of our power; that group is in our way to becoming rich; that group has banded together against us. They are our enemies and therefore deserve nothing less than annihilation. We need the Good News to liberate Africa by giving it the power of reconciliation and forgiveness. “You have heard that it was said: ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But I say this to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you”

(Mt 5:43-44).

Africa needs that Good News to give joy to its millions of shelterless, displaced, miserable citizens. Africa today needs the Good News to open its eyes to

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see and accept the best in humanity and reject evil. Africa needs the Good News to bring consolation to its afflicted citizens. Africa needs the Good News to bring liberty to its many captives and to free those millions of Africans incarcerated in the innumerable towers of Babel dotted around it; the edifices of arrogance, hedonism, falsehood, wickedness, hatred, violence and intolerance. Africa today needs the Good News to be the voice of the voiceless in the uncountable situations of abject poverty, the strength of the powerless, and the dignity of the downtrodden. Africa needs the Good News to be the leg of its lame, the ear of its deaf and the mouth of its dumb.

Africa needs the Gospel to make the life of its women and youth meaningful and worth living. Africa needs the Gospel to show us the only human way to get rid of the scourge of AIDS.

In short, Africa, indeed the whole world, needs the Good News for the human community cannot long survive without fidelity to what is essentially human and criticism of what is fundamentally anti-human. Without criticism, charity recedes into ruthlessness, peace dissolves into rivalry and love yields to hostility.

Therefore Africa needs the Church to rid it of political deceit, of the horrors of torture and of the menace of vote rigging and naked intimidation. We need it to fulfil the wish of the Holy Father that Africa be endowed with holy politicians and saintly Heads of State who place the good of their people over and above their personal interests.

Under the judgement of the enduring values of the Good News of Jesus Christ, Africa must critically examine its traditions, customs and cultural heritage with a view to arriving at true freedom. We need the Good News to affirm and confirm the many lofty and wholesome values in African life.

But we need the Good News also to challenge those aspects of our traditions and cultures that are debasing and obsolete. We rely on the Good News to purify, animate, unite, guard and guide our cultures on the path to salvation.

Africa needs the Good News to strengthen it with the power of Christ, to be able to rid itself of the menace of obsession with the spirit world, especially witchcraft and magical beliefs and operation of secret societies and devil worship.

The Good News must help Africa to expose all those forces, personal and political, which undermine the values of friendship, communality, the fear of God and compassion, prophetically denounce them and, through the instrumentality of moral rather than material force, to disarm and dismantle them. Africa should listen to the Good News, which proclaims without compromise the dignity and worth of every hu-

man person and places everything under the judgement of God's Kingdom.

We need the Good News to remind us of the unsurpassable value of the gift of life on account of which Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Africans must not only accept but vigorously preach the Gospel of Life as passionately advocated by the Holy Father in the recent Encyclical bearing that name.

Africa needs the Gospel to create a vibrant Church which unashamedly witnesses to Jesus Christ the Saviour; a Church which directed by the same Good News becomes a revolutionary community which never rests until the principles of the same Gospel of Jesus Christ are everywhere realised, extended and solidified.

We need the principles of the Good News to form small Christian communities in which there is harmony that radiates to others outside them. Directed by the imperatives of the Good News, these small Christian communities must be open to the world.

13. Conclusion

In short, Africa needs the Good News to resolve the many contradictions in which it is entangled at all levels: cultural, political, economic, social, religious and moral. For only one Person can rescue Africa from the chains of domination. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, the subject, object and final goal of the Gospel, the Good News. He is the only Saviour of mankind "who has given himself up for our sins to rescue us from the evil world that surrounds us according to the will of God who is our Father. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Gal. 1:1-5).

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WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

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The title of this reflection is meant to be polemic. It is fashionable today among people in Latin America and in other parts of the world to ask: What remains of liberation theology? The question formulated in this way has a taste of failure or reminds us of a way of thinking that had an impact at one time and left its mark, but has now passed into history. What we are left with from this effort and what we need to be satisfied with are only remnants. From here stems the question, which is loaded with nostalgia, what has become of this way of thinking and the actions it motivated? Faced with this question I am reminded of what Gilbert Chesterton, a polemic British Catholic in the first decades of the century, said when asked if Christianity had failed. He answered that Christianity hadn't failed because it had yet to be put into practice. His answer was obviously off-the-cuff and useful for debate, but it needs to be rounded out in many ways. Nevertheless, Chesterton's response takes aim at an understanding I have of the question "what is left of liberation theology?" which we have started to hear. Why ask what is left when it has only recently become part of the fabric of the life of the Church? Entering into a social fabric as complicated as that of the Church, as has happened with liberation theology, is a long-term process. In the history of the Church, 25 years is really not a very long time. It is certainly too early to hold a funeral mass for a child who is still alive, in good health and still making contributions that enlighten our time.

It is not enough, however, to reaffirm that liberation theology is still pertinent today. It is necessary, I would say absolutely necessary, to revise our way of acting. Revision is not foreign to liberation theology, but has formed part of its demands since it began. I would like to point out some considerations, which are obviously insufficient, that can contribute to this revision. A brief effort to think about these things is a fine way to celebrate the first quarter century of liberation theology.

What has not changed in the fundamental affirmations of this perspective?

A first task of our revision demands that we examine the fundamental affirmations of this perspective. I think that we are all aware that the social, political and ecclesial contexts have changed in the past 25 years, and with them many of the old ways of thinking and acting. Today, we talk about globalisation, the importance of the market, the factor of individual initiative, terms that were not present earlier and are serious changes within the context in which we live. An awareness of the changes is fundamental to understand the present, but it is not enough. Situating ourselves in the present demands another question — a question that could be asked of a dinosaur but is still necessary: What has not changed, what has remained the same, in our previous affirmations? I will mention three examples.

To begin with, liberation theology, in the light of faith and looking at the reality of our peoples, highlights for us the scandalous poverty of the continent, a scandal rooted in sin and a lack of solidarity. It keeps this in mind so that we can stimulate our solidarity with the poor, and join their struggle against poverty. In these past 25 years, liberation theology has highlighted many profound testimonies of solidarity and struggle in the Church in Peru and the rest of Latin America, but, at the same time and despite the efforts, poverty not only has not improved but has in fact worsened. The scandal has not subsided. As such, the need for the liberation of our poor people, and liberation of all, is as necessary today as it was in the past. The fight on the side of the poor against poverty as a central demand of our faith is as urgent today as it was in the past. If we begin to see liberation theology as if it were a kind of "Lord of Sipan", an interesting relic but a thing of the past, we do it at the cost of the reality that surrounds us, and at the cost of the Gospel itself. It is true that liberation theology demands a new creativity today. But this creativity comes from the old affirmation of liberation theology, which

means that if as Church we do not stand up daily with the poor against poverty we are on the sidelines of the Gospel, and of political and social struggles. I think this was one of the major affirmations of what we call liberation theology and I also believe that this affirmation has, in no way, lost its impact or its effect.

Together with this first affirmation, there is another: the conviction that no country can be humanly viable if the poor do not have a dignified participation in it and, as such, a privileged place — preferential if you like — to be and create Church and country. This conviction is based on a faith whose roots come from Jesus Christ and his way of living a human life, and in a faith in the ability of poor people to be actors, subjects and participants in Peruvian and Latin American societies. A conviction that, at one time or another, could have sounded romantic, perhaps an expression of the guilt complex of the *petit bourgeois* with respect to the goodness and humanity of the poor as if original sin did not have an effect below the poverty line; a romanticism that is not based on reality but present in some of its followers. A conviction of faith and experience that has matured over time but is present and important today as it was in the past. I confess that this conviction which I hold, which I believe many others also hold, that the poor occupy a privileged “place” in being and making the Church and country has not only been maintained but has grown. It is a conviction that is maintained in this perspective.

A third major affirmation has to do with the issue of liberation. A review of our way of being and acting has to stem from actions. Actions that demonstrate this perspective of liberation theology have been proved. Many people who have walked with this current in the Church find themselves freer, both in their families and in society. This presence in society is carried out in a local context, but that does not mean it is not proof of liberation. And liberation theology has, without a doubt, contributed to this. That the poor in Peru and the rest of Latin American have not achieved complete liberation does not mean that this perspective no longer has weight, that many examples of liberation that we promoted and witnessed are now invalid. It is important to remember that liberation theology has begun a long-term process. Placing it squarely in this long-term perspective is necessary for a just revision of our actions today.

By saying this I am not defending an understanding of liberation that reduces horizons, that is limited to personal dimensions and small spaces. This is not the point. It is, instead, returning to the three levels of liberation that were originally formulated, particularly the second level — without excluding the other two — where the subjective and personal dimension enter

into what is understood as liberation. What I propose is an exercise in understanding our reality: there are many people, and not only poor people, who live, act and orient their lives in a different way because of this perspective. It is true that a reflection stemming from these three levels of liberation reveals limitations in its results and successes. But there have been successes! A review of this perspective that comes from a lack of recognition of what this has produced reduces future possibilities. With what I have said I want to show that with all of the great changes in the past 25 years not all things have changed. The fundamental affirmations of this perspective continue to be valid. The well has not run dry, but just the opposite, it appears to me to be quite full. Those who draw close to this perspective of liberation theology asking what is left of it are asking the wrong question. The true question is: Stemming from what has been done, how can we advance further? The intention of the following lines is to suggest a few guidelines to answer this question.

What do we understand by evangelisation?

I will leave to people more competent than I a more theological and systematic reflection on what the term “evangelisation” means. I am under the impression, however, that in practice “evangelisation” has been reduced by many to mean “forming the Christian community”. Evidently, the existence of the Christian community is absolutely fundamental for the advent of the kingdom of God. It is this community that anticipates and makes visible the Kingdom in all its fullness. But the Gospel aims at something that cannot be reduced simply to the formation of the Christian community, which Jesus Christ called the “Kingdom”. Many years ago Jon Sobrino suggested what to my mind is a very good formulation of this term and the final intention of Jesus; he said that for Jesus, the Kingdom, could be understood as a “human history according to God”. Building this “history according to God”, a history of true fraternity, open to the fullness that breaks the confines of history itself, is and will be impossible without the Christian community, which makes it necessary. But at the same time this history according to God transcends the visible limits of the community. Taking into account the demands of the Kingdom allows us to understand our evangelizing task. With reference to this, I would like to offer four ideas.

First, the complementarity between the pastoral work of forming the Christian community and the work of promotion, empowerment, or “development”. There are many concrete experiences of ecclesial agents carrying out both pastoral and development work, but

curiously there has been little reflection on the relationship between the two. While both tasks have their own logic that should not be confused, they are different forms of making the Good News of the kingdom present in our lives, complimentary dimensions of the work of evangelisation. This complimentary nature has opened up the sphere of action for the Church and allowed it to have a presence and carry out actions in many more areas. The evangelising perspective of liberation theology, which reflects the perspective of the Kingdom, offers resources to frame this complementary nature between pastoral and development work. Nevertheless, they are resources that we have not yet fully exploited. Articulating this complementarily and understanding it better to make it more effective, forms part of the revision of our framework and way of acting that is demanded today.

Grace or misfortune

The second point deals with the new global context and the manner in which we are placed within it, which is symbolized by the “hard shock”, of the collapse of real socialism in Europe. A hard shock could mean tragedy, but not necessarily. It can, on the other hand, be an unexpected stroke of luck. From this point of view stems the question: Was this collapse a misfortune or blessing? A blow is certainly a reality and we are called to look for states of grace through reality. It is important to remember that in Peru we foresaw this shock in Europe with the collapse of the United Left in early 1989. But if I state that a shock can also lead to grace and not only misfortune it is because we can review the attitudes we have in our minds and put them into practice.

This new situation, for example, demands a revision of our evangelising work in the context of structural adjustment and neoliberalism (a term that often implies a negative and paralysing vision). Some time ago I was talking to a colleague, a good friend, who said, “the market is intrinsically perverse”. If this were the case, some of the small business experiences I have been involved in with people from my neighbourhood would be “intrinsically” imbued with perversion. The new context, nevertheless, presents us with a serious challenge: how to reaffirm the value of solidarity in a market-oriented society that praises individualism and the ability to compete? If we think that there is an intrinsic opposition between solidarity and the market/competition, we can somehow try to maintain a kind of pristine progressive line, but we will become mere spectators on the sidelines of what is happening. There are certain kinds of purist ideas that can be used to hide mental laziness, a laziness that cannot help many people.

There is no way to place ourselves in the present with our discourse or pastoral work if we do not take into account the market, a mechanism we are challenged to humanize and not simply condemn for being “intrinsically perverse”.

In Peruvian society today there are two ways of thinking. One exalts individual efforts and conformity with the so-called laws of the market as the only way of building a modern society. The other places exclusive emphasis on the communal and collective dimension of human life, and condemns with too much ease individual efforts as “individualist”.

Both ways of thinking, at least in their extreme forms, are not only incompatible but also insufficient. These opposing ways of thinking stem from different ideological sources that have been introduced in great part from outside the country. Nevertheless, both forms reinforce and reproduce in one or another way the inequalities found throughout the course of Peruvian history. The line of thinking that highlights individual efforts does not fully recognize this history of inequality; the communal discourse — to use a term to describe it — does not value the process of individualisation that is necessary to build a national democratic society and reinforces, without necessarily being aware of it, the perpetuation of individuals being identified merely by social, cultural or racial categories (Black, Gringo, Indian, Sambo, etc.).

In this effort to humanize the market society we need to recognize that individual creativity and competition are values that we should promote. Without them development is not possible. At the same time, if we do not recognize that networks of solidarity in human life come before individuality and constitute a condition that allows for individual creativity and competition, there is no way for development to be human. This means that promoting a just and human society also means creating a level of solidarity that is competitive and a level of competition that includes solidarity. Is this possible? I think that this is one of the great challenges of our time, and one of the great challenges of our work of evangelisation.

All of this cannot be separated from the perspective of liberation theology. Liberation theology does not mean an option for a determined economic or political system, but a preferential option for the poor. The fundamental question 25 years ago was how to promote liberation and life among the poor of the continent, understanding “poor” not as a simple mass but as individual people with their own dignity. This question is still valid today. It is a question that has political implications, but does not necessarily fall into one or another determined system. I want to discuss further these political implications.

Re-establish dignity in politics

In the third place, one of the challenges to liberation theology today is to contribute, from its Christian and evangelizing specificity, to the work of recovering and re-establishing dignity in politics. Today, there is a public discourse in the world, as well as in this country, that ties political activity to the work of managers, as if running a society was the same thing as running a business. There is no longer a discourse dealing only with politics, and within the context of the increasing globalisation of the economy and culture there is no debate about politics and its relation to other dimensions of human life. In addition, the policies of the Peruvian State in the past few years have been subordinated to the orientation, to the policies of multilateral institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. Does the economy now dominate politics? What is and what should be the role of politics within today's national and global context? Is the strong communal tradition in Peru still valid? Does this tradition offer resources and possibilities to refound political activity?

Recovering the dignity of politics will not come from a discourse or from the logic that it is only an instrument, a logic based on management, because in its true dimension politics is not about power or order, but the results we strive to achieve as a human collective. And the logic of instrumental reasoning — techniques, efficiency and market mechanisms — is not capable on its own to produce results. In this concept, I think the classic idea of what politics is about has been reversed, just as there has been a change in the biblical perspective of creation that puts things at the service of human beings and not the other way around. In this kind of logic, we arrive only at procedures without touching on the fundamental questions of where we want to go as a society and why. This is a fundamental question that gives sense and meaning to the activity and dignity of politics. From here, the public discourse today in Peru is both politically and humanly weak because it is a discourse that avoids the question of the collective goal, or the common good, that is being searched for through the market. They tell us that privatization is development. That depends. They tell us that foreign investment in good. That also depends. These two depend on the conditions on which they are based and what we get out of them as a society, and what it is we mean by society and its components. This search for what we mean by society is the principal task of politics.

It is also an ethical and cultural task. It is not only a task for professional politicians, but for all society,

all citizens. What we need today in Peruvian and Latin American societies is an ethical-cultural debate that comes from the social and economic practices of our people and, above all but not exclusively, from the social and economic practices of the poor sectors, a debate that is progressively visible in the public eye. Only in this way can we talk about re-establishing dignity in politics, only by re-establishing the ethical-cultural framework of society. This is a demanding task that, without a doubt, is a long-term project. It is a task that touches the Church in a special way because the Church is one of the most important resources Peruvians and Latin Americans have to construct a civic ethic based on the search for consensus about what kind of society we are building and what kind of society we want to build. In this effort to begin an ethical-political-cultural debate, a debate on the kind of society we want, we must be aware of the diverse and plural efforts in society to find alternative seeds for a new kind of national life that is democratic and just.

If we take seriously the task of re-establishing politics, this requires that our collaboration in this great challenge has to go beyond the people with whom we have direct contact in our communities and in our work in order to look for new ways to truly meet others who are different from us and form part of our society.

The perspective of liberation theology, with its sensitivity to the political dimension of evangelisation, offers us resources to reinvent an ecclesial practice with an historic edge, a practice that contributes to re-establishing the dignity of the political in the construction of human society. Recuperating the ability to read and discern in political and ethical language what the Church needs to do in society — in local, regional and national efforts — may be the most important contribution we can make in this effort we have called re-establishing dignity in politics.

Work, mission and discernment

To finish this reflection, I would like to suggest that one way to put into practice the perspective of liberation theology is reflecting on what we mean by “mission”. Either by grace or misfortune, it is difficult for me to address this without referring to my experience as a Jesuit. This might be difficult for some readers, and, if it is, I suggest that you simply turn the page.

In my experience in the Company of Jesus — and I do not think this is a problem exclusive to the Jesuits — there is a tendency to identify “mission” with the concrete work that we have been entrusted. In this

understanding of mission, meaning the same thing as work, we reduce the field of our understanding and distance ourselves from the intuition and practice of Ignatius, as well as from the founding principles of liberation theology. Mission is not the same thing as work. Mission is much larger than the simple work. In terms of the meditation on the King that begins the Second Week of Ignatian *Exercises*, mission is the call to participate in the conquest of the world. The task of mission, on the other hand, is only a trench in this battle, an instrument of mission. The identification of the task can have, and at times has had, ominous consequences because it limits our ability for discernment and effectively eliminates it.

I think that one of the important needs of the Church today, and liberation theology within it, is to re-examine what we understand as mission. Our understanding of mission determines if our discernment is truly apostolic or simply a pious way of seeing things, which limits our playing field because it does not offer important challenges in the present, and keeps us yearning for the fictitious golden years of the past. A better understanding of mission is necessary for a serious discernment. How can we articulate what mission is today? Why does the Church exist today in Peru and Latin America? Proposing and answering these kinds of questions will make our mission and work valid and have a cutting edge.

A way of helping us to explain our understanding of mission today in Peru and Latin America could be, from my point of view, reinventing the Principle and Foundation of the beginning of the *Exercises*. That is, what is our starting point and our level of understanding that orients us today? What does the Ignatian call “to praise, revere and serve our Lord God” mean in the language of Peru and Latin America today? The Principle and the Foundation is an affirmation of faith, but a faith found within a context. Ignatius says that the human being was created (affirmation of faith), but created for something.

How do we translate this in the terms of the liberation theology perspective so that the preferential option for the poor is central to this “for something?” How can we express today the phrase “to praise, revere and serve our Lord God?” Allow me to offer a small example, obviously insufficient, of what I am trying to say. I ask forgiveness from Ignatius and Gustavo Gutiérrez beforehand. A Principle and Foundation for our time might be something like this:

We have been created by God and placed in Peru of the 1990's to create a more viable country that recognises, respects and promotes the dignity of all

people, and in this way, live and offer witness to our faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the God of history. We have been created and placed in Peru of the 1990's to tear down the terrible wall of separation and lack of communication that we have inherited. We have been created to forge new relationships between men and women in this society, to promote the dignity of each person, to work so that no person is excluded from human society, and so that absolutely everyone feels like true members and participants in society. And all the things we use and all the tasks and all the work in which we are involved have to be aimed at achieving this end, this mission, for which we were created.

Finally, my example can be improved, which is not said out of false modesty. But I think it points to where we need to go to re-articulate and re-orient our mission. This re-articulation will give us a better understanding of our mission, to orient our reflection and discernment, and to frame the different works in which we are involved.

And to answer the question with which I began this article: what is left to do in the perspective of liberation theology?” A great deal!

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UNE MONDIALISATION A VISAGE HUMAINE

Rubens Ricupero

Rubens Ricupero, né à Sao Paulo, fit connaissance dès sa jeunesse du Père Lebreton auquel il reste très attaché tout en occupant le fauteuil de secrétaire général de la CNUCED. Les lignes qui suivent ont fait l'objet d'une importante communication à la séance d'ouverture de l'année académique 1997-1998 de l'Institut universitaire d'études du développement à Genève.

L'auteur expose ses convictions. Peut-être paraîtront-elles singulièrement optimistes. Elles se distinguent en tout cas des discours qui chargent la mondialisation de tous les maux de la planète, et proposent de voir aussi des «raisons d'espérer», dans cette nouvelle «révolution culturelle». Rubens Ricupero estime possible de concilier stabilité et croissance économique, flexibilité du travail et sécurité de l'emploi. Il compte sur les organisations internationales pour équilibrer la concurrence et rectifier les injustices dues aux inégalités sociales.

Cette approche d'une «mondialisation à visage humain» ne saurait exclure une discussion serrée sur les méfaits de la compétition internationale qui semble, aujourd'hui, soumettre la planète aux seules lois du marché. Le débat est à peine ébauché. Nous espérons y contribuer.

Albert Longchamp

Il y a cent ans, à la veille du 20ème siècle, au moment de l'exposition universelle de Paris, on assistait à une explosion d'enthousiasme et de confiance dans la capacité de la science, de la technologie et de l'industrie à trouver des réponses aux doutes et aux maux de l'humanité. On croyait en un avenir de prospérité et de paix universelles, la victoire définitive sur la cruauté, l'injustice, l'obscurantisme, l'ignorance.

Un siècle plus tard, c'est le contraire de cet optimisme naïf qui s'affiche partout. Nous allons jusqu'à mettre en doute l'idée même du progrès telle que nous l'avons reçue des philosophes des Lumières, c'est-à-dire la croyance dans une amélioration constante et irréversible de la condition humaine.

Nous avons pourtant quelques bonnes raisons d'être fiers des conquêtes et des victoires récentes, au plan politique ou économique. Dans quelques jours, nous allons commémorer le huitième anniversaire de la chute du mur de Berlin. Pendant cette courte période de moins de dix ans, on peut inscrire dans la colonne «crédit» la résolution de nombreux problèmes qui semblaient presque insolubles: fin de la guerre froide, de la division du monde en deux blocs ennemis, de la division de l'Europe, de l'Allemagne, de Berlin; disparition, dans des conditions plutôt pacifiques, de la dictature du communisme réel en Europe; dissolution de l'Union Soviétique et indépendance des anciennes républiques soviétiques; élimination du danger immédiat de l'anéantissement par une guerre nucléaire; retrait des Russes de l'Afghanistan, des Cubains de l'Afrique; pacification

de l'Amérique Centrale avec la fin de la guerre civile au Nicaragua, au Salvador, au Guatemala, mais aussi au Cambodge pendant quelque temps, en Angola, au Mozambique; liquidation pacifique de l'apartheid et avènement d'un gouvernement à majorité noire qui se consolide en Afrique du Sud; enfin le Proche Orient où, malgré les déboires de ces derniers mois, les accords de paix et l'établissement d'une autorité palestinienne marquent malgré tout des progrès.

Sur le plan économique, on pourrait citer la conclusion de l'Uruguay round, l'augmentation des investissements, le taux de croissance annuel de la Chine de 9 ou 10% depuis déjà 18 ans sans interruption, de l'Inde de 7% depuis quatre ans, de l'Indonésie, trois des pays les plus pauvres au monde qui comptent à peu près 2,5 milliards d'habitants, l'aboutissement du Marché commun européen en 1992, la création de l'ALENA en Amérique du Nord, de MERCOSUR en Amérique du Sud, l'expansion de l'ASEAN, la croissance extraordinaire du commerce mondial, etc.

Paradoxes de la mondialisation

Comment se fait-il alors que, malgré ces succès indéniables, on ne soit pas satisfait et que l'on sombre souvent dans le pessimisme?

Nous sommes par nature des êtres à problèmes. Dès que la solution d'un problème est trouvée, nous nous empressons de l'oublier et nous commençons immédiatement à nous préoccuper des problèmes qui restent à régler, même s'ils sont beaucoup moins graves

que les premiers. La fin de la peste noire ne nous console pas de l'absence de traitement contre le sida.

Les solutions ne sont jamais complètes. Très souvent, la résolution concrète d'un problème en crée un nouveau. Le progrès industriel et technologique menace la planète par la pollution, l'énergie nucléaire par la radioactivité, etc.

La science aussi a des limites: Tchernobyl, l'insuccès des efforts pour trouver le remède au cancer, au sida, à la vache folle en sont des exemples. Un livre vient d'être publié aux Etats-Unis sur «la fin de la science». Selon cet ouvrage, la science aurait pratiquement épuisé ses ressources et se trouverait dans une impasse. La fin de la guerre froide n'a pas empêché les génocides en Bosnie et au Rwanda. Aujourd'hui nous nous rendons compte que l'on peut toujours revenir en arrière.

Finalement les périodes de changement rapide sont toujours accompagnées d'une augmentation d'angoisse. Les repères traditionnels sont perdus et il est difficile de les remplacer par de nouveaux repères. Le marxiste italien Antonio Gramsci l'a bien dit: «La crise est la période pendant laquelle l'ancien ne finit pas de mourir et le nouveau a toute la peine à naître. Pendant cette phase, toutes sortes de symptômes morbides remontent à la surface».

Bilan de l'évolution

La mondialisation est un concept ambigu par excellence, difficile à saisir, qui a une signification différente selon les interlocuteurs. On peut néanmoins affirmer qu'il y a deux approches possibles du phénomène. La première est descriptive et objective; elle s'efforce de se maintenir au niveau de la réalité, d'exprimer les faits, tout en se gardant d'émettre des jugements de valeur.

La seconde tente de déduire des normes, des comportements à partir de ce qu'elle croit capter dans la réalité; elle est normative, prescriptive, risquant parfois de tomber dans la doctrine, dans l'idéologie. Elle devient alors une prescription sur la meilleure ou l'unique politique à adopter pour réussir c'est-à-dire, dans ce cas concret, une politique d'intégration la plus rapide et radicale possible à l'économie internationale.

Cette dernière version défigure la mondialisation, principalement de quatre façons. Par le réductionnisme: en la réduisant à un seul des divers éléments, en général à l'économique, au commercial et parfois même à l'élément financier, en oubliant les

éléments politiques et culturels qui, à mon avis, sont encore plus importants. Par le déterminisme: en considérant comme mécanique, irrésistible, comme la «tyrannie des faits», ce qui découle plus des choix des hommes ou des agissements des puissants. Par le conformisme, en prétendant que l'uniformité culturelle et l'élimination d'alternatives à une seule et invariable solution en sont les conséquences. C'est ce que l'on appelle en France la «pensée unique». Enfin par l'anti ou l'a-historicisme, en affirmant qu'il s'agit d'un phénomène nouveau, sans précédent, essentiellement «autre», différent par rapport au passé.

A mon avis, plus qu'un phénomène économique, la mondialisation est un processus culturel. C'est, en peu de mots, l'unification à la dimension de la planète, non pas seulement des marchés mais de l'espace pour l'action humaine et de la communication entre les hommes. En ce sens, la mondialisation a toujours été le produit d'une révolution culturelle généralement exprimée par le franchissement de nouvelles frontières scientifiques et technologiques.

Au point de départ de la mondialisation, les voyages maritimes de découverte des 15^{ème} et 16^{ème} siècles, on trouve la révolution culturelle de la Renaissance, les révolutions coperniciennes et galiléennes, une nouvelle perception de l'homme et de son rôle dans l'univers, les débuts de la science expérimentale. Et, plus précisément, les progrès technologiques en matière de projet, de dessin d'embarcation (la caravelle), dans les techniques et les instruments de navigation (la boussole), en cartographie... Ce sont les inventions scientifiques mais aussi les inventions juridiques intangibles (le contrat d'assurance maritime, la lettre de change, le développement des opérations bancaires et, plus tard, la société par action) qui vont ouvrir la voie à l'expansion de l'Occident à travers la première incarnation du capitalisme, la variante mercantiliste à la recherche du monopole du commerce ainsi que la création de colonies en Afrique, en Asie et dans les Amériques.

A côté des transformations culturelles ce sont de grands événements politiques qui introduisent la mondialisation dans l'Histoire.

Dans le prologue de son livre *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, Charles Boxer nous raconte qu'en 1552, le chroniqueur espagnol Francisco Lopez de Gomara, en dédiant son *Histoire générale des Indes* à l'empereur Charles Quint, avait décrit les voyages de découverte des routes maritimes vers les Indes Occidentales et Orientales comme «le plus grand événement depuis la création du monde, à part l'incarnation et la mort de Celui qui l'a créé». Deux siècles

plus tard, un homme tout à fait différent, Adam Smith, presbytérien écossais, disait à peu près la même chose: «La découverte de l'Amérique et celle d'un passage vers les Indes Orientales par le Cap de Bonne Espérance sont les deux plus grands et plus importants événements enregistrés dans les annales de l'humanité».

Cette première période d'expansion a rompu l'isolement et l'ignorance mutuelle, la rareté des contacts où vivaient jusqu'alors les grandes familles de la civilisation et de la culture humaines, en dépit des rencontres sporadiques qui pouvaient exister entre elles. Que connaissait-on alors en Europe de la Chine, de Cathay, de la civilisation indienne ou japonaise, des grandes cultures des royaumes africains, de l'Abyssinie ? La connaissance était rare, imprécise, mythique et la réciprocité était aussi vraie. On ne soupçonnait même pas l'existence de civilisations américaines avant l'arrivée des Européens.

Deux siècles plus tard, une autre révolution culturelle et scientifique, la révolution newtonienne et ses applications technologiques (la machine à vapeur, les bateaux à vapeur, les trains, les machines industrielles et, plus tard, les moteurs à explosion, les automobiles, l'électricité) ont rendu la révolution industrielle possible. Cette dernière n'avait que faire du monopole commercial des pays ibériques; elle l'a brisé par l'ouverture des ports au commerce et parfois à coups de canon comme en Chine ou au Japon. Elle a aussi donné naissance à l'impérialisme, au partage de l'Afrique et de l'Asie. Cette forme plus moderne, le capitalisme industriel, a ainsi renforcé le degré d'intégration du monde.

Nous nous trouvons maintenant au seuil de la troisième et peut-être dernière phase du processus qui mettra fin à quatre mille ans de solitude et permettra la fin de l'isolement des cultures et des régions. Les derniers bastions de l'isolement, du manque de contact, tombent jour après jour comme la Mongolie, le Vietnam, la Birmanie.

C'est encore une révolution culturelle et scientifique qui rend possible la nouvelle étape. Les conquêtes en matière d'électronique et de télécommunication impriment leur marque caractéristique au moment où nous vivons. On a déjà remarqué que, contrairement aux révolutions antérieures, qui se limitaient à la matière et à l'énergie, la révolution actuelle est une transformation du temps et de l'espace. Dans son livre *Being digital*, Nicholas Negroponte a employé l'expression «Bits versus atoms» pour expliquer que les échanges internationaux, y compris le commerce, con-

sistent de moins en moins en des matériaux, des atomes, traversant des frontières nationales, et de plus en plus en des «bits» (d'information) qui passent d'un ordinateur à un autre, d'un téléphone cellulaire à un autre ou d'un satellite à une station terrestre.

Mais si, une fois encore, une révolution scientifique et technologique est à la base de cette étape, on ne doit pas oublier que c'est un tournant politique qui l'accélère: la chute du mur de Berlin et l'absence d'alternative au «communisme réel».

Les innovations technologiques ont permis l'apparition d'un nouveau type d'économie. La conception, le dessin et la fabrication d'un produit ont perdu leur caractère purement national pour devenir des activités qui peuvent être distribuées géographiquement dans divers endroits, selon la logique des coûts. Le commerce des biens et services a reçu une impulsion extraordinaire grâce aux communications et moyens de transports chaque jour plus rapides et moins coûteux. On commence à utiliser Internet non seulement pour conclure des opérations commerciales mais aussi pour livrer un produit, lorsqu'il s'agit d'un produit intangible (un programme de logiciel, un projet d'architecture, d'ingénierie, de la musique, de l'art, etc). Enfin, les mouvements de capitaux et les opérations financières ont augmenté à un rythme astronomique.

Cette nouvelle économie est primo, de haute vélocité; secundo, à haute intensité en matière de connaissance et non plus de capital, travail ou ressources naturelles; tertio, à dominante transnationale; quarto, extrêmement compétitive.

Mais après tout ce que je viens de développer, on n'arrive pas encore à comprendre pourquoi ces caractéristiques, qui ne sont pas toutes négatives, font tellement peur.

Des raisons d'espérer

Bien que mondialisation et libéralisation ne doivent pas se confondre, la mondialisation, c'est-à-dire le processus historique et culturel, tend à créer des pressions qui conduisent à la libéralisation, pèse sur les décisions et les politiques des gouvernements pour ouvrir, plus ou moins vite, leur économie vers l'extérieur.

Au fur et à mesure de la libéralisation, au fur et à mesure de la réduction ou de l'élimination des barrières nationales qui protégeaient les secteurs les plus vulnérables, on les expose à la concurrence. Mondialisation plus libéralisation se traduisent par une concurrence plus féroce. Et la conjonction de ces deux

processus augmente évidemment les risques, les pressions, la peur, l'insécurité.

La concurrence est un jeu et, comme tous les jeux, elle a besoin de règles et d'un arbitre. Tous les jeux, même les plus cruels, comme ceux de l'arène romaine, avaient des règles. La justification, la raison d'être de la concurrence est qu'en faisant pression sur les gens, elle les oblige à donner le meilleur d'eux-mêmes; en matière économique, cela se traduit par de nouveaux produits ou par la production d'articles à meilleur prix, par des biens et services de meilleure qualité. Le résultat est que l'efficacité de l'ensemble de l'économie s'améliore. L'économie américaine qui a toujours particulièrement encouragé la concurrence en est un bon exemple.

Cependant, même la société américaine, qui est la plus tolérante en matière de concurrence parmi toutes les formes de culture occidentale, ne la considère pas comme une valeur suprême et absolue, à placer au sommet de la pyramide pour y soumettre toutes les autres valeurs. La preuve est que les Américains n'acceptent pas que l'on puisse exporter des produits qui sont compétitifs parce qu'ils ont été produits par des esclaves, des prisonniers, des enfants ou au détriment de l'environnement. Si la valeur d'efficacité économique produite par la concurrence devait être jugée comme suprême et absolue, il n'y aurait pas de raisons valables pour refuser d'acheter de tels produits. Nous ne le faisons pas parce qu'il existe des valeurs, d'autres valeurs d'une nature différente, que la société place au-dessus de l'efficacité.

Ce que toutes ces valeurs ont en commun, c'est d'être des valeurs humaines, soit directement soit par rapport à la nature, condition de survie de l'homme. Il s'agit donc de définir les règles de la concurrence en prenant soin qu'elle ne détruise pas d'autres valeurs qui la transcendent.

Reprenons l'analogie avec le jeu, le sport. Aux Jeux Olympiques, par exemple, des records sont battus, prouvant que l'effort de la compétition permet à des femmes et à des hommes entraînés de franchir de nouvelles barrières et de réaliser des exploits extraordinaires. Mais pour pouvoir être admis dans la compétition, il ne suffit pas de se présenter. Il faut plusieurs années d'entraînement, de préparation spécialisée, de talent naturel et, puis il faut se pré-qualifier. De même, il serait absurde de penser que nous pouvons tous entrer en compétition contre n'importe qui.

Aux Etats-Unis, dans les années 60 et 70, lorsque l'on a essayé de mettre fin à l'inégalité accablante dont souffrait la population noire, la politique de l'ac-

tion affinnative a été mise en oeuvre. Des dispositions particulières ont été adoptées, allant même jusqu'aux quotas et aux préférences, pour aider les minorités. On a reconnu que la société doit traiter les personnes souffrant d'inégalités de façon différenciée. Le contraire, l'exigence d'un traitement rigoureusement égal équivaldrait à dire que les milliardaires et les misérables sont également libres de choisir entre aller dans un hôtel de luxe ou dormir sous un pont.

C'est précisément à cause de la tendance vers une concurrence exacerbée et plus technologique que le danger de marginalisation devient plus sérieux. L'exclusion et la marginalisation existaient déjà et n'ont pas été un sous-produit de la mondialisation. On ne peut toutefois pas nier que la globalisation peut aggraver le risque de marginalisation, non seulement de pays, de régions et même de continents entiers comme l'Afrique mais aussi d'importants secteurs des pays riches: les chômeurs de longue durée, les industries à forte main d'oeuvre, les travailleurs non qualifiés.

Il serait irréaliste d'imaginer que la solution viendra du seul jeu des forces responsables de la mondialisation. Le marché est un mécanisme merveilleux de prises de décision et d'allocations de ressources mais il est déterminé par la logique des prix. Or les prix ne reflètent pas de façon adéquate des valeurs sociales fondamentales qui n'ont pas de valeur marchande: la protection de l'environnement, le combat contre les formes extrêmes d'inégalités, etc. Il n'est pas raisonnable d'attendre du marché et de la mondialisation des remèdes qui ne peuvent venir que des gouvernements. Loin d'être affaibli ou réduit par la mondialisation, le rôle de ces derniers est de concurrencer à l'intérieur des pays et de négocier des normes internationales qui tiennent compte des différentes étapes de développement et de la capacité d'entrer en concurrence. Les arbitres de leur application correcte doivent être des organisations internationales qui reflètent un équilibre d'intérêts et non pas seulement la vision des puissances plus développées.

A l'intérieur des nations, même des nations riches, cet effort de rééquilibrage doit mettre l'accent sur l'éducation pour les besoins de la nouvelle économie, le recyclage des travailleurs au chômage, le soutien aux personnes les plus vulnérables. Au plan international, il sera indispensable d'aider les pays les plus démunis à se préparer et à se qualifier pour participer à la concurrence, à mettre en place les conditions nécessaires au fonctionnement d'une économie de marché, à réaliser leur intégration stratégique dans l'économie globale. Ceci suppose une politique de longue durée, graduelle, progressive, où chaque étape

d'ouverture doit être adéquatement préparée en accord avec les conditions et les limites locales.

En conclusion, la mondialisation, même si elle vient à peine de commencer et ne peut pas être rendue coupable des tendances qui étaient déjà présentes avant son émergence, n'a pas encore entraîné l'accélération de la croissance économique ou une distribution plus équitable de ses bénéfices. La plus grande faillite de notre temps est que nous arrivons au seuil d'un nouveau millénaire sans avoir trouvé de solution aux deux problèmes clés de l'économie dans les pays industrialisés et dans les pays en développement: le chômage et l'inégalité.

Aucune des idéologies de ce siècle, aucune des propositions d'organisation socio-économique n'a été capable jusqu'à maintenant d'assurer un emploi productif à toute personne désireuse de travailler. Le communisme réel se vantait d'un plein-emploi qui cachait en réalité une économie peu performante et encombrée par l'excès de travailleurs dans les usines. Cela a entraîné sa ruine. Le néolibéralisme a abandonné, en pratique, l'idéal de plein-emploi et se résigne à un niveau soi-disant "naturel" de chômage et à des niveaux croissants d'inégalité.

Afin de faire face à ces défis, il nous faut bâtir une «mondialisation à visage humain». Car cette phase, comme celles qui l'ont précédée, n'est pas la conséquence inévitable de forces hors de notre contrôle. L'économie n'est pas, comme le système planétaire, déterminée par des facteurs que nous ne pouvons pas modifier. Elle est au contraire, un produit de la culture, de choix de société, de choix des valeurs. Cette construction doit être orientée par la nature de chaque pays et inspirée de leur culture. La révolution industrielle s'est répandue à travers le monde d'une façon différenciée: on n'a pas copié ou reproduit l'Angleterre dans chacun des autres pays. Chacun a développé son propre modèle.

Aujourd'hui, à la fin du conflit idéologique, nous avons un monde plus convergent où les vieilles batailles entre partisans de l'Etat et partisans du marché sont largement dépassées. Le climat intellectuel est plus homogène dans le sens où les critères de légitimité sont les mêmes et les principes d'organisation socio-économiques sont largement partagés. Les oppositions ne sont plus aussi fortes qu'entre communisme et capitalisme.

Au début de la guerre froide, le communiste bulgare Dimitrov, un des dirigeants du Kominform, disait qu'il n'y aurait dorénavant que deux mondes incompatibles, le monde du socialisme et celui du capitalisme, avec deux systèmes différents et inconciliables. En revanche, aujourd'hui, comme le suggère le

philosophe politique italien, Norberto Bobbio, il n'y a plus ni blanc ni noir mais des nuances de gris plus ou moins accentuées. Les positions se sont rapprochées: on accepte un rôle légitime de l'Etat, complémentaire au marché et nécessaire à son fonctionnement.

De la même façon, il faut concilier stabilité et croissance économique, flexibilité du marché du travail et un minimum de sécurité, encouragement à l'initiative individuelle et réduction de l'inégalité. Les êtres humains ont besoin d'avenir pour vivre, ont besoin de l'espoir qui est confiance dans l'avenir. Une des raisons de l'angoisse et de la peur naît de l'affirmation que, dans un monde globalisé, on doit renoncer pour toujours à la stabilité de l'emploi. Ce genre d'affirmation nie les deux besoins fondamentaux de tout homme dès sa naissance: l'amour et la sécurité. Jamais les êtres humains ne renonceront au besoin, au désir de sécurité.

Dans une économie, une société dominées par l'information, il est utile de rappeler la phrase du grand mathématicien Norbert Wiener, le fondateur de la cybernétique, selon laquelle «être informé, c'est être libre». J'avoue que la première fois que j'ai lu la phrase, je n'ai pas bien compris quel était le rapport entre information et liberté. Après réflexion, je me suis rendu compte que Wiener se référait au fait qu'être libre c'est avoir la possibilité de choisir. Mais pour pouvoir choisir, il faut savoir quelles sont les options et ce qu'elles représentent, c'est-à-dire qu'il faut avoir les informations.

Les phases antérieures de la mondialisation ont utilisé l'avantage en matière d'information scientifique et technologique pour dominer, pour exploiter, pour instaurer le colonialisme et l'impérialisme. Il est de notre devoir d'être, cette fois, fidèle à l'enseignement de Norbert Wiener et de mettre l'information au service, non pas de l'oppression, mais de la libération de l'humanité.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA: A STRUGGLE OF FAITH AND JUSTICE

Ms Marie Dennis

In 1948 delegates to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights carefully crafted the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — the first international agreement on the rights of humankind. The document proclaims the “inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family”. This year, the global community is engaged in a year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the adoption of this Universal Declaration by the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is a fitting time to review current human rights practices in Latin America, where egregious violations of the most basic human rights were common practice in recent years.

A few caveats are essential in the opening paragraphs of this article. First, a citizen of the United States of America cannot write about human rights practices in other parts of the world without acknowledging her own country’s failures in this area — from a refusal to take seriously critiques by the U.N. Human Rights Commission of U.S. use of the death penalty to U.S. failure to ratify documents as basic and widely supported as the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of the Child and U.S. blindness to economic, social and cultural rights as intrinsically tied to our dignity as human beings.

Second, while we must focus on violations of human rights in the Americas and beyond in order to overcome them, it is also very important to acknowledge and honour the wonderful work being done in Latin America by human rights educators and advocates. From Mexico to Chile, and Brazil to Cuba, hundreds of local, regional, national and international groups dedicated to the promotion of human rights exist. Throughout the hemisphere, courageous and enormously creative people are working to defend against violations and to educate about human rights. In some places, like Colombia and Guatemala, human rights work itself remains a dangerous occupation. At the same time some of the greatest signs of hope are the many, many Latin American children who now know their own value, their basic rights. Others are: the grassroots community groups that are carefully studying popular economics and the phenomenon of globalization so they can better defend their economic, social and cultural rights; indigenous peoples whose voices remain clear and strong despite threats to their well-being and to that of the natural environment in which they live; and campesinos whose struggle for land and access to resources is rooted in their understanding of basic human rights.

With that said, let us look at the situation of human rights violations in the hemisphere. At first glance one is inclined to describe the situation of human rights in Latin America as dramatically improved in comparison to the

situation there in the 1970s and 1980s. The egregious, public violations so frequent during those decades, one thinks, have abated. Brutal regimes, most of them military, have given way in most countries to elected civilian governments. The people of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, and El Salvador, for example, have eked out varying degrees of control over perpetrators of the worst violence. But Colombia remains in the throws of overt, uncontrolled and direct violations of human rights with multiple roots and horrendous consequences. In fact, when one looks a little closer, the reality in Latin America is extremely complex. Thus it is instructive to look more closely at a few countries and at a few particular examples of human rights violations that remain of concern across the region — from the familiar practice of disappearance and extrajudicial execution, to violations of the rights of children and workers, to failed judicial systems and widespread impunity, to violations of the cultural rights of indigenous communities, and the economic and social rights of a majority of all communities.

Slowly in recent years, the international community has turned its attention to Colombia, where indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population and political violence are common dimensions of an extremely complex conflict in which guerrillas, paramilitaries, armed forces, police and drug traffickers are involved. The use of tactics like massacres, selective killings, torture and mutilation, terror, the forced recruitment of children and kidnaping has fueled mass displacement of communities. As of early 1998 as many as one million Colombians — one in every 40 — were internally displaced and unable to return home. Human rights defenders in Colombia have been particularly targeted, victims of a sustained campaign of harassment and intimidation, including death threats, arbitrary detention, disappearances and murder — most perpetrated, according to Amnesty International, by state agents or by paramilitary forces which act with their acquiescence or complicity. The recent assassination of an internationally known human rights lawyer, Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, is a tragic illustration.

Another recent killing, that of Bishop Juan José Gerardi in Guatemala, director of the Archdiocesan human rights office in Guatemala City, was even more startling as it occurred in the context of Guatemala’s carefully constructed process toward peace and reconciliation. Bishop Gerardi was killed only a few hours after the Catholic Church’s project to — recover the historical memory of the people of Guatemala (REMHI) promulgated its documentation of over 55,000 human rights violations during the armed conflict and attributed responsibility for nearly 80% of them to the armed forces of Guatemala. Since the murder of Bishop Gerardi many

others have received death threats, including Archbishop Prospero Penados del Barrio; the mayor of Chimaltenango; 60 leaders of the Guatemalan Convergence (a group formed after Bishop Gerardi's murder); three labour leaders; two mayoral candidates of the opposition party; Pedro Nota, an Italian priest who worked closely with Bishop Gerardi on the collection of data for the REMHI report; two members of REMHI's forensic anthropology team, and others coordinating the REMHI project. The home of one man working with REMHI, Federico Reyes, was broken into and his documents and computer were stolen as he prepared to testify in May before a US congressional committee on declassification.

In Mexico, a country in the process of dramatic political and social change, the December massacre at Acteal of 45 unarmed Tsotsil people exposed another growing area of concern. For years the rights of indigenous peoples in the Southern States of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero have been violated or ignored, particularly their social, economic and cultural rights, but recently the activities of paramilitary groups with probable links to the ruling party have become particularly threatening, especially in the northern zone and highlands of Chiapas. In response to the massacre, the government filed criminal charges against alleged paramilitary group members, the local mayor, and state police and forced the resignation of numerous state and national officials. But communities throughout the region still feel extremely vulnerable — almost 15,000 people in Chiapas are internally displaced due to violence and death threats.

In the Chapare region of Bolivia, where coca production has become the only reliable source of income, campesinos have regularly borne the brunt of human rights violations at the hands of counter-narcotics forces. Most have occurred during periods of forced eradication of coca or through application of the exceptionally harsh law 1008, which intends to control drug traffic, but is most often used against small-time coca producers or innocent bystanders. These are frequently imprisoned for extended periods of time as they move slowly through the cumbersome judicial process. Recently, human rights monitors were harassed or actually prevented from working in the Chapare, raising new concerns about the situation there.

In Peru, reduced political violence has occasioned a dramatic decrease in the number of disappearances and extrajudicial executions, but other serious human rights concerns remain. The judicial system and the Public Ministry lack independence and autonomy. Authoritarian President Alberto Fujimori dismissed three justices from the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees because they disagreed with him. Military tribunals regularly interfere with and disregard the decisions of civilian courts, although tribunals of "faceless judges" in place for years have been dismantled. In emergency zones, which still comprise a significant percentage of Peruvian territory, civilian authorities are subordinated to political-military command structures. Torture is a systematic practice, particularly in cases of those arrested on suspicion of terrorist activities, and prison conditions are generally des-

picable. Journalists have been seriously threatened; one in Lima, Baruch Ivcher, lost his Peruvian citizenship as well as control of his television station. Also of great concern are Peruvian laws that permit the state to set quotas for sterilization. In 1997 100,000 tubal ligations were required — most were done to poor women who were not well informed about the procedure. Lastly, although the Human Rights Ombudsman has defended human rights and citizens' rights, because Peru granted total amnesty to those who violated human rights between 1980 and 1995, impunity in Peru has increased and new human rights violations persist.

Struggles in Brazil have been hard and long and persistent for the rights of street children so brutally violated in the streets of megacities like Rio de Janeiro; for landless people who by law have rights to unutilized land but in practice have met incredible resistance; for the rights of indigenous communities threatened by agricultural and mining and corporate invasions; for the basic rights of prisoners; for the rights of women.

Trade agreements and economic integration have highlighted other human rights concerns in the Americas. The rights of workers are perhaps the most obvious as assembly plants contracting for or owned by foreign companies take advantage of very low minimum wages and relaxed labour laws. At the heart of the problem are laws and agreements that give strong preference to capital, allowing it to move freely across national borders, while severely restricting the movement of labour. Side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have provided venue for a few labour rights violations to be formally reviewed, but largely the struggle for humane conditions, for the right to organise and especially for livable wages continues on a factory by factory basis. In countries like Chile and Venezuela and many others, workers are increasingly vulnerable with access to fewer and fewer stable jobs or benefits. Especially sensitive is the right of workers to determine for themselves when and how to assert their rights and how to prevent companies from arbitrarily closing plants or ending contracts to avoid labour demands.

Finally, permeating all other human rights concerns is a widespread awareness that across the Americas the economic and social rights of most people are not being honoured. In country after country, including those used as examples above — almost without exception — the wealthy and powerful are reaping the benefits of macroeconomic growth and increasing stability, while impoverished people and their communities have lost even basic public services in the avalanche of neoliberal reform, including privatisation. In too many places ordinary people can no longer afford basic education or health care. They are articulating their frustration and demands very well in the language of human rights, but the obstacles they encounter are formidable — "heart of the matter" components of the global economy. In this context, the struggle for human rights in the Americas, as in the rest of the world, will go on.

COMING EVENTS

SEDOS GENERAL ASSEMBLY '98

TUESDAY, 1 DECEMBER 1998 - Morning Conferences

MISSION AND POLITICS - LOBBYING THE MIGHTY

Fr Ignacio Harding, OFM
Franciscan International, New York

Lobbying at the UN in New York

Sr Brigid Reynolds SM - Fr Seán J. Healy, SMA
Dublin, Ireland

The Service of Lobbying in front of the Irish Government

SATURDAY, 5 DECEMBER

SEDOS DAY FOR THE SYNOD FOR OCEANIA

Morning Conferences:

Ms Irene Hancey, *New Zealand*
Fr Ennio Mantovani, *Melanesian Pastoral Institute*

Afternoon Conferences:

Msgr. Michael Putney, *Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane*
Msgr. Michel Visi, *Bishop of Vanuatu*

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