

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	130
<hr/>	
THE GLOBALIZATION OF POVERTY	
Armando Lampe	131
<hr/>	
THE MARGINS — THE SITE OF GOD'S VISITATION — A MEDITATION	
Felix Wilfred	136
<hr/>	
TIMOR-ORIENTAL — NAISSANCE D'UNE NATION	
Luiz de Sena	140
<hr/>	
THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS 2001	
Jan Blom, OFM	148
<hr/>	
BEYOND THE CLERGY-LAITY DIVIDE	
Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ	151
<hr/>	
COMING EVENTS	160

Editorial

In our first article, ARMANDO LAMPE, explains that economic globalization is based on the exclusion of a growing number of 'useless' people. As a response he proposes that the Churches decisively engage in the fields of solidarity and education. —

Fr FEIX WILFRED, meditates on the situation of the big masses of people pushed to the margins by modern society. He is convinced that any missionary agenda for the new millennium has to start from their expectations. —

LUIZ DE SENA elaborates in his extensive study on the numerous challenges the people of East Timor have to face to build up the new-born nation. He sees a good role for the Churches in the urgency to "form the citizens". —

The next Synod of Bishops to be held in October 2001, will study the pastoral mission of the Bishops themselves. Fr JAN BLOM, OFM, is one of the first to present a critical analysis of the Lineamenta. —

Fr KURIEN KUNNUMPURAM, SJ, concludes that in order to express the dynamics of Christian witness, the clergy-laity divide will have to be overcome. He insists that only a participatory Church can convincingly appeal to modern sensibility. —

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The Globalization of Poverty

Armando Lampe was born in 1958 in Aruba. He studied theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, sociology at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City and Latin American Studies at the National University of Mexico. He holds a Ph.D. in social and cultural sciences from the Free University of Amsterdam (1988). Currently he is a lecturer at the Universidad de Quintana Roo, Mexico. Recent publications: *História do Cristianismo no Caribe*, Editorial Vozes, Petrópolis, 1995; *Guerra justa o paz justa, Reflexiones teológicas sobre la vía armada en Chiapas*, Centro Antonio Montesinos-Centro de de Estudios Euménicos, Mexico City, 1997. His address: Tanki Leendert 29d Aruba, Dutch Caribbean; E-mail: armlampe@balam.cuc.uqroo.mx

If we were to shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this: There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Americas (North and South) and 8 Africans. 51 would be female, 49 would be male. 70 would be non-White, 30 White. 70 would be non-Christian, 30 Christian. 50% of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people and all 6 would be citizens of the United States. 80 would live in substandard housing. 70 would be unable to read. 50 would suffer from malnutrition. 1 would be near death. 1 would be near birth. 1 would have a college education. No one would own a computer (Dr. T. Roberts, Tulane University).

At the threshold of a new century we can rightly say that a prophetic deed was announced on 11 September 1962, when Pope John XXIII made an appeal at the Second Vatican Council to transform the Church into a Church of the poor. An immediate response came from Latin America, where the majority is Christian and poor.

1. The birth of the liberation theology

In 1959 the Cuban Revolution was a fact and one cannot deny that in its initial phase it was a revolution of the poor against the social marginalization existing on the island. The myth of Che Guevarra and Camilo Torres had a powerful influence on the minds of the youth. In the '60s many religious, priests and Bishops decided to leave their "palaces" and to settle in "barrios" of the poor. The Church had to become poor, was the slogan, in order to be faithful to the message of Jesus of Nazareth. There was also another movement, the one of the poor themselves, who irrupted into the Church to manifest their despair and hope.

From the meeting of those two movements arose the Christian Basic Communities, where the poor lived their faith as a stimulus to change the situation of so-

cial injustice.

This pastoral project of the Church of the poor was the *locus theologicus* of the birth of the Latin American liberation theology. Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote the following definition of poverty in July 1967: material poverty as evil, spiritual poverty as mystical humility and poverty as solidarity with the poor and as protest against the unjust situation. Gutiérrez participated as a *peritus* at the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), celebrated in Medellín in 1968, and his contribution was widely acclaimed by the Bishops who announced to the world that famous expression: preferential (spiritual poverty) option (solidarity and protest) for the poor (material poverty). Not without reason journalists selected Gutiérrez as one of the ten most influential religious personalities of the 20th century, and in that top ten he was the only Latin American to be elected.¹

2. Facing the challenge of the globalization of poverty

We are living in the era of globalization of poverty, and Christian theology cannot remain indifferent to this reality. "Inhuman" poverty (Medellín) remains the major challenge for Christians all over the world. In the '80s nowhere was the explosion of poverty so intense as in Latin America, according to a report of the World Bank.² In 1990 61.8% of the Latin American population was poor.³ According to CEPAL this tendency of an increasing number of poor continued in the '90s, acknowledging a dramatic increase of poverty in Mexico and Argentina.⁴ The new poor, referring to the economic crisis of the middle class, are also increasing. The last report of the World Bank, published in February 1998, confirmed this tendency of the globalization of poverty.

Since the '80s the poor have become more poor and the rich more rich. The World Bank characterised Latin America as the region with the greatest social and economic injustices: in some countries 10%

of the richest have 84 times more resources as 10% of the poorest of the population.⁵ This progressive process of globalization of poverty happened precisely in the period of the expansion of neoliberalism in Latin America. Neoliberal policy stands for: absolute freedom to the market mechanism; absolute priority to export activities with the consequent unconditional support of transnational capital and devaluation of the local currency; reduction of the State influence by privatising productive activities and services; every form of social policy remains subjugated to macroeconomic successes.

The neoliberal governments have produced more and more poor. According to a United Nations' Report from 1992 absolute poverty increased in Latin America from 35% in 1980 to 41% in 1991. In the '80s the minimum wage lost 40% of its buying capacity. In 1960 20% of the richest countries were 30 times richer than 20% of the poorest countries; in 1990 20% of the poorest were 150 times poorer than 20% of the richest of the world population.⁶

On the economic level the process of globalization has shown its inhuman face. First, human labour is not seen as a positive value, machines are taking the place of human labour. Second, capital is invested in the speculative process rather than in the productive one. The consequence of both those tendencies is that there is an economic growth, but also a spectacular growth of unemployment. The globalization of poverty not only in Latin America and the rest of the Third World but also in the former socialist countries and even in First World countries is a dramatic fact that contrasts with the ever smaller group of the happy few. The transnational globalization of the total free market mechanism does not solve the basic needs of the unhappy majority.

However, State centralism, which was carried out by socialist regimes, is not the alternative. Cuba is a good example to show that socialism meant the socialization of poverty in the last years. New economic policies have to be designed that, limit the speculative financial attitude, stimulate productive activities and promote employment. An economic project that does not respond to the basic needs of humanity on the local, national and global level is not a reasonable option. Economy has to serve the common good, that is employment, food, clothing, housing, health, education and security for all.

Economic globalization is based on the exclusion of a growing number of 'useless' persons who do not even have the 'privilege' of being exploited. There are progressively more poor in the global village; never before in human history were there so many so poor, as in the actual situation. The presence of more and

more poor in the world continues to challenge Christianity and theology. Latin American theologians have written that theology of liberation is more relevant than ever, because the poor do not know "where they will sleep" (Gutiérrez).

Precisely because the neoliberal paradigm is so predominant, it condemns those thinkers who uphold the perspective of the excluded, liberation theology is relevant due to its words that come from the excluded world. The end of history was proclaimed in the sense that nothing new will come after the triumph of capitalism (Francis Fukuyama); therefore, liberation theology remains important as one of the few counter-ideologies that questions the supremacy of neoliberalism.

If there is a crisis of liberation theology, it is certainly not because it has betrayed the principle of the preferential option for the poor. One cannot ignore that there is a crisis of paradigms. A paradigm refers to a global concept that plays an important role in the analysis of reality. The international reality has changed since 1989 therefore the theoretical approach to this reality has to change. There is a crisis of one of the most important myths of Western rationality, that is the evolutionist idea that human history is progressing constantly from an inferior phase to a superior one. The present writings of liberation theologians reflect this crisis: no one writes anymore that in the future there will be a society without classes or that the future will be socialist. But liberation theology is still alive and more relevant than ever, and at the threshold of a new century it is as yet not necessary to create an alternative to liberation theology.

For the pastoral work of the Churches this means that in the future it remains important to continue working on two levels:

a. **SOLIDARITY WORK.** The social subject of the process of eradication of poverty and discrimination has to be the poor themselves. Paternalistic activities to combat poverty are doomed to failure. Communitarianism, based on the organisation of the poor themselves, represents an alternative to the present system. The community sense is something so profound in the cultures of the poor that it must be the point of departure of any strategy designed to eradicate poverty. The transnationalisation of the co-operatives of the poor, which offers them the opportunity to export their products to Europe for example, represents an urgent challenge in this era of globalization. From this perspective the massacre of Acteal in Chiapas in December 1997 was a very sad event. In Acteal a successful co-operative of the Indigenous was operating, even on the international level, that was inspired by the principles of liberation

theology as practised by the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas. That Christian and non-violent community was attacked by paramilitary troops who killed more than 40 men, women and children. It was an attack against the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas which under the guidance of Bishop Samuel Ruiz had developed since the '70s a work of solidarity with the Indigenous peoples. After the outbreak of the Zapatista rebellion in January 1994, which was demanding more social justice and political democracy in Mexico, Samuel Ruiz was appointed mediator between the Indigenous movement and the Government. But Bishop Ruiz made it very clear that he could not be neutral in this conflict, because he was on the side of the rights of the poor. It was then no surprise that on 4 November 1997 there was an attempt to kill Bishop Ruiz, followed by the attack on 22 December 1997 against the community of Acteal. Solidarity with the organisation of the poor remains an imperative.

b. EDUCATION WORK. A programme of education in human rights has failed in many countries, and the Churches that traditionally had fostered education initiatives should promote the education for justice and for peace. The person should be educated to recognise and to respect the rights of the other, especially the right to survive. The centre of the pedagogical process has then to be constituted by the poor. As a consequence of this lack of education, theft is considered a crime but not the absolute poverty of millions of people; and many are blind to the violation of human rights. Human rights are constantly violated by the so-called democratic regimes in Latin America, although they are elected by the poor, they govern against the rights of the poor using neoliberal policies. During the last years numerous States were guided by the IMF neoliberal policy of privatization of national resources. The political consequence was the weakening of the Nation-State and the promotion of corruption among politicians. Money was always a temptation for the political powers, but nowadays it is stronger, because political leaders have become managers of the IMF policy who expect a financial reward, and have ceased to be creators of a new society. The corruption of political power has also to do with the progress of money-laundering activities, especially in small States drug-trafficking has become a serious threat to democratic institutions. For the neoliberal order democracy is not a supreme value, in many Latin American and Caribbean countries with a neoliberal government there have been more violations of human rights during the last years. The reason is that there is a quantitative explosion of the poor, as a consequence of the neoliberal policy, and to the

criminalization of the desperate unemployed youth the answer is a repressive regime. Therefore, it is necessary to educate the people to 'see' the violation of human rights, and the Churches, which played an outstanding role in the modern education system, have to reinvent their traditional educational task.

3. Facing the challenge of the cultures of the poor

Because we face an ecological disaster that can destroy our atmosphere and planet, dialogue between all academic disciplines is imperative in order to formulate sustainable development as the new paradigm that responds to the era of globalisation and that is an alternative to the paradigm of neoliberalism. The most threatened species is definitely the human being due to the globalisation of poverty. In this sense the neoliberal order, based on the exclusive defence of capital and the consumerist destruction of ecosystems, represents a fundamental contradiction to the idea of sustainable development, based on the other logic of long term use of resources for the benefit of future generations. However, the omission of the cultural theme would be a serious mistake. There is an intimate relationship between strategies to eradicate poverty and the immense riches of the cultures of the poor. The homogeneous globalization of the culture based on the individualistic love of money is a major obstacle for the humanization of the world.

Medellín and the first liberation theologians faced in a prophetic way the challenge of the poor, but they did not speak about the Indigenous and Afro-American populations and cultures. They remained silent on the subject of dialogue with other Indigenous and Afro-American religions. They were expressions of a White Church as José Comblin stated: "In that period the Church did not understand that the Indians and the Blacks wanted to save their identity and that they were representatives of another culture that was not integrated in the Latin American totality... Also Puebla did not respond to these challenges, leaving these for the future Conference of Santo Domingo".⁷ The Latin American Bishops' Conference that took place in Santo Domingo in 1992 finally spoke of "the importance of deepening a dialogue with the non-Christian religions present in our continent, especially the Indian and Afro-American religions, which have been ignored or marginalised during a long period".

It is indeed a sign of our time to approach Christianity from a post-colonial and post-missionary perspective. For example, the history of the colonial Jesuit mission among the Tarahumaras in Mexico has been described as follows: "The religion that the baptised

Tarahumaras had created in the colonial period by reworking Catholic beliefs and practices within an evolving indigenous framework had become a key element in the formation of their colonial and post-colonial identity....”⁸ The same happened in many other places of Latin America and the Caribbean: the converted had adopted some Western European Christian practices, but a major transformation in belief did not occur.

What took place in the world of the Tarahumaras, was the interaction between two religions, and it is a mistake to think that the ‘other’ had become a Western European Christian. The African American and Amerindian religions had been inclusive religions that could easily add new elements to their respective religious system, which was a complete other logic than the Western European Christian religion that was exclusive.⁹ To engage in dialogue without the presumption of superiority remains a challenge for the Christian Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean; even in the Document of Santo Domingo the other religions are treated in the chapter about the evangelization and missionary task of the Catholic Church, as if the ‘other’ still has to be converted to the true religion.

The term inculturation had been used to discuss the multicultural identity of Christianity in the new millennium.¹⁰ But I think the question of inculturation as a practical guideline for Christian Church matters in post-colonial societies is completely false. It is a *contradictio in terminis* to speak of the future ideal of inculturation of the Western European Christianity in non-Western societies. What happened in the colonial period was that the ‘other’ had integrated, in his or her own ever changing culture, elements of the Western European culture. In the future, non-Western societies will continue struggling with new religious possibilities. *Missio* as a way of converting the ‘other’ to the Western European Christianity was and will be an impossible task. That does not mean that the ‘other’ was or is condemned to his or her traditional forms. The ‘other’ was and is willing to change while being in contact with new religious possibilities.¹¹ That is the paradigm shift that has to take place in missiology, by replacing the paradigm of *missio* by the one of the interaction of religions.¹² The consequences of this perspective are indeed fundamental for missiology and mission history. One cannot speak anymore of a Tarahumaran Christianity, but rather we have to do with baptised Tarahumaras. The history of Christianity in the Third World can no longer be treated as a new chapter in the history of Western European Christianity, it is simply a new book.

4. The future remains open

Some say that in the third millennium one of the world religions that will disappear from the face of the world is the Christian religion.¹³ Indeed, Western European Christendom at the threshold of the third millennium has difficulty in finding heirs who will continue with the “good” work. In Western European countries there is a growing lack of enthusiasm for the historical Christian Churches. In Austria and Germany many Christians are officially leaving the State supported Churches, in other countries churches have been demolished due to lack of believers, and if this trend continues statistics show that in The Netherlands Christians will not form more than 10% of the population in the 21st century. And ‘the children’ of Western European Christendom in the colonial and post-colonial societies happen to be ‘children of another’.

After the traumatic schism of 1054 that broke the unity of European Christianity, the second millennium was dominated by a new specific ideology, the one of the Christian Western World, where there was a strong union between the emergent Nation-States and the Christian religion, thus a form of Christendom. Peter Brown has written the history of the beginnings in the first millennium of what he called the very peculiar form of Western European Christendom, which knew its consolidation and expansion process in the second millennium. Since 1492 when Western Europe became the centre of the world economy, Western European Christendom became a fundamental ideology of Western colonialism. Colonial expansion went hand in hand with the expansion of Western European Christendom.¹⁴ The third millennium might well mean the end of Western European Christendom, not necessarily the death of Christianity. Some speak of the definite farewell to a vision that has dominated a complete epoch.¹⁵

But no one knows what will happen in the future. One can only hope and work for a better future. That strong desire for the future can only come from the world of the poor. The poor are not satisfied with the present state. For them history has not come to an end, they are waiting for the period to come when they will have daily bread. Only the powerful, satisfied with a world of abundance, can proclaim the end of history. As an Indian woman, co-ordinator of the Women’s pastoral work in a parish of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas, said:

Now I have learned to analyse, to see the things that are wrong, because my conscience tells me that it is not good. I have been born for a reason, to do some-

thing for our future. God has granted us life for a purpose, not just to fill an empty space, we have to do something for a better life.... I believe that if we manage to contribute with something, the life of our children will be better, the women will be more respected, with more rights than we had. We are working for their future, that they can enjoy a better future, and that our country can have women who know how to defend their rights. If I remain alone in a corner, I cannot achieve anything, if I only remain busy in my house, I cannot even think of other women, and it is important that we can think on the others....¹⁶

Indeed, the challenge of the next century will be "the others". That is to accept the other as a human being and as a different being. It means to defend the life of everyone without exception. To this we are called by the God of Life.

This article is dedicated to Bishop Samuel Ruiz, successor of Bartolomé de las Casas, who in January 2000 will give the pastoral responsibility of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas to his successor, Raúl Vera. The writing of this article was facilitated by a Research Fellowship at the Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Mainz, awarded by the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung in Bonn.

Notes

¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Liberación y desarrollo: un desafío a la teología', in: C. Romero and I. Muñoz (eds.), *Liberación y desarrollo en América Latina*, Lima: Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas, 1993, 17-29, reference to p. 21.

² World Bank, *World Development Report: Poverty*, Washington D.C., 1990.

³ Proyecto Regional para la Superación de la Pobreza, PNUD, 'Magnitud de la pobreza en América Latina', in: *Comercio Exterior* vol. 42/4, April 1992.

⁴ Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, *Panorama Social de América Latina 1995*, Santiago de Chile, 1995.

⁵ World Bank, *World Development Report 1990: Poverty*, Washington D.C., 1990.

⁶ Proyecto Regional para la Superación de la Pobreza, PNUD, 'Magnitud de la pobreza en América Latina', in: *Comercio Exterior* vol. 42/4, April 1992.

⁷ José Comblin, 'Medellín: vinte anos depois. Balanco temático', in: *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* Vol.

⁸ William L. Merrill, 'Conversion and Colonialism in Northern Mexico: the Tarahumara Response to the Jesuit Mission Program, 1601-1767', in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Conversion to Christianity. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*,

Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993, 129-163; quote from p. 156.

⁹ Cf. Christian Parker, *Otra lógica en América Latina. Religión popular y modernización capitalista*, Mexico D.F. and Santiago de Chile: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993.

¹⁰ Giancarlo Collet, 'Vom theologischen Vandalismus zum theologischen Romantizismus? Fragen einer multikulturellen Identität des Christentums' in M. Pankoka-Schenk and G. Evers (eds.), *Inkulturation und Kontextualität. Theologien im Weltweiten Austausch. Festgabe für Ludwig Bertsch, SJ, zum 65. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt am Main: Jozef Knecht, 1994, 37-49.

¹¹ Erick Langer, 'Conclusion', in E. Langer and R.H. Jackson (eds.), *The New Latin American Mission History*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, 188-194.

¹² Despite the very promising title of the book of David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis 1991, the contents of the work remains traditional.

¹³ Robert Schreiter, former president of the American Society of Missiology, has also suggested to abandon what he called the metaphor of mission, but he is proposing reconciliation as a new metaphor for mission. I fear that this is unacceptable: after 500 years of destruction of non-Western cultures, has the West the right to propose reconciliation? See Robert J. Schreiter, 'Foreword' in L. Price e.a. (eds.), *Mission Matters*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997, 9-16.

¹⁴ Peter de Rosa, *Der Jesus-Mythos. Über die Krise des christlichen Glaubens*, München: Droemer Knaur, 1991, 592 (originally published in English: *The Great Myth*).

¹⁵ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom, 200-1000*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996.

¹⁶ Words of Cedema Morales, May 1994, quoted by Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, *Religiosas e Indígenas en Chiapas: una nueva teología india desde las mujeres?* (unpublished manuscript, p. 21).

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The Margins — The Site of God's Visitation — A Meditation —

Poor people in today's world are increasingly pushed to the margins. They do not have any space, any role in planning for their future and they are deliberately left out. God however, always has privileged the small and the insignificant; God's real self is disclosed most authentically among poor people. If in their sufferings we hear God's judgement about our world, then any agenda for the new millennium has to start from their longings and yearnings. They are sites of God's visitation. It is from these margins visited by God that the world of tomorrow will take shape and make the coming millennium really new and different.

Editor

“God's centre is everywhere, his (her) circumference is nowhere”, so wrote an early Christian thinker. Today, to meditate on God's encounter with us is to be aware of the profound truth, that we just cannot fix centres of God's presence. This stands out in bold relief against increasing claims of possessing the *ipsissima verba* (the very words) of God. What the whole of biblical revelation tells us is that God is someone who finds herself (God is beyond the distinction of male and female. If paternal qualities can be experienced in God, so too maternal qualities. In this meditation I am highlighting the maternal qualities of God, and hence the pronoun “she”) on the margins, at the periphery. Anyone, therefore, wishing to encounter God will migrate to the periphery.

Surprising God in Unsuspected Locations

Jesus' privileging of the small, the hidden and the insignificant in the eyes of the world (Mt 11:11, Lk 7:28, 9:48) has a double purpose: first, it is to show how the mercy and compassion of God is with the last and the least. Secondly, it is among them that God reveals her very self. Like a mother who is particularly fond of a physically weak or handicapped child, so the compassion of God is with persons who are without power and protection. There are numerous incidents in which this deeply engrained attitude of Jesus can be observed. Some incidents drive home the message of Jesus by means of striking contrasts. There is an incident in which disciples were taken by the beauty and grandeur of the Jerusalem temple. It was, as we know from history, a marvel in those days. Jesus was not impressed at all by the glory and magnificence of the temple. He rather shocks his hearers by stating that the centre they claim to possess God would come tumbling down and one stone would not remain on another (Mk 13:2). What he considers great, instead, is what is hidden to the eyes of other persons. He draws the disciples' attention in another direction by pointing out what they have habitually overlooked. He looks at the widow who drops a few coins in the temple treasury (Mk 12:41-44). It is the heart of the

woman and her generosity, that invite high praise from the lips of Jesus.

Children stand as the symbol of all who are powerless and who look up to God as their refuge. It is such people who will inherit the Kingdom of God (Mt 18:2; Mk 9:36; Lk 9:47). What is implied therein is that all persons who care to be on the side of God's Kingdom by doing so become in some sense marginalized and powerless. The Kingdom of God itself is compared to something small, hidden and invisible — the mustard seed, the leaven, etc. (Mt 13:31-33). Here again, the motive of God's self-manifestation is clear. Jesus was so pained by the arrogance of the political and religious centres of his time and, on the other hand, so moved with joy when looking at persons considered non-persons in society, that he breaks out into an exultant statement about where God's self-manifestation takes place: “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes” (Mt 11:25-26).

God's Voice Through Disturbing Questions

We are so used to look to God as the solution — *Deus ex machina* — to all human problems that we forget that God often comes to us as disturbing questions. Experience shows that God is often silent when we are looking for solutions. She speaks when we are silent and allow ourselves to be challenged and taught by realities around us.

She comes in the form of many unsettling questions. Acquiescence to the existing order of things is the sign of God's absence. The presence of God is associated with disquietude regarding the prevailing situation. The ungodly state of affairs stirs up the heart and minds of people deeply discontented with surrounding society.

In the Old Testament, Moses represents the symbol of all people attuned to the voice of God. He was a person who asked disturbing questions about the servitude and suffering of oppressed people in Egypt. His whole being rebelled against unjust treatment

meted out to an Israelite already burdened with work and humiliated in an alien land (Ex 2:11-12). He runs away, but does not leave his questions behind. He carries them with him, and when the women at the well were driven away (Ex 2:16-19), the challenging question is there once again. As the women draw fresh water from the deep well, so do fresh questions gush forth from the heart of Moses. The unquiet heart and mind of Moses presented itself as the most appropriate receptacle for the self-manifestation of God. He is visited by God (Ex 3:1-6). The burning bush is the symbol of the heart of Moses who kept alive disconcerting questions.

The Dreams and Hopes of the Poor — The Tabernacle of God

No people can survive without hope. Cynicism, despair and defeatism would wipe them from the face of the earth. If some ancient civilizations of Asia have survived uninterruptedly to this day, this fact cannot be explained without giving due credit to the element of hope that has been vigorously at work among them. This hope, nurtured through culture and religious traditions, is embedded in the ethos, aesthetics, narratives, and proverbs inspiring the daily lives of the marginal identities, despised groups, and other peoples. One such South Indian proverb says, “There are certainly a thousand suns beyond the clouds” — a proverb that provided the title for a fascinating book by the well-known French journalist Dominique La Pierre. What is significant is that this hope, like the lotus that blooms *from out of the* muddy ground under the waters, has found expression in the midst of adversity, amidst hopeless situations of poverty, malnutrition, misery, and powerlessness. This very situation has converted masses of people into a people of hope and resilience, dreaming of a new world and yearning for a different future. Behind the emaciated faces and fragile bodily frames of children, old people, women and marginalized persons, there is a diamond-like firmness and unshakable hope in life. But for this, they would be victims of the jaws of death. Is this not a sign that the power of God is with these people who do not give up even when everything seems to tumble and fall apart? Hope is the tent God has pitched among the poor people.

Dreams and hopes of poor people are expressed at different levels. Amazing are the innumerable stories of daily life, which reveal how ordinary and simple people are tenaciously anchored in hope in the face of raging odds and adversities. They resist abuses of power, take on the globalising forces by small initiatives at the local level, affirm their identity against cultural domination and homogenization, claim their

right to land and other natural resources against exploiting forces. Is this not a sign of God’s self-manifestation that she is the God of life who, when it is threatened, promotes, nurtures and protects life in all its forms?

These stories of hope are the antidote to demoralizing despondency and despair generated by powerlessness. In biblical terms, the situation of persons on the margins is like that of David before Goliath (1 Sm 17:40-47). This story of the Bible drives home the truth that one should not commit the mistake of identifying God with power and pomp. God is one who is permanently the supporter of David in confrontation with Goliaths, she is with the lamb in confrontation with Leviathan (Is 27:1, Jb 3:8).

Hope is something that breaks the framework of causality. From a logical point of view, there is a proportion between cause and effect. This is the mainstay of the centres, which think in terms of system and order, which unfortunately leave little room for hope. What is claimed in other words is a life without surprises! When the effect, however, far surpasses the apparent cause, and reverses the logical order — an experience that is part and parcel of the life of persons on the margins — we are left with a sense of amazement and wonder. Here we are in the realm of God as hope right in the midst of the life of poor people. Human history itself, moreover, amply bears witness to how the most unpredictable burst into the theatre of human life can falsify all ready-made scripts of centres of every kind. Concurring with this seem to be the conclusions of physical sciences postulating a principle of indeterminacy as part and parcel of even material reality.

Religions have interpreted this experience from a transcendental point of view. When the Israelites, their powerlessness in every way (Dt 7:17-20) notwithstanding, were led to experience wondrous things, they viewed it in faith as the hand of God guiding them. Hope became the never-receding horizon in their lives. Individual stories, like that of Joseph (Gn 37:12ff) and Daniel (Dn 6:1-29), and visions like that of Ezekiel (Ez 37:1-14) of the dry bones, nurtured unshakable confidence in a future God had in store for his people. In the words of Walter Brueggemann, the “Old Testament is fundamentally a literature of hope”.

The mystery and transcendence in the experience of hope can be seen in many other Asian traditions. All over Asia, religious wellsprings of hope abound. Running through the Asian religious universe is the theme of the powerless person conquering the mighty, the good ultimately triumphing over the power of evil. Among many Asian peoples, popular celebrations connected with myths inspired by this vision are occasions for a general renewal of hope. It is a celebration of the power of gods on the margins.

Plurality — The Language of God and the Language of the Poor

No serious-minded person would think that the stupefying diversity in the cosmos and the bio-diversity on planet Earth are things to be regretted because they do not fall within an imagined scheme of unity. In our contemporary world, more than ever before, we realize the disastrous consequence of a pseudo-unity. God speaks today in the language of diversity, something which centres of power fail to comprehend. From the viewpoint of power, only one language — the language of the power-centre — is the legitimate language. Making everybody speak this language of course is the easiest way to control and manipulate. God however, is not a partner to this programme of one language and it is not in consonance with her creation either. The Spirit of God is the source of differences, many tongues, but is also the basis for creative communion and mutuality (Acts 2:1-11). How then could any judaizer care to exclude the gentile? (Acts 15:5-12). Today, are there not many judaizers from whom the differences of poor gentiles, their cultures, their histories, their ethos, modes of thought, etc., are very unsettling?

Poor persons love plurality because they find in it a place for themselves. More important still, they find themselves acknowledged and affirmed. Difference is very important for their life and survival. Abolishing differences and diversity is a programme of domination, whereas affirmation of difference is the way of victims. God is on the side of victims and, therefore, she shares with them the language of difference, and she is most at home with it. Claims of oppressed identities are coupled with assertion of difference. They care to distinguish themselves from others, particularly so, when assimilationist policies are sought to be imposed on them as a solution to their problems. In this situation, affirmation of difference is a weapon against false integration. Difference also becomes entitlement, especially when this difference is the result of a history of discrimination and disadvantages. Assertion of difference more importantly, is the way by which marginal peoples come consciously to perceive and acknowledge their collective selves. *Difference*, in other words, is crucial for construction of their subject-hood as principal agent of their own emancipation. In the struggle of poor people to affirm their difference, we discern God's language of plurality in operation.

God's Scribblings in the Margins of History

The modern world is often characterized as one with sharp historical consciousness. That may well

be so. The crucial question is, however, what kind of history? As is well-known, conquerors write histories and chronicles from their perspective. Consciousness of history among marginal persons expresses itself as a call to re-write it from their perspective. It is the perspective of victims, which converges with God's understanding of history, namely, as that of the story of making a people out of a non-people, the story of raising lowly persons from the dungheap. God, in this sense, is the companion in the history of marginal identities. She is with them in creating and re-building their identities. The entire Bible concerns itself concretely with the reality of identities. The Biblical God was a companion in the identity-formation of a "people" without identity and power. The same God was actively involved in the post-exilic period in re-constructing the symbols and collective identity of a battered people. The vision and world-view of Jesus and his praxis is one of helping to construct the suppressed identities of the *anawim* relegated to the backyard of history by the power-centres of Palestine as well as of the Roman Empire. Paul and his associates battled for space for gentiles within early Christianity and upheld their identity against judaizers. Apoclyptic literature depicts in symbolic expressions the assertion of identity by people driven to the margins by the imperial sway of power. This story of God continues. We shall be failing to discern God's hand and voice if we do not migrate to the margins.

God with Those with the Poor

Because God is on the side of poor people, all persons who stand with poor people are with God. Our world and society, is becoming more global, relying on competition and achievement. It is a scandalous reality that the poor people in our villages and the slums of our cities are pushed to the margins. Their life and their needs do not count. A speeding lorry ran over and crushed to death nine construction workers in the city of Chennai in the month of September, 1999. They were impoverished persons from the rural area who came in search of jobs. They were resting on the payment close to the construction site after a day of sweating out in the parching sun. Everyday such tragedies and crucifixions of innocent people take place in different parts of our country. What is striking is the callous indifference with which people respond to such misfortunes of the poor and powerless.

Persons who stand on the side of the underprivileged are extensions of the arms of God stretching out to pull them up from the ditch. When they experience any such thing, poor people are quick to realize that they are encountering God. It often happens to a committed priest or religious that a poor person when

helped out in a crucial hour of need, expresses his gratitude saying “you are God”. To avoid the *scandelum pusillorum* (scandal of the faint-hearted), these poor are no idolators! What they mean to say is that God becomes real to them in those who stretched out their arms at the right moment; that such people are truly the sacrament of God’s unfailing presence. For poor people, God is intensely present in persons who protect them and their life, saving them from the abyss.

Communities Owning the Poor — New Locus of God’s Speaking

At a time when advanced countries in the capitalist world are experiencing increasing individualism and traditional forms of communities are breaking down, causing “anomie”, we witness new forms of solidarity among marginal peoples all over the world. We know from our experience in South Asia that a closed understanding of religious identity has caused conflict and disruption of the true community spirit. This identity is built on exclusion. The traditional, caste-based understanding of community similarly, has been a source of discrimination and dehumanization. All communities, which live by convention, tradition, rules and regulations but in which poor people are welcomed, are unfortunately locations of God’s absence.

Against this background of “communities” based on the principle of exclusion, the emergence of new forms of open communities and associations stand out, which have as their focus issues affecting marginal peoples and identities. If concrete life-issues bring together people of various backgrounds, their commitment and dedication to the oppressed “other” cement their relationships and create a spirit of profound communion. New forms of communities cut across conventional boundaries. Here we could hear the voice of God today. Characteristic of these communities is that poor people come into their own. It is an act that proceeds not from the head but from the whole being of a person. In our world, owning is something associated with possession of power, position, wealth, etc. These open communities are ones that possess poor people as their own, then everyone leaves them by the wayside in the rat-race to achieve and accumulate. Owning of poor people is clear evidence of the presence of God and it is in reference to it that God’s judgement is made (Mt 25:31-46). Such communities do not have constitutions to swear by and traditions to follow, but have as their heart and treasure poor people.

Communion with poor and marginalized people define these new forms of communities. Members of

these communities may not reside in the same place or locality, but are bound together by a spiritual affinity in their common commitment to poor and marginalized people. All people, for example, who are deeply concerned and committed to the cause of displaced tribals and marginal peoples form a community of common concerns. Those committed to the cause of Dalits, their dignity and rights would form a community. It is such types of communities that become truly sacraments of God’s presence, symbol of her unconditional love and concern.

Victims’ Agenda for a new Millennium — God’s Agenda

As the new millennium is dawning, we hear of great programmes and plans. Commercial sectors project prospects of new and growing markets. Capitalists accumulate wealth. Academics conjure up new avenues to be explored in their respective fields. Self-styled custodians of religio-cultural sectors project certain ethereal visions. These segments of society are most incompetent to judge our world and societies. Yet they rule the world with their fiat and fatwas in every area. Who are the persons who will be able to tell us about the true face of our societies? Who are the persons who will expose the festering wounds of our world? Those who really are able to tell us about the true face of our world and judge it are the victims. In their judgment about the world, we hear God’s own verdict. Anyone today who would like to listen to what God thinks of the mess we have made of our world, has to accept the judgement poor people make about our world through their wounds. Poor people may not be articulate but they themselves are in a way the judgement of God.

Victims on the margins do not have any space, any role in the planning for their future; they are left behind and even deliberately muscled out. If in the suffering of the poor, however, we hear God’s judgement about our world, if we see in their tears, agony and misery the true face of our world, any projection for the future, or any agenda for the new millennium must begin from their longings and yearning. The agenda from the periphery is the agenda of God. The real future of humanity comes from here and not from grotesque decisions and deliberations from centres that dominate the world. It is from the site of God’s visitation — the margins — that a new world will take and make the millennium really new and different. This is our hope.

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Timor-Oriental

Naissance d'une Nation

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Comme certains feux de maquis qui pendant un temps disparaissent sous la cendre et soudain se rallument avec éclat, l'histoire du Timor, petite île de l'archipel de la Sonde, s'est brusquement accélérée. Provoquant du même coup une prise de conscience planétaire.

Quiconque visitait le pays au mois de décembre dernier ne pouvait soupçonner un instant les épreuves que Timor et ses fils allaient endurer quelques mois plus tard. Impressionné par l'accueil et l'hospitalité de ce peuple, ce visiteur était loin d'imaginer que tant de haine déferlerait sur ce petit pays. Une accélération de l'Histoire que l'on serait tenté d'attribuer à une succession de hasards. Et pourtant, durant ces journées dramatiques, le peuple timorais a su faire preuve d'une maturité inattendue et a répondu avec force aux énormes défis qui se posaient à lui. Et cela en dépit des risques et des dangers mortels encourus par les siens.

Chute d'une dictature

En mai 1998, la vieille dictature indonésienne s'écroulait en quelques jours devant des mouvements de protestation de rue et sous le poids de sa propre corruption. Le Timor, et son annexion brutale en 1976, n'ont pas été étrangers à cette chute. Ignorés des années durant, voire censurés par la presse indonésienne, le désir d'indépendance et la lutte des Timorais ont joué un rôle de déclic dans la mobilisation du mouvement étudiant indonésien et, plus largement, des organisations et associations travaillant en faveur des droits de l'homme et des droits sociaux. Timor a agi comme une sorte de miroir révélant aux Indonésiens les dysfonctionnements de leur propre société.

En effet, l'Indonésie, durant quarante des cinquante années de son existence comme pays indépendant, n'a pas connu de régime vraiment démocratique. Le gouvernement « progressiste et non aligné » de Sukarno (1), père de l'indépendance du pays et promoteur de la première Conférence de Bandung en

1955 fut renversé par un coup d'Etat qui amena au pouvoir le général Suharto. La dictature sanguinaire qui suivit ce coup de force - tristement célèbre pour avoir perpétré un des plus grands massacres politiques du siècle - a toujours pu compter sur l'appui et la protection des Occidentaux et des Japonais, peu soucieux de faire respecter les droits de l'homme en pleine Guerre froide durant l'engagement américain au Vietnam.

Le choix de l'indépendance

Pendant la période de transition consécutive au départ de Suharto, le 21 mai 1998, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, président fantoche selon les uns, habile continuateur d'un système honni selon les autres (proposé aux Timorais en janvier 1999), de choisir entre l'autonomie - au sein de l'Etat indonésien - et l'indépendance. Sincérité ou hypocrisie ? Excès d'optimisme ou ruse pour offrir au monde des gages de démocratie ? Ou tout simplement volonté d'en finir avec un abcès qui empoisonne les relations internationales d'un pays voulant apparaître « en changement » ? Peut-être un peu de tout cela à la fois. Toujours est-il que cette décision venant d'un pays agité par des crises identitaires et de fréquentes pulsions centrifuges était pour le moins inattendue.

Huit mois plus tard, malgré les menaces et violences qui pèsent sur lui, le peuple timorais décide de prendre son propre destin en main. Le 30 août 1999, faisant fi des intimidations, 98 % des électeurs se présentent aux urnes. Une large majorité (78,5 %) opte pour l'indépendance.

La suite, on la connaît. Après proclamation des résultats, une vague de violence déferle sur le pays. Violence gratuite relevant plus d'une attitude de dépit et d'un esprit de revanche que d'intérêts particuliers. Violence stupide, semblable à celle qui s'est répétée maintes fois durant ce siècle sur différents continents : Allemagne nazie, Rwanda, Cambodge, Kosovo, ... Violence mettant en cause toute prétention au progrès

moral de l'humanité.

Pour expliquer cette violence de type génocidaire, on a mis en avant les exactions de milices intégrationnistes en omettant de préciser qu'elles avaient été créées, armées et guidées par l'armée indonésienne. Pire encore, on sait à présent que les anciens membres de Kopassus (2) ont participé aux massacres.

Les justifications officielles voudraient faire croire que « *les soldats auraient agi en tant qu'individus et non en tant que soldats* ». Quelle ironie ! Qu'on se rappelle seulement que l'état de siège avait été préalablement proclamé. Ces « héros » de la guerre non conventionnelle qui « *courageusement* » ont démontré leur efficacité devant des populations sans défense ont été bien formés et bien entraînés par les Américains et les Australiens. Et disposaient de liens avec les *Special Action Services* britanniques et les mercenaires sud-africains *Executive Outcomers* (3).

Un grand peuple

Mais cette naissance du Timor dans les affres de la douleur nous donne de nouvelles raisons de renouer avec l'espoir en cette fin de siècle marquée de bien des désillusions. Ce « grand peuple », bien que petit par le nombre, s'est en effet montré prêt à sacrifier sa vie en échange d'un droit : celui de choisir son avenir. Face à un monde qui ne se mobilise que pour des biens matériels et financiers, les Timorais ont accepté de mourir pour sauver leur identité. Face à un monde qui ne reconnaît plus que le court terme, ils ont manifesté leur volonté de se projeter dans l'avenir. Face à une mondialisation qui fragmente l'humanité en individualismes frileux, ils ont pris collectivement d'énormes risques pour défendre des valeurs considérées comme dépassées : le peuple, la nation, la patrie. Ils ont opté pour un « vivre ensemble ». Autant de choix qui témoignent de leur soif de liberté. Dernière-née du millénaire, cette petite nation est un symbole porteur d'optimisme pour notre monde. Encore faut-il qu'on la laisse vivre.

Ces événements dramatiques ont provoqué, par contrecoup, un réel sursaut dans un autre petit pays : le Portugal. En devenant « européen », l'ancien colonisateur du Timor semblait en effet avoir perdu son ouverture au monde. Il était accusé, entre autres, d'oublier son passé de pourvoyeur de migrants en appliquant avec zèle la discipline de Schengen (4). Et voilà que tout un peuple, en rage et en larmes, se mobilise comme un seul homme contre la brutalité et l'injustice qui accablent le Timor. Le Portugal a-t-il voulu se racheter de son passé de colonisateur et des

lâchetés dont il a été accusé en 1975 ? Toujours est-il qu'à 15 000 km de là, le petit peuple de son ancienne colonie lui a offert une superbe occasion de se racheter.

Ces cris d'alarme repris aujourd'hui par tout le Portugal, ont été pendant longtemps le seul fait de quelques ONG empêchantes de tourner en rond. Cette ténacité, ainsi que les pressions diplomatiques qui se sont exercées auprès de l'ONU, ajoutées à la nomination en 1996 des deux prix Nobel de la Paix (5), ont permis d'accélérer les événements. En optant finalement pour l'indépendance le Timor a offert à la communauté internationale l'occasion de retrouver son âme. Il aura néanmoins fallu 24 années pour que, face à un pouvoir indonésien qui perdait de plus en plus de crédibilité, l'on se décide enfin à consulter les Timorais sur leur sort. En dépit de ces lenteurs, la communauté internationale a finalement refusé de persister dans les voies de la *realpolitik* et a choisi de défendre les droits d'un petit peuple face à un géant de 200 millions d'individus.

Une identité paradoxale

Quelle est donc cette identité pour laquelle les Timorais se sont montrés prêts à mourir ? Certaines de ses caractéristiques ne sont pas faciles à cerner. Habités à trouver leurs racines dans une longue histoire au point d'avoir du mal à appréhender l'avenir, les Européens ont tendance à considérer comme paradoxales ces jeunes « identités » qui ont à peine 25 ans d'existence. Marqués par les exigences de la logique et de la rationalité, au point de s'interroger en permanence sur les raisons de leur « vivre ensemble », ils ont du mal à comprendre les revendications d'une identité née au cœur de multiples contradictions.

Les Timorais se reconnaissent catholiques et membres du monde lusophone et même lusitaniens. En 1512, les Portugais débarquent dans l'île du Timor. S'ils évangélisent avec zèle le pays, ils ne veulent pas pour autant en faire une colonie de peuplement. L'île sera et restera, dans le « réseau asiatique portugais », un entrepôt après le XIX^{ème} siècle.

Un seul exemple suffit à confirmer la nature des intentions portugaises sur le Timor. Au moment de l'invasion des Indonésiens en 1976, seulement 2,5 % de la population (6) parlaient portugais. Aujourd'hui, grâce à la scolarisation indonésienne qui a même assumé les dépenses des écoles catholiques, la langue écrite des Timorais est l'indonésien (*bahasa indonesia*). Pour ce qui est des langues propres, le Timor Oriental en compte plus de 14 principales ap-

partenant aux deux familles (austro-nésiennes et papoues) régionales (7). Toutes ces langues sont très minoritaires et bien localisées, sauf le tetum qui s'impose à plusieurs zones, peut-être à cause de l'usage que les missionnaires en ont fait au long des siècles.

On ne doit pas non plus oublier que les deux principaux mouvements qui constituent aujourd'hui le Conseil national de la résistance du Timor (CNRT) - l'Union démocratique timoraise (UDT) et le Front révolutionnaire pour l'indépendance du Timor (FRETILIN) - sont indépendantistes. Et si l'UDT représente un parti recrutant dans les minorités assimilées, visant une indépendance progressive en liaison avec le Portugal, le FRETILIN, d'inspiration initiale social-démocrate (8), avait le caractère populaire et mobilisateur du peuple maubère (9). La rupture entre ces deux mouvements, qui se sont opposés dans une guerre civile en 1975, et le bref gouvernement du FRETILIN après cet épisode, n'ont jamais mis en question leur commune volonté d'indépendance.

En ce qui concerne l'identité catholique, l'Eglise comptait, en 1974, 150 000 fidèles pratiquant une religion teintée d'un certain syncrétisme. Durant toute la période qui a suivi l'invasion indonésienne de 1975, elle a dénoncé constamment les massacres successifs et protégé la population dans les situations de détresse.

Les prises de position de l'Eglise du Timor en faveur de la population et contre la brutalité de l'armée indonésienne ont commencé à se manifester au moment même de l'invasion. Au plus fort de la répression - on estime à plus de 200 000 le nombre des morts - la population s'est tournée vers les religieux. Des prêtres se sont réfugiés avec des gens du peuple dans les montagnes, rejoignant les zones contrôlées par le FRETILIN. Dès 1976, face aux rumeurs provoquées par cet événement, le dernier évêque portugais de Dili, José Joaquim Ribeiro, avait protesté auprès du commandement de l'armée indonésienne, faisant remarquer que « *la troupe avec ses assassinats, pillages et viols était mille fois pire* », sous-entendu « *que le FRETILIN* » (11) considéré alors comme « *communiste* ».

En 1977, après le départ de Mgr Ribeiro, Mgr Da Costa Lopes, premier évêque timorais, est nommé administrateur apostolique du diocèse. Des divergences de vue apparaissent avec le nonce à Djakarta. A propos de ces prêtres qui avaient rejoint les « zones libérées », l'évêque timorais avait rappelé que le FRETILIN comptait dans ses rangs bon nombre de personnes ayant une formation catholique, que beaucoup d'entre eux avaient même fréquenté le séminaire,

et il avait ajouté : « *Il n'y a rien de mal à cela* » (12).

A partir de 1981, Mgr Costa Lopes commence à dénoncer publiquement la situation, en particulier l'enrôlement forcé de 50 000 Timorais pour la résistance du FRETILIN. Dans un témoignage écrit qu'il fait parvenir au Portugal et qui sera rendu public par une ONG (*A paz é possível em Timor Leste*) il déclare : « *Je sens une impérieuse nécessité de dénoncer au monde entier le génocide qui est en cours au Timor afin que, si nous devons mourir, le monde sache au moins que nous mourrons debout* ». Ces prises de position de plus en plus fréquentes gênent considérablement la *realpolitik* du Saint-Siège et irritent le pouvoir indonésien qui s'emploie par tous les moyens à discréditer l'évêque. Conséquence, Mgr Da Costa est poussé à la démission. Il mourra en exil au Portugal. En 1983, pour le remplacer le jeune Carlos Belo est nommé évêque. C'est le dernier essai d'apaisement du Vatican qui cherche à éviter une éventuelle persécution des catholiques indonésiens. Le 6 février 1989, ce jeune évêque que l'on avait cru docile et malléable, se révèle au monde en adressant une lettre au Secrétaire général de l'ONU. Il rappelle dans un langage simple et clair que « *jusqu'à maintenant le peuple n'a pas encore été consulté. Ce sont les autres qui parlent au nom du peuple. C'est l'Indonésie qui dit que le peuple a choisi l'intégration, mais le peuple du Timor lui-même n'a jamais dit cela. Le Portugal veut laisser au temps le soin de résoudre le problème, mais pendant ce temps nous mourons comme peuple et comme nation. Excellence, il n'y a pas de moyen plus démocratique pour connaître la volonté suprême du peuple timorais que la réalisation d'un référendum, promu par les Nations Unies, en faveur du peuple du Timor* ».

En commentant sa lettre, le 15 mars 1989, il ajoute : « *Cette lettre veut alerter le monde : les intérêts économiques et stratégiques ne peuvent servir de raisons pour violer les droits essentiels d'un peuple, si petit soit-il* ». Et, en juillet 1994, il justifie sa requête en se prévalant de sa responsabilité (13) : « *Les Indonésiens me considèrent comme un adversaire irréconciliable, mais ils ont tort. En fait, je ne suis rien d'autre qu'un observateur concerné. Comment pourrait-il en être autrement quand la dénonciation de l'injustice fait partie du devoir d'un évêque ?* » Des années durant, il n'y eut que cette petite église timoraise pour se faire l'écho des souffrances du peuple. Il n'est pas surprenant, dès lors, que la population catholique du Timor soit passée à 800 000 personnes sur un total de 950 000 habitants. Quiconque a vu les églises pleines et les manifestations d'attachement aux pratiques religieuses ne peut accepter

que l'on qualifie le christianisme des Timorais de circonstanciel ou de convenance. Il s'agit certes d'un catholicisme traditionnel et fortement influencé par ses origines portugaises mais fervent et bien ancré dans les convictions du peuple.

Un pays sous perfusion

Ainsi les Timorais ont voté contre le maintien de leur pays dans la nation indonésienne. Ils l'ont fait dans l'espoir de pouvoir maîtriser pleinement leur avenir. Saluons l'autodétermination qui leur a permis d'accéder à l'indépendance. Il leur faut à présent reconstruire le pays. Il importe qu'ils en soient les maîtres d'œuvre.

En Occident, et même ailleurs, on s'interroge sur la viabilité d'un si petit pays qui compte moins d'un million d'habitants. Une petite île perdue dans l'archipel indonésien et dans un continent asiatique peuplé d'un milliard d'individus. La réponse à cette question réside dans la détermination des Timorais eux-mêmes. Ils ont fait le choix de vivre ensemble - cela devrait suffire - et refusé de n'être que la 27^{ème} province de l'Indonésie. Une province perdue au milieu de l'agitation d'un géant qui n'en finit pas de trouver son identité.

Comme tout homme qui vient au monde, le Timor-Oriental n'a pas choisi sa famille d'accueil. Le nouveau pays est né dans le tiers monde, dans cette immense famille qui ne cesse de croître et dont les membres ont vécu en permanence dans la pauvreté et les affres de la misère. Aussi, comme tout enfant du tiers monde, il sera appelé à se battre pendant sa petite enfance pour survivre et contourner les pathologies sociales et chroniques qui l'empêcheraient d'avoir des conditions de vie humaines.

Pour le moment, le pays est sous perfusion. Perfusion de l'urgence humanitaire. Celle-ci est devenue nécessaire et il faut se réjouir de sa présence. Mais c'est un scénario qui se répète de plus en plus souvent et qui pourrait se résumer ainsi : « Il était une fois un méchant acteur que les pays, "garants de l'ordre international", avaient bien nourri et rendu puissant pour achever quelques sales besognes. Un jour, cet acteur se rebelle et décide de faire le mal à son propre compte. La communauté internationale est alors interpellée et soumise à une grande pression. Elle commence par gesticuler. Après de longs pourparlers, les "grands" examinent ce qu'ils peuvent faire, ce qu'ils veulent faire... La machine de l'ONU, déjà très lente, tarde encore plus à se mettre en marche. Quand enfin les forces de paix arrivent, les massa-

ces, les pillages et les exactions ont déjà perpétré leur œuvre de mort. Alors l'aide humanitaire devient nécessaire et urgente. Elle tente, tant bien que mal, de remédier aux graves dysfonctionnements provoqués par notre civilisation. Résultat, les uns sont amenés à reconstruire ce que d'autres ont détruit ! Et ainsi de suite (14)... »

Quel développement pour Timor ?

La deuxième étape sera celle de l'aide au développement. Dom Carlos Belo a déjà évoqué, au cours de son séjour en Allemagne, en septembre dernier, un « plan Marshal » pour le pays. Xanana Gusmao, président du Conseil national de la résistance du Timor, lors de sa visite au Portugal, également en septembre, a manifesté de son côté l'exigence du CNRT de participer à l'administration initiale du pays. Il a aussi fait remarquer que le Timor Oriental souffrait d'un manque patent de cadres et de compétences, et a sollicité l'aide internationale pour le développement. Pour le moment, le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU s'est contenté d'autoriser la mise en place d'une administration onusienne sous la direction du Brésilien Sergio Vieira De Mello.

La question primordiale est de savoir ce que les *uns* et les autres mettent sous le terme de développement. En ces temps de mondialisation effrénée, le développement semble devenu un sujet démodé. Le modèle économique dominant, qui s'est transformé en « pensée unique », ne reconnaît comme règle que le marché sans contraintes qui, de plus en plus, se traduit dans les faits par le marché financier sans frontières. La logique financière n'est pas sensible aux cycles longs ni aux investissements publics et sociaux qu'exige toute œuvre de développement. Le marché n'est concerné que par le profit et n'a que faire de l'Etat dont le rôle est pourtant d'orienter la politique vers la distribution de la richesse et le bien commun. Or, le développement durable n'a de chances de réussir que si l'on place l'homme au centre des préoccupations de la vie sociale et économique. Cette divergence dans la conception du développement pourrait être paradoxalement bénéfique au Timor. Le pays n'est pas grand, sa population ne dépasse pas le million. Les dépenses de reconstruction ne devraient pas prendre des proportions démesurées. L'aide au développement ne demandera pas de grands « sacrifices » de la part de la coopération bilatérale et multilatérale. De plus, les richesses du pays n'attireront pas les convoitises des raiders. Théoriquement, les conditions sont réunies pour qu'on laisse Timor se développer selon la volonté, les besoins et les rythmes de ses habitants.

Pourtant, nous avons de bonnes raisons de crain-

dre que ce peuple, qui a survécu à la violence, ne vienne à être menacé d'étouffement et noyé sous l'aide. Y compris celle qui relève de la bonne volonté. Quelle tragique ironie de l'Histoire si ce peuple, qui a connu les pires dangers pour gagner le droit à l'autodétermination, venait à être privé de la possibilité de choisir son avenir et de la manière de le bâtir !

Concrètement, que va-t-il se passer ? Il faut d'abord s'attendre à une aide officielle tant bilatérale que multilatérale. Elle sera souvent octroyée selon les orientations des institutions qui appliquent la logique officielle de l'actuel ordre économique international. Le risque est grand, dans cette logique, que les pauvres, convalescents de l'aide humanitaire, ne soient pas consultés.

Dans le même temps, il est à prévoir une aide privée, assurée par des bureaux d'étude et par des organisations non gouvernementales (ONG). Les premiers seront chargés des opérations d'importance qui mobilisent beaucoup de moyens. Ces bureaux d'étude sont les clients des coopérations officielles dont ils doivent obligatoirement partager les points de vue.

En ce qui concerne les ONG, leur coopération risque d'être dispersée, et pas dans le sens positif de la décentralisation et d'une créativité respectueuse des originalités, des besoins et des intuitions des interlocuteurs à la base. Cela, c'était l'apanage des ONG dont la multiplicité représentait bien l'expression de la société civile. Aujourd'hui, on ne croit presque plus à cette créativité là. On croit plutôt à la concentration (15). La dispersion à laquelle on risque d'assister est celle de la concurrence et de l'absence d'entente entre ONG.

En outre, il arrive souvent que les ONG n'aient plus la même vision du développement. De plus en plus de divergences apparaissent dans la pratique et dans les idées. Dans le passé, la logique de coopération préconisée par le « développement humain » s'attachait à commencer par les gens du peuple. Il s'agissait de laisser ces derniers identifier ce dont ils avaient besoin, et l'action de développement était destinée à les aider à découvrir les moyens de résoudre leurs problèmes. Cette logique est aujourd'hui abandonnée. En quarante années d'expérience, le développement, théorique et pratique, est devenu une discipline « sérieuse ». Elle a formé probablement plus de « techniciens développeurs » venus de l'extérieur qu'elle n'a suscité de capacités parmi les populations des pays pauvres.

Les raisons en sont multiples. On a constitué dans

ces pays des classes dirigeantes qui comprennent mieux la logique des intérêts extérieurs - dont elles sont fréquemment solidaires - que la logique des intérêts des populations elles-mêmes. En général, le développement moderne exogène provoque le démantèlement des systèmes traditionnels, libérant ainsi des masses de personnes qu'il est incapable de réintégrer ailleurs. Car les bailleurs de fonds de tout bord sont impatientes. Les financiers ne connaissent que le court terme. Il n'y a donc plus de temps à perdre avec des habitudes et des cultures d'ailleurs condamnées à disparaître ! Moralement, le risque est grand de substituer les connaissances techniques ou techno scientifiques à la pratique sociale, de confondre science et morale. Dans cette logique, celui qui sait (au sens de science) a la prétention de savoir (au sens de sagesse), certainement mieux que les intéressés eux-mêmes, comment les rendre heureux.

Il serait souhaitable pour le Timor-Oriental que l'on passe rapidement de la logique d'urgence à la logique de développement, que l'on évite de mettre en œuvre de gros projets (à l'exception de ceux qui s'avèrent nécessaires), et surtout que l'on donne priorité aux petits projets permettant une intense participation d'un maximum de gens du peuple. Enfin, que l'on pense d'abord aux hommes et aux femmes et seulement après aux techniques et aux « gros sous ».

L'idéal serait qu'il y ait une concertation entre les ONG qui prétendent intervenir dans une perspective humaine pour qu'elles concentrent leur attention sur la promotion, à tous les niveaux, des ressources humaines du pays. Et pour qu'elles s'unissent de façon à contraindre « les aides officielles » à écouter les demandes du peuple, ses centres d'intérêt, ses besoins concrets, ses rythmes et ses capacités à assumer son propre développement. En un mot, pour permettre que l'aide arrive aux populations et que cette aide soit à leur portée.

L'urgence : former des citoyens

Parmi les acteurs à écouter et à soutenir, l'Eglise timoraise ne doit pas être oubliée. Elle a souffert dans son corps et dans son esprit. Depuis des années, elle n'a cessé de célébrer ses martyrs, allongeant dramatiquement la liste de son « memento des morts ». Mais ces derniers jours, au moment où le peuple vivait mort et résurrection, elle a été invitée avec plus d'insistance encore à participer à ce sacrifice de la population. Cette Eglise pleure la mort et la disparition d'une grande quantité de fidèles parmi lesquels des leaders, des séminaristes, des religieuses, des diacres et quelques prêtres. En revanche, force est de constater qu'elle

n'a pas subi d'importantes pertes matérielles (16).

Sous le poids de tant de souffrances, sa force morale a grandi. Il ne faudrait pas cependant qu'elle cède à la tentation d'en faire une source de pouvoir. Des années durant, cette force morale a été mise au service de la protection des Timorais, mais aussi d'une réconciliation difficile dont les tentatives répétées pour qu'elle aboutisse doivent être aujourd'hui poursuivies. On a parlé plus d'une fois de risques de « polonisation », de l'Eglise du Timor. On devrait pouvoir se rassurer en lisant ce que l'évêque de Baucau, Dom Basilio Do Nascimento, disait à propos même des tâches subsidiaires de son église dans une interview à *La Vie* (17) : « *Après avoir incarné la résistance du peuple timorais, notre Eglise doit maintenant revenir à sa mission religieuse. Nous ne pouvons pas continuer, comme cela est le cas aujourd'hui, à diriger tant d'écoles, d'orphelinats et d'œuvres sociales. La reconstruction du pays passe par nous, mais elle passe aussi par un rapide transfert de pouvoir aux autorités civiles. L'évêque que je suis aspire à redevenir davantage le prêtre que j'étais* ».

L'Eglise, de par sa présence auprès de la population, est la seule institution qui offre un espace d'encadrement à la majorité des habitants de l'île. Elle devra être attentive à maintenir cet espace pour que la population puisse se ressaisir, soigner ses blessures et dépasser ses traumatismes. Dans l'immédiat, sa tâche la plus importante est de contribuer à la réconciliation. On parle déjà du troisième Dare, du nom de la ville timoraise où s'est tenue la première des deux réunions en faveur de la réconciliation, en septembre 1998 (18). Ce rôle de réconciliation, l'Eglise a essayé de le jouer durant les événements sanglants de septembre 1999, comme en témoigne Dom Basilio dans une interview à *La Croix* (19) : « *Quand nous avons vu la terreur qui régnait, nous nous sommes tous mis ensemble, les autorités civiles, les bupati (administrateurs de la ville), le chef de la police et le commandant militaire, ainsi que les milices, et nous avons dialogué* ». Aujourd'hui, les leaders du CNRT invitent, eux aussi, les Timorais à cette réconciliation. Xanana Gusmao et José Ramos Horta ont manifesté cette préoccupation lors de contacts fréquents avec la presse mondiale.

Viennent ensuite les tâches dont, aux dires de certains, l'Eglise devrait être déchargée : les hôpitaux, les écoles, les œuvres sociales. L'Eglise avait constitué un important réseau d'écoles qu'elle avait pu créer avec l'appui de l'Etat indonésien. La procédure de collaboration était simple. L'Eglise décidait de fonder

une école, construisait l'édifice, recrutait ses propres enseignants. L'Etat l'aidait en assumant une partie des frais. Il mettait aussi à sa disposition des enseignants du public à partir de candidatures proposées par elle. Nul ne peut ignorer cet effort de l'Etat indonésien en faveur de la scolarisation des Timorais.

Il faut aussi rappeler que le salaire d'un enseignant du public au Timor-Oriental était deux fois plus élevé que celui des enseignants d'autres îles. Cela ajoute à la gravité du problème éducatif auquel le tout nouveau pays va être confronté. Les deux réseaux (privé et public) ont été démantelés avec le départ des enseignants indonésiens. La tâche est donc immense. C'est sans doute une des plus grandes préoccupations des futurs responsables du nouvel Etat, les problèmes de politique linguistique nationale et de langue scolaire ne faisant que les aggraver. L'Eglise ayant été très engagée jusqu'à un passé récent dans le travail d'éducation ne peut sérieusement se dérober à cette tâche délicate. Le défi qui se pose à elle est de collaborer à la nouvelle conception du système éducatif du pays et à sa mise en œuvre en engageant ses ressources humaines propres et en mobilisant des ressources extérieures.

Le problème sera semblable pour les réseaux de soins de santé et l'assistance sociale. Même si, dans ce domaine, il est plus facile d'imaginer l'apport qui peut être fourni par des agences d'aide étrangères.

Enfin, s'agissant du développement, le retour sur « la pastorale », tel que le préconise Dom Basilio, ne devrait pas signifier un repli de l'Eglise sur elle-même. Au contraire, un travail pédagogique avec les laïcs chrétiens devrait être le meilleur garant de sa contribution au développement.

Un premier travail urgent que l'Eglise peut réaliser est d'offrir son cadre, son espace pour que la population reconstitue son tissu social, soigne ses traumatismes moraux, réunisse à nouveau les familles, rassemble les dispersés. Elle peut promouvoir auprès de ces personnes une action spécifique pour les aider à surmonter leur détresse, rechercher un nouveau sens à leur vie, retrouver la paix et se donner une espérance. Un formidable travail de restauration est ainsi à réaliser avec les énergies du peuple lui-même.

Dom Basilio, dans son interview à *La Croix* (21), déclarait : « *Ici, l'Eglise a d'abord été la défense, le refuge des Timorais contre les abus (...). Ensuite elle a été appelée à jouer un rôle de réconciliatrice [...]. Pour l'avenir, je pense que nous allons avoir un troisième rôle. L'Eglise, en tant qu'institution est appe-*

lée à structurer l'homme timorais, à préparer ceux qui vont avoir la tâche de reconstruire le pays. Après toutes ces violences ils doivent faire une catharsis, retrouver les valeurs chrétiennes, extirper cette haine ». C'est ce rôle essentiel qu'elle a à jouer auprès des fidèles : restructurer l'homme et préparer ceux qui auront la lourde tâche de construire le pays.

Cela représente sans doute une véritable conversion pour une Eglise qui est demeurée assez traditionnelle de par ses origines, et très cléricale. Une Eglise qui, jusqu'à présent, reconnaissait peu la responsabilité et le rôle des laïcs et même des religieuses qui sont pourtant plus de 600 dans le pays. La grande contribution de l'Eglise dans cette nouvelle étape de développement du pays devra être cette conversion pastorale dont la formation de chrétiens adultes, par l'émancipation du laïcat en son sein, représente l'élément le plus important.

Le diocèse de Baucau a demandé qu'une étude, commencée par le père jésuite Karim Albrecht (22), soit étendue à l'ensemble des diocèses et utilisée par les paroisses. Cette étude permettrait de réfléchir sur les besoins du pays en matière de développement et de mettre en route, déjà au niveau des paroisses, un processus de formation à la citoyenneté. Une urgence qui, si elle n'est pas prise en compte à temps, risque de compromettre pour longtemps l'avenir du pays.

L'exemple de Baucau et plus largement du Timor Oriental montre que, dans un monde fortement sécularisé, les religions peuvent jouer un rôle essentiel : celui de contribuer à responsabiliser leurs fidèles pour qu'ils deviennent des citoyens à part entière dans leur pays et dans le monde.

Notes

(1) Régime démocratique entre 1949 et 1959 puis régime spécial de « démocratie guidée » jusqu'au coup d'Etat de 1965.

(2) Troupe d'élites aux ordres de Prabowo, beaux-fils de Suharto, dissoute avec l'arrivée au pouvoir de Yusuf Habibie et la nomination du général Wiranto aux armées.

(3) *Le Monde diplomatique*, octobre 1999, R. Bertrand.

(4) Traité européen supprimant de facto les frontières entre la majorité des pays de l'Union européenne et appliquant les mêmes politiques à l'égard de l'immigration et de l'asile.

(5) Le Prix Nobel de la Paix a été décerné à Mgr Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo (administrateur apostolique de Dili) et José Ramos Horta., ancien ministre

des Affaires étrangères du FRETILIN et aujourd'hui vice-président du CNRT.

(6) Certaines personnalités d'Eglise ont cherché à maintenir une mémoire portugaise, mais on peut se demander s'il ne s'agissait pas plus d'un volontarisme émanant de quelques personnes. Les prêtres, en particulier les jeunes, ne parlent pas tous le portugais.

(7) Des études portugaises, dans les années 1960, ont recensé 31 groupes linguistiques.

(8) Les principaux leaders du FRETILIN (Xavier do Amaral et Nicolau Lobato) pouvaient être considérés comme des chrétiens progressistes ou de gauche. Ce n'est qu'après qu'on reconnaît une influence marxiste dans le mouvement. Cette influence explique l'accusation de « communiste » par ses adversaires (régime salazariste au Portugal, de Suharto en Indonésie, UDT...).

(9) Quelques auteurs reconnaissent dans ce terme une note de mépris des anciens coloniaux pour des « indigènes non assimilés ».

(10) Au dernier recensement portugais en 1974, les catholiques étaient 159 000, représentant 30 % de la population.

(11) Geoffrey Hull, *East Timor: Just a political question ?* Document publié par la Commission « Justice et paix » de la Conférence épiscopale australienne et traduit en français dans Dossiers et documents N° 9/92 du numéro 143 d'*Eglises d'Asie* (16 novembre 1992).

(12) Informations catholiques internationales (ICI), n° 167, août 1982.

(13) *Le Monde*, 12 octobre 1996, Jean-Claude Pomonti.

(14) Les organisations humanitaires ont pris de nos jours une grande importance : ce sont peut-être les seules ONG qui ont connu une véritable croissance. Elles comptent avec le support des gouvernements et des populations des pays riches dont la solidarité se mobilise plus facilement pour soigner les effets des catastrophes que pour les prévenir. La croissance de ces organisations se manifeste par le souci permanent d'augmenter et de diversifier leurs services de façon à être capables d'offrir une gamme plus complète de produits à leur clientèle.

(15) On sait que les organismes d'aide commencent à se concentrer en conglomérats. On découvre même une espèce de petit cannibalisme malthusien entre ONG, concentration et cannibalisme stimulés et appuyés par des organismes d'aide multilatérale et par les gouvernements.

(16) Aucune église n'a été détruite contre 60 brûlées pendant les émeutes dans l'île de Java au mois de novembre 1998. Cela confirme que le conflit de Timor n'a pas été un conflit de religions comme certains l'ont laissé croire.

(17) *La Vie*, 7 octobre 1999, Richard Werly.

(18) La 2^{ème} Rencontre de réconciliation a eu lieu à Djakarta, fin juin 1999.

(19) *La Croix*, 6 octobre 1999, Marie-Pierre Vérot.

(20) La réconciliation et la pacification sont aussi importantes parce qu'on devrait dès maintenant pouvoir penser au retour de médecins indonésiens au titre d'une future coopération entre les deux pays. Xanana Gusmao a soulevé cette question à plusieurs reprises.

(21) Cf. note 19.

(22) Karim Albrecht, prêtre jésuite d'origine allemande et de nationalité indonésienne, a été assassiné le 11 septembre 1999.

Repères historiques

Les royaumes hindou et bouddhiste qui se sont développés sur les îles de Java et Sumatra depuis le VII^{ème} siècle succombent peu à peu à l'avancée de l'islam au cours du XIV^{ème} siècle.

Présents dans l'archipel depuis 1511, les Portugais arrivent à Timor en 1520.

Entre le XVII^{ème} et les débuts du XX^{ème} siècles, la présence portugaise dans l'archipel se réduit progressivement. Des 1653, les Hollandais occupent la partie ouest de l'île de Timor.

En 1904, un traité entre la Hollande et le Portugal définit les frontières actuelles de la colonie portugaise de Timor également l'enclave de Oekussi et les îles d'Atauro et Jaco).

Durant la deuxième Guerre mondiale, le Japon occupe l'archipel, y compris le Timor-Oriental.

Avec la défaite du Japon, les nationalistes indonésiens, sous la conduite de Sukarno, déclarent l'indépendance de l'Indonésie le 17 août 1945. En 1965, Sukarno est renversé par un coup d'Etat militaire fomenté par le général Suharto. Une violente répression s'abat alors sur les « communistes » faisant près d'un million de morts.

Le 25 avril 1974, le président Caetano (successeur de Salazar) est renversé pacifiquement au Portugal. Le colonisateur se retire de Timor et laisse le champ libre à l'intervention indonésienne fin 1975. L'annexion ne sera jamais entérinée par les Nations unies.

En 1998, Suharto est contraint de démissionner. Il est remplacé par Yusuf Habibie. Le régime indonésien entre dans une phase de mutation. Une proposition de consultation sur un projet d'autonomie élargie en faveur de Timor-Oriental est faite par le président Habibie en janvier 1999. Le 5 mai, l'Indonésie et le Portugal, sous l'égide des Nations unies, signent un accord au terme duquel la population est-timoraise

devra être consultée par référendum. Le 30 août 1999, une majorité de 78,5 % opte pour l'indépendance. Le résultat des élections entraîne une répression violente de la part de l'armée et des milices. L'intervention des casques bleus de l'ONU mettra fin aux violences.

Le 20 octobre 1999, Abdurahman Wahid est élu président de la République d'Indonésie. Megawati Sukarnoputri, fille de Sukarno, devient vice-présidente.

Repères géographiques

Situé à 600 kilomètres des côtes australiennes, le Timor-Oriental a une superficie de 14 615 km² (enclave de Oekussi et des îles d'Atauro et Jaco compris).

Sa population est évaluée à 950 000 habitants. La capitale, Dili, en comptait environ 200 000 avant les événements violents de l'automne 1999.

Ses ressources sont relativement diverses : agriculture (le pays est exportateur de café), forêt, pétrole.

Ref.: *Dossiers et documents*, n.1/2000, Janvier 2000.

The Synod of Bishops 2001

In a critical analysis of the Lineamenta for the proposed Synod of Bishops in 2001, the author reflects on some of the questions raised.

The title of the *Lineamenta* of the Bishops' Synod is, The Bishop: Servant of the Gospel of Jesus for the Hope of the World. Reading through the document is not very exciting. Nothing really new and nothing much of joy. The tendency of the document is a going back to the *status quo ante* Vatican II. It is a document of the so-called 'restoration-ideology' with not much very hopeful. The main stress is again on inflating the hierarchy, instead of Vatican II's stress on the People of God. The thrust is again towards the Church instead of towards the 'kingdom of God'. It is as if the writers, reading the words of Christ, 'where two or three are gathered in my name I will be in their midst' would not hesitate to add 'provided a Bishop is present'. The *Lineamenta* suggests that the Bishops are the sole means through which Christ and the Holy Spirit are allowed to work. A monopoly on the 'service of hope' for the Bishops is not only against the movement of Vatican II, but is also a distortion of the Gospel. Eph 4:4-7 is very clear about this 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all mankind, who is Lord of all, works through all and is in all. Each one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given'.

The *Lineamenta* mention that the Bishop is to be a 'servant' and a 'good shepherd'. Yet this is done in such a way that it makes a caricature of this noble ministry of 'serving and shepherding'. The *Lineamenta* put the Bishop high on the throne of powerful canon law, with on one side of his desk, 'the Word of God' and on the other, the 'Magisterium'. From this high position the Bishop has to rule, to teach and to sanctify. But how could a ruler rule unless he listens to the ruled? How can a sanctifier sanctify unless he listens to the sinner? How can a teacher teach unless he listens to his students? Without listening he will land up ruling, sanctifying and teaching in a vacuum. This vacuum will be avoided if the 'servant' Bishop sincerely believes in *Vox populi, Vox Dei* (= that the voice of the people is the voice of God). Therefore a good shepherd has courageously to walk in the midst of the flock. There in the middle of the flock he will discover why people cry, how they are burdened, how they suffer, and how their faith strengthens them to trek along on the way of the Lord. There in the middle of the flock the 'shepherd' will be able to hear the 'voice of God' in a loving communion. Listening to this 'voice of God' in a loving communion. Listening to this 'voice of God' from the people the 'servant-shepherd' will find his way to real leadership, he will find his way to encourage people and

he will find his way of making his service into a healing service.

If a Bishop relies on a ready-made fixed agenda then he will be walking in front of the flock in a vacuum. Even Jesus himself did not have a ready-made fixed agenda 'from on high'. In his everyday ministry. Instead he discovers his mission in the voice of people wherever he meets them, when they cry out to him, when they appeal to him or when they just put their misery before him. To take examples from just one Gospel: 'Then he came to Bethsaida and some people brought him a blind man whom they begged him to touch' (Mk 8:22). 'And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment of speech and they asked him to lay his hands on him' (Mk 7:32). 'In the storm on the lake... they woke him up and shouted, "Master, do you not care? We are going down"' (Mk 4:38). 'Jairus pleaded: "My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life". Jesus went with him' (Mk 5:21-24).

In these voices of pleading people Jesus hears 'the voice of God', clarifying his mission then. In this way he really did become 'the good shepherd' and the 'faithful servant'.

If however, the 'service' of the Bishop is time and again translated into terms of power and authority, then the Church will discover that the more authoritative it tries to be the less people will care. *Humanae Vitae* and its non-reception is one example. Another destructive example is the appointment of 'restoration' Bishops in certain Dioceses. Three of them in Holland, and they were enough to kill all the enthusiasm generated during Vatican II. Confusion, painful divisions, and public apathy was the result.

Some Questions Raised by the Lineamenta

There is still in the document, a very strong division between the secular/worldly vs the religious/spiritual. The clergy have to look after spiritual matters and the task of the laity is to take care of the 'worldly affairs'. The Incarnation does not allow such a division. Jesus teaches that God is present, with all his power in the ordinary and secular events of life. Jesus is the 'Emmanuel', the God-with-us, both when we pray and when we eat rice. When Jesus feeds the hungry, do we call that secular? Or when he teaches people to pray, would that be spiritual? All spheres of life are geared to his kingdom and all are the concern of the whole Church.

I get the impression that the authors of the *Lineamenta* did not study any modern exegesis or an up-to-date Church history. I believe that the study of history is able to free us from many an ideological virus. History challenges us to face some serious questions.

In what sense, e.g., can we say that Jesus founded a church? Did he have — and give us — a blueprint of the church with a hierarchy of Pope, Bishop, priest, deacon, with the proper division of clergy and laity, with the seven sacraments and jurisdiction and everything else in place? In what sense are the Bishops the successors of the Apostles and in what sense are they not? Is the pious ‘holy pedigree theory’ (Brown) historically maintainable?

Infected by an ideological virus the *Lineamenta* does not hear the questions. The questions are not new and were already very much alive at the time of the Council. If I were allowed to give the curia some homework I would advise reading: *Church History*, by John Dwyer (No 1.24 & 1.25) Translated in Urdu; the article on ‘Church’ in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*; and *Priest and Bishop*, by Raymond Brown.

Lineamenta No. 15

Today, however, the family is facing many threats, ranging from a consumer mentality to a widespread hedonism, and from a moral permissiveness to a harmful promotion of deviant forms of sexuality. The means of social communication often advocate behaviour which degrades the dignity of the person. Such conduct is opposed to the moral life set forth in the Gospel and taught by the Church. Added to this situation is the myth of a ‘demographic explosion’ and the fear of an over-population which would keep humanity from providing for vital needs. These occurrences and fears pave the way for the great evils of abortion and euthanasia, above all, because they are nourished by a widespread and oftentimes deceitful ‘culture of death’, against which Pope John Paul II has raised his voice in the Encyclical Evangelium vitae (25 March 1995).

The *Lineamenta* speak about the ‘myth’ of a demographic explosion. Do the authors live on the planet Mars? Here on earth the ‘population explosion’ is a problem which worries thousands of thinking people. And the author just brushes the problem away by calling it a ‘myth’. Does the ideological bug also prevent him from seeing what is going on in the world? As homework he could profitably read *The Tablet* of 12 September 1998, p. 1172.

Lineamenta Nos. 16 and 63

This situation poses an obvious difficulty for the episcopal ministry and causes notable concerns for many Bishops. Each Christian community has its endur-

ing sources in the Sacrament of the Eucharist of which the priest is the minister. Priestly vocations, then, are a necessary pre-requisite for the growth of the Church and an unmistakable sign of its spiritual vitality.

One of the more pre-eminent duties of the Bishops is to provide that the faithful of the particular Church have the possibility to approach the table of the Lord, above all on Sundays, the day on which the Church commemorates the Easter Mystery and the faithful, in a spirit of the joy and rest from work, give thanks to God by whose great mercy ‘we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Pt: 3).

Here mention is made of the scarcity of priests on account of which not all communities are able to take part adequately in the celebration of the Eucharist. I think a very wrong development is taking place. What is happening is that the Eucharist is sacrificed for a highly trained sophisticated, celibate, male priesthood. This would have been unintelligible in the early Church. Wherever there is a reasonable community that wishes to celebrate the Eucharist there is also always someone who is able to preside. The people have a right to the Eucharist as it is the centre of all Christian life. If the authorities, on account of some man-made legalistic fixation, are not able to provide ample ministers for the Eucharist, then the authorities are in the wrong. I am hesitant about the ‘lay presidency’ of the Eucharist, as already practiced in some dominations, but I would be inclined to prefer ‘lay presidency’ over ‘no Eucharist at all’.

Besides, is it I wonder, historically maintainable that there were already priests in the early Church? Who presided over the Eucharist before there were priests on the scene? Church history may lead us to a more qualified attitude about the ‘president of the Eucharist’. Openness to this early history may be able to give us insight for a solution of the present eucharistic impasse.

A very unhealthy way out of this impasse is that on account of the ‘scarcity of priests’ recourse is being taken to ‘communion services’. These services are a distortion of the Eucharist, solely geared to receiving the ‘consecrated host’. The Eucharist is far more than that. I hope for some new fiery tongues of the Pentecostal Spirit to shake up the Bishops, before people seize their right in their own way, or fall away from eucharistic starvation.

Lineamenta No. 17 **The challenge of the sects.**

It is clear that very few of these ‘new religious movements’ have anything in common with an authentic search for God. As a result, both in their teachings and methods they promote themselves as alternatives not only to the Catholic Church but also to other

Churches and ecclesial communities.

The widespread expansion of these new religious movements requires a pastoral response in works which have the person as their central principle, each person's need to be part of a community and each person's yearning for an authentic intimate relationship with God. The existence of these new religious movements suggest in each case the need to re-vitalize catechesis at all levels, using catechetical methods which take into account the people's mentality and their manner of speaking, always making central the unfathomable riches of Christ, the one and only Saviour of Humanity.

The sects certainly are a problem. But should we not search for the causes of this problem in our own bosom? Could it not be that, our highly organised, feudalistic and triumphalistic Church is experienced as a smokescreen through which the Servant of Yahweh from Nazareth is no more visible? Might it not be that people experience a certain closeness to Jesus in these smaller, more dynamic sects? Instead of experiencing these sects as evil, would it not be better to see them as challenges of the Spirit for our own renewal? Could it not be that also these sects, in many ways, are really from God? Would it not be good for us to be less negative and adopt the patience and wisdom of Gamaliel? (Acts 5:34-39)

Lineamenta Nos. 75, 77**The great world religions.**

The Bishop has the duty in his particular Church in his teaching and pastoral work to help all the faithful to respect and esteem the values, the traditions and convictions of other believers, and also to promote a sound and appropriate religious formation for Christians, so that they might know how to bear witness with conviction to the great gift of the Christian faith.

The Bishop also has to keep watch over the theological dimension of inter-religious dialogue, ensuring that in his particular Church the exchange be pursued in such a manner as never to be silent about, nor hesitate to affirm, the universality and the unique character of the Redemption accomplished by Christ, the one and only Saviour of the World and Revealer of the Mystery of God.

Since the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world, I am surprised that in describing the role of the Bishops, the authors do not seriously reflect on the function of other great religions, who, willed by God, are, *de facto*, the ordinary means of salvation for the majority of mankind.

Mapping interreligious dialogue will be the greatest challenge for the Church in the third millennium. Making this map will mean a new crossing of the Red Sea

and venturing out again into the uncertainties of the desert. The only guideline we will have is that God loves all people *as they are* and wants to save all *as they are*. The only way we have is to follow, gropingly, the road of loving dialogue. This road will be long and arduous but also full of surprises. But as we trek along we may discover how God not only spoke his word at Creation and at the Incarnation, but that he goes on speaking his word till the end of history when the kingdom will be fully realised. Only then will God's Word stop. In the meantime, let us cross over courageously and be humble enough to believe that God is leading us even though he has not provided us with hyper-qualified map makers for this totally New Exodus. The people leading us on this Exodus will not be the administrators of the old establishment, they will rather be the prophets and visionaries, creative architects of a New Heaven and a New Earth. It will be good to be on the lookout for these prophets. And when we find them, let us not kill them.

Kenosis

It may have been the need of the Church for super-centralisation around the beginning of the second millennium. This resulted in a strong monarchal form of government, complete with all powers of jurisdiction and law. All these things were expanded in various ways in the course of the second millennium, with many positive and negative results. *My question is: Must we carry all our baggage, which we picked up in the second millennium, along into the third millennium?* Do our present times not ask for an overhauling of the archaic structures and modes of functioning of the hierarchy? Are we faithful to the Gospel and the Church at its present stage in history if we do not seriously consider afresh the words: 'They left everything they had and followed Jesus?'. It may take courage to read the signs of the times and accept Jesus' invitation in a prophetic way. If the Bishops are called to be 'the shepherds and the servants' they should not function in the 'top-down' way of the *Lineamenta* but in the down-to-earth way of the humble Jesus of Nazareth. Only in a kenotic service will Christ be recognised.

I do hope and pray that the coming Synod will be a Synod of real renewal for the whole episcopate and the Church, in which the movement of Vatican II is taken up again and carried on. It will mean homework for all the Bishops. If they do not pick up the challenge and remain stuck in the present *Lineamenta* then the coming Synod will only contribute to the further irrelevance of the episcopate. And this would be a sad celebration at the beginning of the third millennium. I pray that the powerful Pentecostal Spirit will not let this happen, and that the whole Church may enter the third millennium full of hope.



Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide

In his article, the former rector of JDV, Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ, makes a strong plea for eliminating the clergy-laity divide as a way of expressing the newness of Christian praxis in the new millennium. Through a review of the historical process that led to the divide as well as the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar Magisterium, he shows how there has to be a change on the part of the hierarchy, leading to a participatory Church.

Introduction

Standing on the threshold of the third millennium many Christians are engaged in an earnest quest for the new. Some of them talk about a new way of being the Church.¹ Others manifest a felt need for repentance and reconciliation so that the followers of Christ may be able to show forth the newness of life to which they are called.² It is in this context that I make a strong plea for the overcoming of the clergy-laity divide which has plagued the Church for many centuries.

It seems to me that the clergy-laity divide and the consequent lack of power-sharing in the Church are largely responsible for the apathy and inertia that one notices in the bulk of the laity today. There is, to be sure, a small but growing member of lay people who are clamouring for a say in the decision-making process in the Church. But they are not really representative of the lay people of our country who are mostly passive. This is in striking contrast to what is happening in secular society. A large number of Catholics are making significant contributions in the professions, the media, the civil services, the police and the armed forces. The sad state of affairs in the Church, I believe, is the result of the concentration of all power and initiative in the hands of the clergy. In spite of all the inspiring things that Vatican II said about lay people and their share in the life and mission of the Church, no real empowering of the laity has taken place. Hence, it is necessary for us to examine the causes of the clergy-laity divide and find ways and means of overcoming it.

This paper begins with a brief survey of the historical process that led to the clergy-laity divide. It goes on to discuss the positive contributions of Vatican II and the post-conciliar documents of the magisterium. It then attempts to develop some theological perspectives on the question. By way of conclusion the paper points out some practical consequences of the views proposed here.

1. Historical Background

1.1. During the New Testament times, the Church was understood as the People of God, a community characterized by radical freedom, radical equality, radical sharing and radical service.³ According to St Paul, it was a fellowship in which all racial, social and sexual differences were eliminated (cf. Gal 3:26-28). What Paul asserts here is that in the Church there is no place for the oppositions that prevail in the rest of society.⁴ Besides, the Christian community does not tolerate "domination and structures of domination which are customary in society. In the community of brothers, no fathers are permitted. The rule of God does not imply the rule of humans".⁵ Jesus is absolutely forthright in the rejection of domination (cf. Mk 10:42-45).

In this egalitarian Church there are varieties of charisms which blossom into diverse ministries. The Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Letters deal with them at some length.⁶ Gradually, the ministry of leadership emerges. But it is clearly understood that the leadership ministry, like all other ministries, is for the building up of persons and communities. Paul speaks of the authority "which the Lord gave for building you up and not tearing you down" (2 Cor 10:8; see also 1 Cor 13:10).

The early Christian leaders thought of themselves as ministers of Christ in the service of the people (see 2 Cor 4:5; 1 Cor 9:19). There was no question of their lording it over the community (see 1 Pt 5:1-5; 2 Cor 1:24). Jesus, the servant, was the model for all Christian ministers (Mt 23:25-27; Mk 10:42-45; Jn 13:13-17). As E. Schillebeeckx has remarked:

According to Paul and the whole of the New Testament, at least within the Christian communities of believers, relationships involving subjection are no longer to prevail. We find this principle throughout the New Testament, and it was also to determine strongly the New Testament view of ministry. This early Christian

egalitarian ecclesiology in no way excludes leadership and authority; but in that case, authority must be filled with the Spirit, from which no Christian, man or woman, is excluded, in principle, on the basis of the baptism of the Spirit.⁷

1. 2. As Yves Congar has pointed out, “there is no distinction between ‘lay people’ and ‘clerics’ in the vocabulary of the New Testament”.⁸ But such a distinction began to be made already at the end of the first century. In his Letter to the Corinthians, written probably in the year 96, Clement of Rome spoke of ‘Laikos’ who are distinguished from the high priest, the priests and the Levites.⁹ For Clement the distinction between the clergy and the laity was a functional one and in no way went against the *koinonia*, the communion, that existed among the members of the Corinthian Church.

In spite of the use of this new terminology, there really was no clergy-laity divide during the patristic period. It was during the Middle Ages that some significant changes took place which had far-reaching consequences for the life of the Church.

First, there developed a view that the clergy are *spiritual* and that the laity are *carnal, worldly*.¹⁰ In the early Church, Baptism was the dividing line between the ‘spirit of Christ’ and the ‘spirit of the world’. For at baptism a person freely renounced the spirit of the world and embraced the spirit of Christ. This was expressed in the baptismal vows. But at the beginning of the Middle Ages mass conversions and a large-scale expansion of the Church took place in England, Germany, etc. A king would decide that his kingdom was to become Christian, and all the people of the kingdom would be baptized. There was no proper instruction in the Christian faith and, as a result, no real personal decision on the part of the people to accept Christianity. They could not, then, be said to have renounced the spirit of the world and embraced the spirit of Christ. Hence, the opinion came to prevail that the boundary between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world was the ‘second baptism’. At first religious profession was looked upon as the second baptism. Hence, the monks were regarded as spiritual persons. Gradually this view changed, and ordination to the priesthood came to be thought of as the second baptism. This paved the way for considering the clergy to be spiritual and the laity to be carnal, worldly. Towards end of the 13th century, Stephen of Tournai declared:

In one city and under one king there are two peoples whose difference corresponds to two sorts of life.... The city is the Church; her king is Christ; the two peoples are the two orders of

clergy and laity; the two sorts of life are the spiritual and the fleshly....¹¹

1. 3. Another important change was the gradual acceptance of the idea that the clergy had Christ-given power to fulfil certain functions. Till the 12th century, the Church held a sacramental, iconological view of ministry.¹² But then this view was changed. And the change can be seen in the subtle transformation that took place in the understanding of the title “Vicar of Christ”, which at that time was given to the Pope, the Bishops and even the priests. Originally it meant that Christ was present and active in his minister. This view was based on the idea that God and the celestial powers were actively involved in the earthly sphere. But gradually a ‘possession-of-power theory’ came to prevail. According to this theory, Christ at the beginning gave power to his vicar, that is, to “a representative who takes his place and who hands on to those who came after him, in an historical sequence of transmission and succession, the power thus received”.¹³ In other words, Jesus Christ bestowed his power on the Apostles who transmitted it to the Bishops, who in their turn share it with the priests and the deacons. Speaking of this new understanding of the ministry in the Church Joseph Neuner says:

Thus leadership in the Church is seen no longer as a participation in Christ’s mission for the realization of God’s reign, but as a power and competence given to a group of people, the hierarchy, to rule the community of the faithful in analogy to a secular government.... Luther’s revolt is not primarily a theological challenge of traditional doctrines but a revolution against the domination of the Christian people through the clergy in a spirit totally alien to Jesus Christ.¹⁴

1.4. At the dawn of the modern period, Josse Clichtove (1472-1543) developed a theology and spirituality of the priesthood. The image of the priest he helped to shape was that of a man who by virtue of his state of life was “detached from the world, even from the world of the Christian laity”.¹⁵ This is how E. Schillebeeckx sums up Clichtove’s views:

The idea of ‘being taken out of the world’, i.e., escape from the world, completely determines this image of the priest.... Priesthood is essentially defined by its relation with the cult (and not with the community), though this is the cult of the community. A priest, even a pastor, may have as little contact as possible even with his own parishioners, except for the necessary administration of the sacraments. To be a priest is to be a ‘cultic priest’. Precisely on the basis

of this relation to the cult, the priest is the one who is set apart from the people, and priestly celibacy is the only adequate expression of this essential separation.¹⁶

1. 5. The Council of Trent was greatly influenced by the theology of ministry prevalent at the time. While in its reform decrees, the Council dealt with such priestly tasks as preaching the word and pastoral care of the people, its doctrinal decrees define priesthood almost entirely in terms of presiding at the Eucharist (power of consecration) and administering the other sacraments.¹⁷ This is understandable since Trent had set itself the limited task of refuting the errors of the Reformers. As Schillebeeckx observes:

Finally, the eight canons concerning the sacrament of ordination are a reaction against a view which reduces the priest to a preacher, spokesman and proclaimer (with the result that at least in defining the functions of the priest the canons only stress his cultic activity and so do not say anything about the tasks of preaching and teaching, which were stressed so strongly by Scripture and the early Church as the task of ministers of the church).¹⁸

Trent laid great stress on the hierarchical structure of the Church, while totally ignoring the universal priesthood of the believers.¹⁹ This Council in many ways contributed to the widening of the gap between the clergy and the laity. As J. Neuner has remarked:

The Council of Trent has determined not only the theology but also the social image of the priest for the past centuries: priests form a secluded group with a social status of their own with their life and work centred round the altar.²⁰

1. 6. During the 19th century it became quite clear how the idea that priests possessed sacred power aggravated the clergy-laity divide. In a schema on the Church prepared for Vatican I we find this statement:

But the Church of Christ is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of unequals, not only because among the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen, but particularly because there is in the Church the power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach, and govern, and to others not.²¹

This draft was probably never discussed at the Council. Its only value lies in this, that it expresses the theology prevalent at that time.

In the first half of the 20th century there was a lot of talk about “Catholic action”. Both Pius XI and Pius XII spoke enthusiastically about it. And Catholic ac-

tion was described as the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of hierarchy.²² The implication was that the laity had no apostolate of their own. All this, of course, would change with Vatican II.

2. Vatican II and After

There are many elements in the teaching of Vatican II that can help us to overcome the clergy-laity divide in the Church. I shall highlight some of them here.

2. 1. For the Council the favoured image of the Church was the People of God. And the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church devoted a whole chapter to it.²³ The People of God includes all the believers — the Pope, the Bishops, the priests and the ordinary faithful. “The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the children of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 9). The entire people of God participates in the priestly, prophetic and kingly/pastoral office of Christ (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 10-12).²⁴ The Church is not primarily an institution but a people — a people who are makers of history and masters of their destiny. There is also a hint in *Lumen gentium* that the pilgrim people of God may at times be the ‘wandering people’ of God.²⁵

Vatican II is quite sure that in the Church all are equal. In unmistakable terms it declares:

And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, dispensers of the mysteries, and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ (*ibid.*, n. 32).

The faithful may belong to different states of life. They may be called upon to fulfil diverse functions. And yet, all are equal with regard to the dignity and the mission which are common to all the faithful.

It is significant that the Council looks upon the priestly ministry as a function within the community of salvation. The words of St Augustine cited here go to confirm this: “To you I am a Bishop; with you I am a Christian”.²⁶ Precisely because of this, the functional differences among the members of the Church need not stand in the way of a close collaboration of all for the common good. Vatican II points out:

For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God involves union, for pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship.... Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the admirable unity of the Body of Christ

(*ibid.*, n. 32).

2. 2. Both the clergy and the laity participate in the mission of Christ. The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity emphatically declares:

The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father (*Ad gentes*, n. 2).

And the lay people have their own share in this mission. The Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People states:

But the laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 2).

The Council stresses the fact that the lay people have their own vocation and mission (see *LG*, n. 31). It also makes it clear that it is Jesus Christ who authorizes them to engage in their mission. As the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People asserts:

The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself (*AA*, n. 3).

Besides, the lay people receive charismatic gifts which are to be used "for the good of humankind and for the building up of the Church" (*ibid.*, n. 3).

Vatican II understands priestly ministry as a participation in the mission and ministry of Christ (see *LG*, n. 28). Speaking on behalf of the Commission that worked on the draft of the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Presbyters, Bishop Francois Marty said:

The nature and mission of presbyters must be derived from the nature and mission of Bishops; the nature and mission of Bishops must be gathered from the nature and mission of the Apostles; the nature and mission of the Apostles must be seen in the light of the nature and the mission of Christ.²⁷

Participating as they do in the mission and ministry of Christ, Priest, Prophet and King, presbyters have the triple function of proclaiming the Gospel, administering the sacraments and pastorally caring for the people (see *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nn. 4-6). Among the different pastoral activities the Council lays stress on "the formation of a genuine Christian community" (*ibid.*, n. 6). Priests are said to be "set apart" in the midst of people in order to bring home to them the need for real insertion into the life of people today.

Otherwise they would be total strangers to this world which would make their ministry ineffective (*ibid.*, n. 3).

2. 3. Vatican II tried to restore the earlier understanding of the priesthood as the sacramental, iconological representation of Jesus Christ. He is present and active in his minister. Already The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy had taught: "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the person of his minister" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 7). But a more elaborate statement was made in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Speaking of the Bishops it declared:

In the Bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe. For sitting at the right hand of God the Father, he is not absent from the gathering of his high priests, but above all through their excellent service he is preaching the Word of God to all nations, and constantly administering the sacraments of faith to those who believe (*LG*, n. 21).

It must, however, be admitted that the Council was not very consistent in upholding this sacramental view of the ministry. It also spoke of "ministers who are endowed with sacred power" (*ibid.*, n. 18).

There is one statement of the Council which seems to reinforce the clergy-laity divide. While dealing with the participation of the People of God in the priestly office of Christ, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church maintains that the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood "differ essentially from one another and not only in degree" (*ibid.*, n. 10). On the face of it, this statement of the Council is rather strange. Why does it use such an apparently metaphysical language to distinguish what is really a functional difference in the community of salvation? As Aloys Grillmerier, who was a resource person (*peritus*) at Vatican II, has pointed out, what the Council meant to insist on was "the difference between the common and the special, hierarchical priesthood".²⁸ Various suggestions were made to help to clarify this difference. One suggestion was to regard the common priesthood as an improper or initial (*inchoativum*) priesthood. Another suggestion was to name the common priesthood as "spiritual priesthood" to distinguish it from the official priesthood. Against this it was argued that the quality of being "spiritual" was common to both. Yet another suggestion was to look upon the special priesthood as 'sacramental' and representative. But then, the priesthood of the faithful, too, has a sacramental basis. Finally, it was decided to state

that “they differ essentially from one another and not only in degree” (*LG*, n. 10). This is what Grillmeier has to say about this statement:

The Constitution does not claim to have found the definitive distinction. Its concern is to make a positive statement about the priesthood of the faithful while still keeping it apart from the consecrated priesthood.... The consecrated priesthood is not to be understood merely as an intensification and heightening of the dignity and mission of the common priesthood, but represents a new type of priestly dignity and power, even though it is based on the common priesthood.²⁹

2. 4. The Third Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 1971 dealt with the ministerial priesthood and tried to clarify how it is distinguished from the common priesthood of the faithful. This is the way it expresses its mind:

Among the various charisms and services, the priestly ministry of the New Testament, which continues Christ’s function as mediator, and which differs from the common priesthood of all the faithful in essence and not only in degree, alone perpetuates the essential work of the Apostles: by effectively proclaiming the Gospel, by gathering together and leading the community, by remitting sins, and especially by celebrating the Eucharist, it makes Christ, the Head of the community, present in the exercise of his work of redeeming mankind and glorifying God perfectly.³⁰

Almost 20 years after this, another Synod of Bishops (1990), while dealing with priestly formation, spelt out its understanding of the priesthood. The fruit of this Synod was incorporated into the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, published in 1992. In it John Paul II declared:

In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, particularly in Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the Head and Shepherd (n. 15).

The Pope quotes with approval proposition 7 approved by the Synod Fathers:

Inasmuch as he represents Christ the Head,

Shepherd and Spouse of the Church, the priest is placed not only *in the Church* but also *in the forefront of the Church*. The priesthood, along with the word of God and the sacramental signs which it serves, belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church (n. 16).

From what has been said so far, it is clear that according to the current teaching of the Magisterium the specific nature of the ministerial priesthood consists in this, that it represents Christ the Head to the ecclesial community. We shall have to reflect on this.

3. Looking to the Future

If the Church is really serious about overcoming the clergy-laity divide then it must be prepared to undergo a three-fold change: a **cognitive** change — the development of a new vision of life and reality; an **attitudinal** change — the acquisition of a new set of values; and a **behavioural** change — the adoption of a new way of acting. Vision, commitment and action are essential ingredients of real change. The reflections, comments and suggestions offered here are meant to facilitate such a change.

3. 1 Christ the Head:

It is in the captivity Letters, Colossians and Ephesians, which are most probably Deutero-Pauline, that Jesus Christ is depicted as the head of a Body which is the Church. What does the term head mean? One meaning of “head” is “beginning, origin or source”.³¹ This is probably the meaning “head” has in Col 1:18-19. Referring to Col 1:15-20, E. Ferguson says:

Christ is the head of the Church, as he is the head of creation, in the sense of being its “source”. He is the vital principle from whom the Church derives its existence and meaning, and this is so by reason of his Resurrection. This interpretation of the head gains support from the other reference to the Church as a body in Colossians: “...not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col 2:19). Growth of the body derives from its head, the source here of sustenance as well as of life.³²

The other use of the word head is in Col 2:10, and here it probably means preeminence or authority.³³ This is the meaning of head in Ephesians. As Ferguson explains:

The statements about the headship of Christ point to his superiority, his authority in relation to the Church. “Christ is the head of the

Church” (Eph 5:23), and his treatment of the Church is the model of leadership for husbands in relation to wives (Eph 5:23-30). As head of the Church, he is the standard toward which the body grows (Eph 4:15-16).³⁴

This interpretation is confirmed by a distinctive passage in Ephesians about Christ as the head of the Body:

God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1:20-23).

Of these two uses of the word head, the first one found in Colossians is very valuable. The Church really has its origin in Christ. He is the source of the Church. “The saving act of Christ constituted the Church and continues to be constitutive of the nature of the Church”.³⁵ So, when the recent documents of the Church teach that priests represent Christ the head of the Church to the ecclesial community, it means that in and through them Jesus Christ is present and active in the community. This is a sacramental understanding of priestly ministry and does not imply that priests have power and authority *over* the ecclesial community.

But the way the word head is used in Ephesians creates problems. According to the Gospels, Jesus in his life wanted only to be a servant. Now we make him Lord endowed with power and authority *over* people and things. And then, go on to assert that the ministers of the Church as representatives of Christ the head of the Church have power and authority *over* the people. This certainly is how the “ruling” function of the Bishops and priests is practically understood today. As Avery Dulles observes:

Whereas in teaching and sanctifying, the hierarchy have a merely ministerial function, transmitting the doctrine and grace of Christ himself, ruling is something that they do in their own name. They govern the flock with pastoral authority, and as Christ’s vicegerents impose new laws and precepts under pain of sin.³⁶

Such an understanding and exercise of priestly ministry does not seem to correspond to the Gospel ideal.

3. 2. Gospel Leadership

Priests are called to be leaders after the example

of Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples and exhorted them to do the same (see Jn 13:13-15). Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the welfare of those entrusted to his care. His whole concern is that “they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). A Christian leader is called to render selfless, self-sacrificing service to his brothers and sisters. He/she is meant to be a life-giving and growth-promoting person. There is no place for power and domination over others in the life of a Christian leader. As the First Letter of Peter exhorts the elders:

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it — not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:1-3).

As Vatican II reminds us, ministries in the Church are for “the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God” (*LG*, n. 18). Ministers are servants of their brothers and sisters. Their service consists in coordinating the activities of all toward a common goal while respecting the God-given dignity and freedom of each one (see *ibid.*). Speaking of the ministry of the Pope John Paul II wrote a few years back:

This service of unity, rooted in the action of divine mercy, is entrusted within the college of Bishops to one among those who have received from the Spirit the task, not of exercising power over the people — as the rulers of the gentiles and their great men do (cf. Mt 20: 20-25; Mk 10:42) — but of leading them toward peaceful pastures.³⁷

One hopes that all those who are entrusted with the ministry of leadership in the Church will take to heart these words of the Pope.

3.3. A Participatory Church

An increasing number of lay people are asking for a more active role in the thinking, planning and decision-making process in the Church. They are longing for a truly participatory Church. It is, however, surprising that whenever there is a plea for “democratic rule” in the Church, the invariable answer is that the Church is not a democracy. This is quite true. All the same it is noteworthy that Vatican II is quite keen that the structures of the Church should be in tune with the spirit of the times. While describing what the Church has received from the world, the Council states:

Since “the Church has a visible and social struc-

ture, which is a sign of her unity in Christ: as such she can be enriched ... by the evolution of social life. The reason is not that the constitution given her by Christ is defective, but so that she may understand it more penetratingly, express it better, and adjust it more successfully to our times (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 44).

Now two of the human aspirations which are quite characteristic of our time are the aspirations to equality and to participation. And they promote a “democratic type of society”.³⁸ In fact, Rudolf Pesch believes that the New Testament Church was a community which led a democratic form of life, “that is, a life of liberty, equality and fraternity”.³⁹

In any case, participative decision-making was quite common in the Church from the earliest times. Referring to what Luke has described in Acts 6:1-6 and 15:1-12, Raymond Brown suggests that major decisions in the Jerusalem community were made collectively and that the Twelve Apostles functioned as a presiding council facilitating the process of decision-making. And he finds a parallel to this in the Qumran community. He says:

The group of Jewish sectarians at Qumran responsible for the scrolls had a form of community government remarkably like what Luke describes in Acts 6 and 15. At Qumran the Assembly of all the mature members of the community, called “the Session of the Many” (*rabbim*), was called together to exercise judicial and executive authority over the sectarians. In addition, there was a permanent Community Council, consisting of twelve men and three priests, which served as a higher and authoritative body within the general assembly. The parallel between ‘the many’ of Qumran and ‘the multitude’ of the Jerusalem Christians is obvious, as is the similarity of the Council of twelve men in each group (probably patterned on the same idealism of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve patriarchal progenitors — with Qumran having additional representatives of the three clans of Levi). Thus, the Christian sect of Jews in Jerusalem may well have structured its government in imitation of other Jewish sectarians. If this comparison has any truth, then there is plausibility in the basic Lucan picture that in the primitive Church the Twelve constituted a type of council, convoking sessions to deal with major problems.⁴⁰

The practice of participative decision-making continued in the Church after the New Testament times. Yves Congar has reported:

When in 1950-52 I was preparing my book on the laity, I examined not only the texts but the

facts of the early history of the Church. I discovered everywhere in each generation and in the four spheres of faith, worship, the apostolate, and the Church’s social life, a union between the hierarchical structure and the communal exercise of all Church activities.⁴¹

In the third century St Cyprian declared: “I have made it a rule, ever since the beginning of my episcopate, to make no decision merely on the strength of my own personal opinion without consulting you (the presbyters and the deacons), without the approbation of the people”.⁴² And in the course of the 13th century, Innocent III and Boniface VIII, two of the most authoritarian Popes in the Church’s history, appealed to this principle of Roman Law: “Whatever affects everybody ought to be corporately approved by everybody”.⁴³

It is encouraging to note that the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India is committed to the ushering-in of a participatory Church. At its General Body Meeting, held at Thiruvananthapuram in February, 1996, it declared:

We reiterate our sincere desire to improve and perfect the movements towards a truly participatory Church where all sections of the People of God, revitalizing their baptismal grace, fulfil their vocation and mission. The CBCI will then be a Body that gives witness to unity in mission, achieved with a diversity of roles. In this context we emphasize the importance of involving all sections of the Church, especially the Laity, and reposing greater confidence in them, in order to bring about a mature, participatory Church.⁴⁴

The CBCI goes on to point out that the spirit of coresponsibility and sharing is “neither a matter of condescension nor of rights grudgingly conceded. Rather it belongs to the very nature of the Church as communion”.⁴⁵

A participatory Church calls for the practice of non-dominating leadership (Jn 13: 14-15), “which is most effective in bringing out the best in others”. It also demands an attitudinal change on the part of the leaders. They need to adopt “an attitude of trust in our people, appreciating their reliability and competence”.⁴⁶ The CBCI is strongly in favour of establishing Parish Pastoral Councils and Diocesan Pastoral Councils wherever they do not yet exist.⁴⁷ It also intends to restructure and revitalize the Catholic Council of India (CCI), which “will be a Body that represents all sections of the Catholic community”.⁴⁸

If effective steps are taken to implement the decisions and suggestions of the CBCI on a time-bound basis, then the emergence of a truly participatory Church in India will not be far-off.

3.4. Unity in Diversity

It is well known that Vatican II had a positive attitude to the world. It readily recognized the autonomy of the world (see *GS*, n. 36) and acknowledged the benefits that the Church had received from it. But in its efforts to relate to the world, the Council reinforced the clergy-laity divide in the Church. As Francine Cardman has observed:

Yet, despite its positive — some might even say naïve — appreciation of the world, the Council could not conceive of Church and world as integrally related. Instead, it had to resort to the laity as the link between world and Church, so that the laity “consecrate” the world and “infuse it with a Christian spirit”, while the clergy tend to the Church, governing, teaching and sanctifying the faithful. That the pattern of distinguishing Church and world proposed at Vatican II should reflect and reinforce the contrast between clergy and laity is, therefore, not surprising.⁴⁹

In a sense Vatican II stands for “Churchly” clergy and “worldly” laity!

It is significant that according to the Council the distinguishing mark of the lay faithful is their relationship to the world. As the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church asserts:

A secular quality is proper and special to laymen. It is true that those in holy orders can at times engage in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But by reason of their particular vocation they are chiefly and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry.... But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations (*LG*, n. 31).

It is such an understanding of the clergy and the laity that makes the present Pope affirm that priests should not be involved in politics since their proper ministry is the spiritual care of the faithful. Politics is the sphere of activity of the laity.

In order to overcome this dichotomy we need to clarify the meaning of the term “spiritual” as applied to priestly ministry as well as spell out the Church’s relationship to the world. Speaking of the spiritual character of the priestly ministry, Josef Neuner states:

The distinctive feature of the priestly apostolate is expressed with the term ‘*spiritual*’. This is biblical language. Spirit stands in contrast to ‘flesh’, i.e., to the merely natural sphere of man. The entire Christian life is guided by the Spirit,

and so the pastoral care of the priest for the faithful, for people at large, is aptly called spiritual.... For the same reason the priestly apostolate should not be called ‘spiritual’ in contrast to the apostolate of the laity.... During the middle ages the term ‘spiritual’ was used for hierarchy and monks whereas the laity was considered as belonging to the profane realm. This dividing line is not biblical.⁵⁰

Hence, the life and the apostolate of the laity are just as spiritual as the life and the apostolate of the clergy, since both of them are as Christian believers led by the Holy Spirit.

Besides, if the Church has a mission to the world, both the clergy and the laity participate in it. Speaking of the role of the Church in the modern world, Vatican II states:

Pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the Church not only communicates divine life to humanity, but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth. This she does most of all by her healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which she strengthens the seams of human society and endows people’s daily activity with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus, through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the human family and its history more human (*GS*, n. 40).

Hence, mission to the world and relationship with it cannot and should not be a cause of division in the Church between the clergy and the laity.

Positively we need to foster union between the clergy and the laity. It has been pointed out that Vatican II has advocated an ecclesiology of communion.⁵¹ For the Council, the Church is a “community of faith, hope and charity” (*LG*, n. 8) and “a communion of life, love and truth” (*LG*, n. 9). The Triune God is the source and the pattern of ecclesial communion. Vatican II quotes with approval the words of St Cyprian that the Church is “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (*LG*, n. 4). In a pregnant passage, the Council states:

As the firstborn of many brethren and the gift of his Spirit, he established after his death and Resurrection, a new communion of kinship composed of all those who receive him in faith and love; this he did through his Body, which is the Church. There everyone, as members one of the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each (cf. *GS*, n. 32).

Like the Triune God, the Church is and will always be a unity in diversity.

Footnotes

¹ See P. Puthanangady, *A New Way of Being the Church*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyothi College, 1998.

² See John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, nn. 32-36.

³ See G. M. Soares-Prabhu, "Radical Beginnings: The Jesus Community as the Archetype of the Church", in *Jeevadhara* 88 (1985), pp. 307-325.

⁴ See G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, pp. 92-93.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶ See Rom 12:4-6; 1 Cor 12:27-29; Eph 4:11-13.

⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face*, London: SCM Press, 1985, p. 39.

⁸ Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965, p. 4.

⁹ Clement of Rome, *The Letter to the Corinthians*, Chapter 40.

¹⁰ See E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, London: SCM Press, 1980, p. 56.

¹¹ Prologue to the *Summa super Decreta*, in Mirbt, *Quellen Zur Geschichte des Paptsums*, n. 318, as quoted by Congar, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

¹² See Y. Congar, *Power and Poverty*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964, p. 62.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ J. Neuner, "Exploring Global Dimensions of Jesuit Priestly Apostolate", in *Ignis Studies* 2 (1983), pp. 12-13.

¹⁵ See E. Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face*, pp. 195-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁷ See J. Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, 6th ed. Bangalore: TPI 1996, n. 1714.

¹⁸ E. Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face*, p. 200.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Neuner-Dupuis, n. 1719.

²⁰ J. Neuner, "Exploring Global Dimensions...", pp. 13-14.

²¹ As quoted by A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1974, p. 35.

²² See *ibid.*, p. 40; also Vatican II, *AA*, n. 20.

²³ See *LG* Chapter II.

²⁴ See also *LG*, nn. 21,31; *PO*, nn. 4-6.

²⁵ See *LG*, n. 9.

²⁶ See *LG*, n. 32.

²⁷ As quoted by B. Kloppenburg, *Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, Chicago: Franciscan Press, 1974, p. 269.

²⁸ See A. Grillmeier, "Commentary on Chapter II," in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. I, New York: Herder and Herder, 1967, pp. 156-9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³⁰ Neuner-Dupuis, n. 1746.

³¹ E. Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, p. 96.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁶ A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 35.

³⁷ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995, n. 94.

³⁸ Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 1971, n. 24.

³⁹ R. Pesch, "The New Testament Foundation of a Democratic Form of Life in the Church", in *Concilium* 3 (1971/7), pp. 48-49.

⁴⁰ R.E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, London: Chapman, 1971, pp. 58-59.

⁴¹ Y. Congar, *Lay People...*, p. 43.

⁴² As quoted by Congar, *Lay People...*, p. 43.

⁴³ As quoted by Congar, *Lay People...*, p. 35.

⁴⁴ CBCI, "Response of the General Body to CBCI Evaluation Report", in *Catholic India*, 1996, p. 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ F. Cardman, "The Church Would Look Foolish Without Them: Women and Laity Since Vatican II", in G.M. Fagin (ed.) *Vatican II: Open Questions and New Horizons*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984, p. 110.

⁵⁰ J. Neuner, "Exploring Global Dimensions...", pp. 24-25.

⁵¹ See J. Thornhill, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World*, London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1988, pp. 206-9.

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COMING EVENTS

FOR YOUR AGENDA

SEDOS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

5 December 2000 — Morning
Brothers of the Christian Schools

JOAN CHITTISTER, OSB, USA

A FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY FOR MEN AND WOMEN

TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, OP, Superior General

A MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY FOR A NEW WORLD

WORKING GROUPS

Sunday, 25 June World Debt Group 16:00 hrs at **SEDOS**