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Éditorial

Les délégations des différentes congrégations religieuses membres de SEDOS se sont réunies du 15 au 19 mai à Ariccia, près de Rome, pour leur Séminaire résidentiel annuel.

Quelle est notre vision d'une Église missionnaire pour le vingt et unième siècle ? Tel était le thème retenu pour ces journées de rencontres, de réflexions et d'échanges.

Nous avons adopté pour ce séminaire une formule inhabituelle. En effet, au lieu d'écouter des exposés, puis de réfléchir et de discuter à partir de ceux-ci comme c'est ordinairement le cas dans de telles réunions, il a été décidé d'appliquer un processus de travail interactif. Les "spécialistes" étaient les participant(e)s eux-mêmes, et c'est sur la base de leurs expériences, frustrations et réussites, comme de leurs visions et aspirations, que les échanges ont été amorcés.

Ce séminaire constitue en quelque sorte une première étape. Tous les membres qui y ont participé sont bien conscients qu'il devra être suivi de plusieurs autres, afin de synthétiser tout ce qui a été dit, d'étudier et d'approfondir les sujets évoqués et de fixer des lignes directrices pour les années à venir.

Il est fort probable que notre Séminaire résidentiel annuel d'Ariccia de mai 2002, prenant en compte les résultats du précédent, aura pour objet d'approfondir ce qui a émané de celui de mai 2001.

L'expérience d'Ariccia a été riche à plus d'un plan. Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de lire les réponses des participants(e)s aux différentes évaluations qui ont été données. Un résumé quelque peu schématique, comme celui qui suit, ne peut donner qu'une faible idée de tout ce qui s'est passé et de tout ce qui s'est dit à Ariccia du 15 au 19 mai 2001.

Il serait certainement intéressant — et combien utile — que les membres des différentes congrégations puissent poursuivre leur réflexion, au cours des prochains mois, à partir de ce qui s'est vécu et de ce résumé que nous offrons. Ceux et celles qui souhaitent que nous formions un Groupe de travail sur ce thème de notre *vision d'une Église missionnaire pour le vingt et unième siècle* sont invité(e)s à me faire parvenir leurs coordonnées.

Les propositions de tous les membres de SEDOS sont les bienvenues pour nous aider à préparer le suivi que nous souhaitons donner à ces journées et les moyens concrets de poursuivre notre réflexion sur ce thème passionnant de notre *vision d'une Église missionnaire pour le prochain siècle*.

Bernard East, o.p.
Directeur exécutif de SEDOS

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What is Our Vision of a Missionary Church for the 21st Century?

“If the future is not in our hearts and minds, there is no future”.

Margaret Denis,
(SEDOS, Ariccia, 15 May 2001)

Ms Margaret Denis from Canada ably facilitated the process over three days. On the first evening we were asked to choose which cluster we wanted to join: Church as Structure, Church as Movement or Church as People. Each cluster had several groups of six or seven and followed the same process reflecting on the questions below.

I. Examination of the past and the present in order to look at the future

1. What we want to build on or hold on to as we create our future
2. How we want to be different in the future from how we have been in the past
3. What we want to be sure not to repeat
4. What we want to let go of
5. What are our proudest proudests?
6. What are our sorriest sorries?

II. EDT (Events, Developments, Trends)

STEP 1 Identify and list the important events, developments and trends of the past decades for the area assigned to your table (World, Church, My Country)

STEP 2 Print on chart paper and post with other EDTs in your gathering

STEP 3 * With your table team, decide which five trends may have the most positive impact on the future of the mission in the Church. Identify each of these by placing a green dot.

* Decide which three trends may have the most negative impact on the future of mission of the Church. Identify each of these by placing a red dot.

STEP 4 * At your table examine the clustering of dots (green and red) on the events, developments and trends.

* Discuss: What is significant for the Church's mission in the next 25 years?

What do you think are the greatest needs for mission that flow from this context?

* Print these needs on chart paper and post with others in your gathering.

III. The being and doing of the missionary Church of the future

+ Sit comfortably and keep eyes closed. Ask yourself to use the right side of your brain to imagine a Church of 2025.

+ Share what you saw. As each one shares her/his vision, it will be owned by everyone of the group. An individual dream becomes a collective vision.

+ As cluster, listen to each group and answer the questions.

Structure

- What will the structure look like?
- How is it organized?
- What is the structure?

Movement

- What is the movement about?
- How is the Gospel expressed anew in this movement?

People

- Who are the people?
- How is relationship expressed among them?

1. What clarities do we have about the *BEING* of the Missionary Church of the future?

2. What clarities we do have about the *DOING* of the Missionary Church of the future?

IV. Final presentation: our future vision

1. In preparing your vision of the Structure/Movement/People of the Missionary Church of the 21st Century (at least up to 2025), combine similar ideas, include unique ideas, present alternative ideas, think of some creative symbols.

2. Each cluster has 35-40 minutes for presentation.

Church as Structure

I. Examination of the past: The Past Colours our Future

We began by looking into the past because it has a deep influence on each of us and on our institutions. The following questions guided our group work:

1. *What do we want to build on and hold on to as we create our future?*

The Vatican II concept of “Episcopal collegiality”

The original vision, purpose, charism

Faith life and liturgy

Shared and common life

Lectio Divina as a way of life

Collaboration – ecumenical/inter-faith

Collaborate with others in ministry, e.g. women, laity, NGOs, other faith traditions, organizations of civil society

Better recognition of interrelatedness of the fundamental elements of mission: *proclamation, witness, dialogue, social justice and service, inculturation – a closeness to the people*

Missionary pastoral Church as a Community of Disciples, People of God

Development/formation of lay leadership

Conscientize Christians towards transformation of injustice in society

Equality of women in Church and society

Advocate for responsible care of the earth

Promote transparency and accountability in Church and civil society.

2. *How do we want to be different in the future from how we have been in the past?*

3. *What do we want to be sure not to repeat?*

4. *What do we want to let go of?*

The lack of flexibility and need for stability:

Tradition oriented, lack of openness

The need to be “right” – our way is best – those in leadership have the right answers always

A culture of fear

Change brings uncertainty, diversity seen as threatening

Lack of equality and participation:

Superiority of the Roman Catholic Church:

competitiveness (between churches and congregations)

Racism/separatist attitudes/ oppression of minorities/labelling

Desire to control:

Sexism/clericalism/dogmatism

Domination of cultures and theology, lack of sensitivity to cultures. Euro-centric superiority/inferiority – prophetic voices silenced.

Authoritarianism/pyramid style, “top down”, rigid, heavy structures; bureaucracy – over legislation of details

Power play – development that creates dependency, systems of privileges

Lack of witness of the Missionary Church

The perception of “pagans needing conversion” – measuring success by quantity instead of quality

Exploitation – sexual/economic/ecological

Polarisation of issues

Having to pay to receive the sacraments

Group-conforming structures

In Religious Life:

Charism seen in a particular historical/cultural setting

Our need to be comfortable

Individualism – no sense of common good

Keeping labels on people — not allowing them to change

II. Events, Developments and Trends (EDTs)

We were invited to look at *the events, developments and trends* of the past decade in the world, our country (of mission or origin) and the Church. The list of EDTs as they were called, was long, and included some we know well because they still deeply afflict our world and Church.

World

The end of communism/fall of the Soviet Union

End of *apartheid*

Globalization

Global trend towards institutions like World Bank, IMF, World Trade Organization

Widening gap between rich and poor and the perceived inability to make the connections regarding lifestyle changes

The setting up of the European Union.
 International terrorism, including technological terrorism. Covert political terrorism
 Exclusion of Africa from these institutions and from global thinking
 Asian economic crash
 Spread of Islam

Rise in nuclear power and nuclear nations
 Local, regional and ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and ethnic cleansing
 AIDS — devastation in Africa, loss of a generation
 Sale of arms/drugs/persons — multi-billion dollar industries
 Organized crime — trafficking in women, children, human organs
 Exploitation — child labour/bondage, sweatshops, sexual exploitation
 Space exploration
 Environmental threats and irreversible damage in some parts of the world
 - In some countries — denial about the effects
 Growth of a new ecological awareness
 Peoples on the move — refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, trafficked persons
 Rise in indigenous peoples' movements
 Rise in involvement of civil society, through NGO movements
 Resistance to long-term commitment
 The growth in information technology and communications technology
 Awareness of world debt
 Technological developments re life and death: test-tube babies, cloning, genetic engineering

Individual countries

Many countries now adhere to an “economy comes first” priority. But there is a growth in popular action, for example PEOPLE POWER, and civil society groups are pushing for more accountability. The Cold War was supposedly ended but the trend in local and national conflicts is still evident. Increasingly people are displaced within their own countries. The talented ones with education are drained from poorer countries to the developed ones. Within countries, migration and refugees means more exposure to the cultures and religions of others, which creates tension and fears. In some countries there is more awareness of ecological issues.

The Church

Synods of the 1990's
Redemptoris Missio
 Jubilee 2000

Challenge to transparency and accountability
 Greater concern for justice, peace and integrity of creation issues
 Africa's quest for solidarity
 In the Americas, concern for the “excluded” ones.
 In Asia, the cry for recognition of inculturation and its theology
 In Europe, an awakening need for re-evangelization
 In the Pacific, the challenge is to recognize its uniqueness and identity
 The emergence of “laity” and women as partners in collaborative ministry
 The “regression” — push for pre-Vatican II values and structures
 Silencing the Prophets
 Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue

From all the EDTs we were asked to decide on *five* trends which may have the most *positive* impact on the future of mission in the Church and the *five* trends that may have the most *negative* impact on the future of mission in the Church. The group discussion was very lively and interesting because so many of the trends could be seen as having either a positive or negative impact. Then we were asked to consider:

STEP 4

What is significant for the Church's mission in the next 25 years?

What do you think are the Greatest Needs for mission that flow from this context?

From the information gathered so far, the groups identified the significant needs that would engage the Church in the 21st Century.

A summary of the Significant Needs is presented below:

* Need for authenticity and consistency — we need to be credible witnesses to human and Christian values, inclusive and accountable.

* Need to read and continue to discern the “signs of the times”.

* The Church needs to insert itself into cultures and realities, rather than expect them to conform to the Church culture.

* Need for dialogue of healing and reconciliation.

* Need for openness to pluriformity and diversity.

Other needs which were important included:

* Need to be open to dialogue at ALL levels.

* The desire and need to be a Prophetic Church

– at the service of LIFE; and to use

* The new technological means to promote the Gospel.

* Need to be involved with the poor.

III. Imagining Our Future

Up to this point, our collective “left brain” had been working hard. But now came the time to indulge the right side of the brain, which allows for creativity and energy. The day began with a guided imagery exercise, and small group sharing of the images. Margaret pointed out that once shared, the images became the property and resource of the groups. This encouraged people to let go of their images and let them be at the service of the group. We were led in a process of identifying the different symbols in the images, much as you would identify the different symbols in a dream. We were invited to dialogue with the symbols – *what message did they want to give us.*

Further group work involved listening to each one share his or her images, and we began to notice similarities. The Key question for this process was:

What will the structure look like? How is it organized? What IS the structure?

We were then asked to go through a process of identifying clearly how the structure would be, what it would do, and design a creative symbol to express this structure.

The next day’s process drew us together as a Cluster to listen to each group within the Cluster present whatever clarities they had identified regarding what a structure would BE, what it would DO and their CREATIVE SYMBOL.

The symbols within the Structure Cluster included:

A TENT — a structure that was open, had some support structures, but was easily transportable and could be a “home” very easily. The tent included different tables for different groups within the community.

A structure created of swirls and spirals, in different colours, which interlinked, and which, when the breeze came, moved “in the spirit”. Again it was an

open and dynamic structure with room to move.

A structure portrayed as an unfinished web, with pieces interlocking yet flexible and open.

A structure as network, unfinished, a bit chaotic and dynamic.

After the presentation of the ideas and symbols from each group, we were asked to combine similar ideas, include unique ideas, present alternative ideas. The Structure Group decided to highlight what was missing from the structure so far. Working in smaller groups, the cluster brought all this together with a creative presentation that included mime and music. The Cluster group participated in a presentation to the whole seminar group.

The Structure group decided that all the symbols were important aspects of the Missionary Church: A Church that needs to be “webbed together” and learn to network, and continue to be open to the spirit and dynamic. The symbol of the Tent-Home was very impressive: **“We shall come to them and make our home *with them*” Jn 14:23-24.**

In a summary declaration, the Structure Cluster sees the structure of the Missionary Church at the service of humanity as a means to incarnate the Gospel values in particular situations, places, moments of history, by BEING Christ-centred, and open to the Spirit.

It is a structure that embraces:

§ A communion of communities: worship-

ping, serving and witnessing

- § Open and all embracing and inclusive
- § Compassionate, forgiving, simple and humble
- § Flexible, interconnected, transparent and co-responsible
- § Ecumenical
- § Prophetic

It is a structure that promotes and enables:

- § Transformation of our world
- § Listening, discerning, respect for diversity
- § Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue
- § Liberation and a strong commitment to social action, justice, peace and integrity of creation
- § Inculturation
- § Participation and collaboration
- § The celebration of different ministries
- § Networking
- § Learning houses
- § An open priesthood
- § Solidarity with the poor
- § Inserted where it is most needed
- § Analysis and understanding of reality
- § Development of leadership that enables
- § Encouragement of inculturated leadership
- § Small faith and human communities

A structure where BEING and DOING are in a process of ongoing transformation!

Ref.: Martina Burke, RNDM, Caroline Price, RGS, and Filo Hirota, MMB.

Ariccia 2002

Ariccia Residential Seminar for Members

14-18 May 2002

Church as Movement

**“The Missionary Church is a movement. What is the focus of this movement?
The future seeds of our vision are already in our hearts and minds,
we have our eyes to see them; let them see!” (M. Denis).**

I. Examination of the past and the present in order to look at the future

1. What we want to build on or hold on to as we create our future:

We want to build on:

- a. a strong sense of mission
- b. our identity as believers
- c. the commitment and dedication of our predecessors
- d. strong convictions (e.g. the option for the poor)
- e. the basic teachings of the Church
- f. our human resources as integrated persons
- g. our conviction that God is at the heart of our reality

2. How we want to be different in the future from how we have been in the past:

- a. enablers
- b. co-responsible
- c. co-searchers
- d. pilgrims
- e. inclusive
- f. flexible
- g. leaven
- h. listeners and learners
- i. releasing the spiritual
- j. joy
- k. holistic (wholly)
- l. congruency between being and doing

A Church more open and less sure about itself:

1. listen to the great religions
2. not be afraid of differences
3. not want to be greater, more powerful and more illustrious
4. listen to the signs of the time

A Church at the service of Justice and of the little ones:

1. give witness to poverty in the face of the power of money and the search of self-profit
2. hear the conflicts of values in the societies

A Church adept in the use of modern communication means, at the service of Justice and of the little ones

*These changes are unavoidable
We can choose to change
The unique reference is the Gospel*

3. What we want to let go of:

- paternalism
- fear and egoism
- rigid hierarchical oppressive structures
- conservatism
- gender differentiated religious life
- superiority complex of Christianity (*Dominus Iesus*)
- culture that blocks life
- “throw away the Constitutions”
- present inquisition (going after modern-day heretics)
- provincial mentality
- excessive nationalism
- inequalities in our world (rich, – poor, races; ...)
- exclusion
- dualistic thinking
- living life to a timetable
- activism (workaholic)
- resistance to acceptance of differences
- letting go of dependency and lack of critical questioning
- obligations without a clear rationale
- lack of openness to novelty / newness
- institutional mindsets
- we-ness communities
- specific religious dress
- large community *inertia*
- numbers game of vocations / conversions / church membership
- liturgy without life
- western exegesis in the orientation of religious life and Christianity
- militaristic terminology / Church language
- canonization period

- exclusive religious life (laity / married / celibate)
- univocal faith communities (Hindu, Moslem, Jewish, Christian, ...)
- dichotomy we – I / I – we

4. What we want to be sure not to repeat:

- a. mistake – sin against the Spirit
- b. imposition of culture
- c. lack of dialogue
- d. regression to the past
- e. male domination in the Church
- f. misuse of priestly charism
- g. patriarchal / matriarchal style of life
- h. outdated customs and traditions

5. Our proudest prouds and our sorriest sorries:

- a. joy – proud (*orgullosos de*)
 - the vitality of the Latin-American Church
 - the religious life open to the world (Vatican II)
 - we are evangelized by the poor
 - Church inserted into the local and open to the global
 - *Búsqueda continua desde la inserción y lo global*
 - new ecclesiastical understanding of cultures and religions
 - the awakening of the laity and of women (*visión de generos*)
- b. sorrow (*con pena de*)
 - offer resistance to what's new and to change
 - the pain because of the fight for power within the Church
 - authoritarianism and pretension of possessing all knowledge and truth; disdain/hold on contempt of the other
 - painful contradiction between the defence of the human person and the practice of exclusion
 - exclusion of women and the laity and the formation of seminarists as an example of going backward (*come ejemplo del retroceso*)
 - the growing gap between the rich and the poor and marginalized
 - alliance with the power: assignments (*alianza con el poder: imposiciones*)

II. Events, developments and trends of past decade in World, Church, Country

+ Trends which may have the most positive impact on the future of the missionary Church

* Trends which may have the most negative impact on the future of the Missionary Church

World

Events:

1. end of Cold War
2. ethnic wars and ethnic cleansing (Rwanda, the Balkans, ...) *
3. natural disasters
4. legalization of euthanasia (in the Netherlands)
5. ending of *apartheid* in South Africa / racial implications
6. year 2000 jubilee celebration
7. fall of communism / collapse of Berlin Wall
8. Gulf War

Developments:

1. IT / globalization / universal access to technological developments
2. networking developments
3. communication explosion
4. growth of the European Union
5. volunteer work +
6. feminist / women's movement +++/+++
7. international travelling / increase of travel speed
8. technology in communication +
9. developments in biotechnology
10. human rights developments
11. implications of Third World debts
12. growing awareness and sense of helplessness in debt crisis

Trends:

1. worldwide increase of HIV and AIDS *
2. sexuality issues / sexual revolution / body culture
3. aging increase
4. family destabilization **
5. migration of peoples / refugees / movement of peoples *
6. compensation mentality
7. scientific developments / genetic engineering / cloning *
8. nationalism / regionalism *
9. cults / sects / fundamentalism *
10. growth in aggressive face of Islam
11. interreligious dialogue +
12. desire for spirituality and mystic +
13. solidarity +
14. awareness of rights
15. influence of multinationals *
16. increase of addictions / chemical dependencies
17. new forms of slavery / trafficking of women and children / pedophilia *
18. escalation of violence / increase of handguns / child soldiers *
19. opening of borders
20. rapid change

21. emphasis on health / fitness
22. lack of long-term commitment / lack of tolerance *
23. inequality / growing gap between rich and poor *
24. globalization *
25. world-global village
26. intensive farming
27. global warming / ecological destruction *
28. space – exploration
29. importance of China
30. transnational corporation runs the world
31. United Nations (world governance)
32. abandonment of Africa *

Church

Events:

1. continental Synods
 2. travelling and visits by the Pope
 3. three years of preparation for the Jubilee
- Year 2000
4. World Youth Day 2000
 5. sexual scandals in the Church **

Developments:

1. theological reflection +
2. interreligious dialogue +++++
3. new forms of communication (Internet) ++
4. give occasion to the laity ++
5. new movements in today's Church
6. increase of integrism, fundamentalism, sects **
7. evolution of religious life in the Church
8. development of movements for prayer +
9. aging of priests in Europe
10. great popular movements for Justice +
11. development of Justice and Peace: debt, human rights, children +
12. ethical questions (bioethics)

Trends:

1. globalization of solidarity ++
2. missionaries from the South to the Nord
3. emergence of women / feministic theology +
4. condemnation of certain theologies and support of other conservative “theologies” *
5. *cerrazón en la ética sexual*
6. the new “theological paradigms”: gender, ecofeminism,
7. abandonment and alienation of the Church *
8. the power of conservative tendencies and movements *

My Country

1. communication revolution ++
2. increase of education +

3. economic prosperity (neo-liberalism / globalization)
4. struggle between social groups / break down of families and social ties (de-solidarization) *
5. disengagement from political processes
6. new forms of slavery / trafficking of women and children *
7. growth of right-wing parties and racism *
8. manipulation of life / genetic manipulation *
9. destruction of the environment **

III. The BEING and DOING of the missionary Church of the future

1. What insights do we have about the BEING of the Missionary Church of the future:

- Church as family rooted in Christ on pilgrimage (People-oriented):
 - o creative
 - o inclusive
 - o available
 - o dynamic
- Rooted in:
 - o holiness
 - o the Trinity
 - o the reality of the world with Jesus as its pulsating heart
- Connected worldwide:
 - o linked with other people
 - o moving towards union with all who hear the Word of God
- Constantly in renewal:
 - o seeking transformation
 - o meditating on God's loving presence
 - o seeking coherence and transparency

- Experiencing being on the margins
- Being the leaven

The 2025 Church IS a gift, a movement of the Spirit, God's mission, love. The Church is intercultural, pluri-centric, acts as servant, macro-ecumenical, open, community of people, source of hope, meeting place, compassionate, leaven, prophetic, a community of martyrs, feministic countenance, of one mind, *incluyente, itinerante, desde los pqueños chinorais,*

The Church is characterized by the option for life.

2. What clarities do we have about the DOING of the missionary Church of the future:

- Deepening Scripture (*Lectio Divina*)

- Approach people where they are
- Share our Good News
- Searching together through:
 - o dialogue
 - o solidarity
 - o collaborative ministry
 - o service: doing with, suffering with, hoping with
 - o mass media
- Life-style that is based on:
 - o dialogue with all people, open to all
 - o sharing giftedness / enable the sharing of giftedness
 - o reflective, discerning: seeking and sharing meaning in life
 - o seeking reconciliation
 - o developing relationships / people accompanying people along the way
 - o presence: being present to people in their daily lives
- Committed to:
 - o standing up and being seen to be firmly on the side of the poor, willing to rock the boat for justice
 - o developing the role of women in all areas of life
 - o working towards de-clericalisation on the one hand and the development of our common priesthood on the other

□ The Church weaves a net of solidarity; solidarity is its life-style; the Church discerns, dialogues, prays; the Church cares for the environment (*ecologia*), for Justice and Peace; the Church is counter-cultural; inclusive practices; participation of women; special formation to solidarity; the Church promotes economical alternatives: ethical banking, fair business; human rights; interreligious dialogue....

□ The Church continues the journey of the Great Jubilee 2000 and as such is a pilgrim Church characterized by: witness, dialogue, humility, listening. The Church is Gospel-based and promotes freedom. The Church's activities grow from an 'agenda from below'. The Church is a story-telling community. The Church acts in an inclusive way and is inserted in society.

3. How can the Church be the place of the living Word of God?

This question implies:

1. that together we share the Scriptures; that we are open in order to listen to the Word of God which is inscribed in the events of people today; it supposes a Church which is *relation, communion* and *welcoming*.
2. so that the Word of God should touch us, we

are invited to root ourselves in sentiments of compassion and respect; we are invited to let beam all the dimensions of the Word of God which every moment is incarnated in the actualities of the world.

3. a Church in dialogue with every person, whatever his religion, his culture and his faith; a rootedness in the local communities where everybody has responsibilities and has the capability to be open to the universal dimension; the avoidance of centralisation so that churches have the opportunity for theological and liturgical inculturation.

4. in a concern for dialogue to know how to use the means of communication in a positive way and how to make them available for all; that these means may help us to obtain information about situations; that these means may be a help in our struggle for justice and solidarity.

5. a Church which can help all to be aware of the beauty of the planet and to safeguard it, because the earth belongs to all; a Church which uses the resources as a means and not as goals; a Church concerned about a correct and just distribution of the goods of the earth.

IV. Elements from final presentation – Movement-cluster

What the cluster wants the whole group to hear and to know:

Similar ideas raised by all the groups in the Movement-cluster:

§ The Missionary Church of the 21st century will be rooted in Jesus Christ and fully present to the world.

§ It will be an inclusive, multicultural Church, a Church of dialogue, a pilgrim Church always on the move.

§ The Missionary Church of the 21st century will be impassioned and on fire. This Church will live and act prophetically. It will reach out and approach people where they are and will live in solidarity with those among whom it is inserted.

§ The Church will struggle for justice and will act collaboratively.

§ It will use the mass media and modern means of communication creatively.

§ It will be a Church engaged in on-going discernment and transformation.

Alternative vision:

In the year 2025 we see a Church that has moved:
FROM hierarchical leadership — TO participative leadership

FROM clericalism— TO a priesthood of all
FROM Western/Roman centre — TO East/

South inculturation

FROM big mouth — TO big ears
 FROM Catholic Monopoly — TO common search
 FROM male domination — TO the inclusion of a feminine face
 FROM authoritative — TO democratic
 FROM static Church — TO itinerant pilgrim Church
 FROM religiosity — TO faith based on Gospel
 FROM a position of privilege — TO giving a privileged place to

Unique ideas: (*in French*)

I. Par rapport à la dimension **ÊTRE** de l'Église future, les idées particulières que nous avons découvertes dans notre groupe Mouvement, sont les suivantes :

1. que 'l'être Église' soit avant tout **'une manière de vie'**

o que 'la manière de vie' qui est l'Église soit enracinée dans celle de **la Trinité** (la vie de *communio de charité* entre le Père, le Fils et le Saint-Esprit).

o le *style* particulier de cette manière de vivre est celui de la **famille**.

2. tout ce que fait l'Église doit être mu par **l'idée du sacerdoce commun** qui est **un sacerdoce divin ...**

o autrement dit : nous envisagions d'être **une Église dé-cléricalisée**.

o on envisage aussi **une Église dé-centralisée**.

3. l'Église du futur sera une communauté guérissante, tout en étant consciente que celui ou celle qui guérit est en même temps quelqu'un qui est blessé(e).

4. une autre idée particulière pour exprimer la dimension d'être de l'Église est l'idée du sel : **être le sel du monde** (cf. Matthieu 5, 13)

5. que l'Église soit **un mouvement circulaire** : entre autre ça veut dire qu'on ne perde pas le visage de l'autre.

6. une belle image particulière pour présenter la dimension d'être de l'Église future est celle du **cœur à l'écoute** :

o cela implique le mouvement permanent du cœur-oreille en-vers tout le monde.

o pour que le Cœur-Église puisse être bien à l'écoute, **la vertu de l'humilité** est de grande importance.

II. Par rapport à la dimension **FAIRE** de l'Église future, les idées particulières que nous avons découvertes dans notre groupe Mouvement, sont les suivantes :

1. Une tâche primordiale est celle d'établir des **petites communautés** :

o où on peut se réunir régulièrement pour :

§ raconter et écouter les **histoires de la vie** de chacun et de chacune des membres : les joies, les désillusions, ... et confronter toutes ces histoires avec **l'histoire et le message de l'évangile**

§ établir l'agenda de la vie particulière de cette communauté ecclésiale, en réunissant les objectifs, les plans, les idées afin d'assurer le mouvement permanent de la communauté, ...

§ assurer **la construction et la maintenance des ponts** qui portent aux autres communautés, pour assurer aussi la **cohérence**

§ **célébrer la vie**

§ ... faire encore beaucoup d'autres choses qui arrivent déjà ailleurs ...

Aspects de *style* qui accompagneront la vie ecclésiale future des communautés chrétiennes :

a. la porte qui donne accès à la communauté est **une porte sainte**, par laquelle on entre avec **respect**

b. l'assemblée où on entre est une **sainte communion**.

c. chaque personne qui entre, porte une mentalité de **transparence** (personne n'a rien à cacher).

Ref.: Pierre Paul Walraet, O.S.C.

Church as People

I. Examination of the past and the present in order to look at the future

1. *What do we want to build on or hold on to as we create our future?*

- intuitions spirituelles des fondateurs/trices ; sens de l'histoire

- discerner les valeurs permanentes
- l'annonce de l'Évangile à tous et à toutes
- solidarité avec les pauvres
- respect de la personne
- le partage en communauté humaine
- ouverture aux signes des temps
- zèle missionnaire – audace
- l'attention aux jeunes
- se laisser évangéliser par les pauvres : écoute
- attention aux cultures différentes
- vision universelle – au delà des frontières religieuses, cultures, idéologies

3. *What do we want to be sure not to repeat?*

- In the past individuality was not valued; (today in our congregations and in the Church we should form people who can claim their own identity

- In the past we didn't form our members for inculturation in other countries

- Rigidity in structures, doctrine, moral teaching: "formulas hiding mystery".

- Triumphant attitudes to Church, Schools and Institutes; a sense of superiority which caused tension with other religions, especially Islam

- Subordination of the laity — fear of turning over institutions to them

- Male domination in church and society
- Fear of equality and partnership

4. *What do we want to let go of?*

- Institutional mindsets
- Prejudices; labelling
- Racism; nationalism
- What was good in the past not relevant for today
- Need for security and clarity which inhibits risk-taking
- Cultural dominance
- Being over comfortable with procedures
- Male domination/male-female polarisation

- Exclusiveness
 - Hierarchy that excludes
 - Legalistic attitudes
 - Need for certainty
 - National domination; "Western" domination
 - Un-freeing traditions
 - Fears: of others, of those in power, of authority; of being oneself, of those who are different, of change
 - Compartmentalization, e.g. "prayer-church", norms and rules which ignore personal and communal needs and contexts
 - Inequality; lack of participation
 - Resentment.
- (However, we should accept the past as reality; things built on each other; God used human weakness).

II. Events, developments, trends

Church

- Pope asks forgiveness in name of the Church (of Jews, Orthodox Christians, etc.)

- Japanese Bishops question the relevance of the *lineamenta* before the Asian Synod

- Pope's many prophetic statements on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation; publications of the Pontifical Commission for JPIC

- More holistic formation for priests and religious

- Inter-religious/ecumenical dialogue at grassroots and official levels

- More inculturation of liturgies/growing respect for other cultures

- Growth of right-wing movements in Church e.g. Opus Dei ; fundamentalism in general

- Appointment of right-wing Bishops and Cardinals thus diluting the prophetic voice of the Church

- Jubilee Year

- Union of Religious families e.g. Dominicans, Franciscans, etc.

- Growth of lay Movements e.g. Sant' Egidio

- Vatican silencing of theologians

- Large numbers of beatifications and canonizations.

World

- chute du Mur de Berlin

- explosion technologique

- création de l'Union Européenne

- mondialisation – "Village Global"

- WTO
- G8
- annulation de la Dette des pays pauvres
- guerres/violence/refugiés
- augmentation de l'émigration
- chômage
- hégémonie des États-Unis
- pandémies – SIDA, malaria ; médicaments chers
- détérioration de l'écologie
- développement des droits humains (charte des droits de l'enfant ; de la femme ...)
- fin de l'*Apartheid*
- ouverture de la Chine
- développement des ONG
- instauration du Tribunal de la Haye
- libre échange
- commercialisation de la drogue
- exploration spatiale
- trafic des êtres humains
- commercialisation des organes.

In “My Country”:

- Knocking down of “heroes and heroines”
- Exposure of sexual abuse in the Church
- Rise of the “Celtic Tiger”
- Participation of people in the liturgy – local language
 - Greater participation and empowerment of women and youth
 - Immigration/Refugees/ Asylum Seekers – Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe
 - Trafficking of women and children
 - Institutional racism (Stephen Lawrence enquiry in UK)
 - Northern Ireland peace process
 - Change of governments: UK (Tony Blair); Italy 2001 Centre Right; the Philippines...
 - Growth of, and fear of, Islam
 - Separation of Church and State
 - Growth of Civil Society, NGOs and volunteers
 - Youth – lack of interest in Institutions; growing influence in society
 - Great gap between rich and poor
 - Foreign investment linked to globalisation
 - Telecommunications/Internet/Texting
 - Influence of international conferences e.g. Beijing (Women) and the Hague (Peace)
 - Need for peace processes
 - Debt Campaign
 - Networking for change
 - Hearing the voice of the poor
 - Decline of family values – marriage weakened/ one parent families
 - Individualism/selfishness

- Growth in addictions: alcohol and drugs
- Growing interest in spirituality as opposed to organised religion
 - Dialogue with other religions
 - Growing conservatism
 - Urbanization
 - Religious persecution

STEP 4

What trends will have the most positive effect on the Missionary Church

- * Inter-religious/ecumenical dialogue
- * Growth of Lay Movements
- * Growing respect for other cultures
- * Growing interest in spirituality
- * Networking for change
- * Development of human rights
- * Technological explosion
- * Growth of civil society

What trends will have the most negative effect on the Missionary Church

- * Growth of right-wing groups and fundamentalism in general
- * Appointment of right-wing Bishops and Cardinals
- * Individualism and selfishness
- * Decline in Family life and values
- * Great gap between rich and poor
- * Trafficking of women and children
- * Deterioration of the Environment
- * War/violence/plight of refugees

Greatest needs for the mission of the Church in the next 25 years

(NB: Only one group had time to do this part of the process)

- Que l'Église s'engage :
- dans les moyens de communication sociale et qu'elle se forme (à cet égard ?)
 - dans le développement des mouvements de laïcs : “être avec et travailler avec”
 - dans le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux
 - dans la place et la responsabilité des femmes dans l'Église
 - dans le JPIC
 - dans la présence prophétique aux marges de la société
 - dans l'attention et la présence aux jeunes et à leur soif spirituelle.

III. The being and doing of the Missionary Church of the future

1. *What insights do we have about the BEING of the Missionary Church of the future?*

- Contemplative people – aware of being loved by God;
- a Church of equals – men, women, lay, religious, etc.;
- mobility;
- openness;
- light in the darkness;
- formation for mission;
- concern for the whole person;
- non-violent people;
- respect for the integrity of creation;
- a Church of communities – “home”;
- aware that our mission is mystery;
- sent to other Churches;
- a humble Church;
- a poor Church;
- people with a global vision;
- a servant Church;
- “poets, prophets and pragmatists” – and martyrs;
- inculturated;
- inserted into the diverse realities of the world;
- a nomadic, flexible, mobile Church;
- inclusiveness – gender, race, sexual orientation;
- not institutional;
- a freeing and empowering Church;
- sharing at all levels; solidarity with the poor;
- communion at all levels;
- builders of JPIC; universal;
- searching for the Spirit in the Church and in the world;
- a Church in dialogue – with the poor, with women, with youth and with nature;
- acceptance of differences
- a reconciling and healing Church.
- “leaven” in the world
- a smaller, simpler Church

2. *What clarities do we have about the DOING of the Missionary Church of the future?*

- Building community – basic *human* communities
- Valuing people
- Giving people a sense of belonging
- Giving people a sense of responsibility for ministry
- Empowerment of people – formation
- Praying communities
- Advocacy for the transformation of society – a global vision
- Calling forth the creativity and gifts of all/ each

has his or her place

- *Lay* leaders – not just priests
- Good communication/dialogue at all levels – (races, religions, cultures ...)
- Participation of grassroots in decisions about liturgy, appointment of Bishops and finance
- Authority exercised in a spirit of service
- Use of mass media to communicate
- A prophetic Church – Christians present on the margins of society AND where the decisions are taken
- A missionary Church – *ad intra* and *ad extra*
- Engagement with youth; engagement with sects
- No moralising
- Embracing and welcoming home those who stray
- Reconciling
- Creation of forums where ALL can participate – not like Synods
- Re-definition of ministry (e.g. reconciliation expressed in new ways ...)
- Simple, immediate responses, like our founders and foundresses
- More space for the theological voice of women and the poor
- Simplicity of life-style
- Transformation of the Curia though difficult is essential; there should be reflection at grassroots on how this could happen.

IV. Final presentation: our vision of the people of the Missionary Church of the 21st Century

The Church we envision will be a Church which is

COMMUNION – A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES –

where there is unity in diversity and where all are included as equals – the poor, the laity, men and women, the young, all races and all sexual orientations. In these communities people will feel welcomed, forgiven, nurtured, “at home”. It will be

UNIVERSAL, open to all, including those of other faiths (including the sects) or of no faith and it will know how to

INCULTURATE itself respectfully in all cultures. It will be a

HUMBLE Church which relies on the power of God and not on its own, which knows how to listen and dialogue. It will be a

SPIRIT-LED Church, where there is freedom, flexibility and dynamism. It will be a

CONTEMPLATIVE Church, where people know themselves to be accepted and loved by their

God – the Father of Jesus Christ. In this Church there will be
SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITY, COLLABORATION and the
EMPOWERING OF ALL. No important decisions will be taken without grassroots' involvement. It
will minister to the
WHOLE PERSON. It will be a
PROPHETIC Church which *announces* the truth, and denounces injustice and evil – a *transforming leaven* in
the world, using the mass media to spread its message. It will be a
PILGRIM Church, simple and flexible in its structures, which will be at the service of people.

Our new Church will have an alternative vision:

Its *symbol* is the *tent* rather than the *temple*
Its *leadership* will be *circular/participative*, and not *heirarchical*
Its *members* will *include all* in basic human communites – the *exclusive model* of the past will be no more.

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Michel de Verteuil, C.S.Sp.

Lectio Divina

Fr Michel de Verteuil is a native of Trinidad and a member of the Trinidad province of the Holy Ghost Fathers. He did his secular and philosophical studies in Ireland and his theological studies at the Catholic University of Fribourg in Switzerland. He was ordained in 1959.

His first appointment was to Nigeria. After four years he was assigned to Trinidad and became rector of the Regional Seminary of St John Vianney. In 1979 he founded the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre as a centre for lay theological formation and has been its director ever since.

From 1979 to 1991 he was provincial superior of the Trinidad Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers. Since 1991 he has been editor of the Archdiocesan Weekly, the Catholic News.

I came upon *Lectio Divina* when I went full time into lay theological education, having completed twelve years of teaching theology in a seminary.

I thought at first I was merely changing students — laity rather than seminarians — and setting — the parish rather than the classroom. I soon realised however that I needed to use a teaching method which was totally different from what I followed in the seminary.

The people I was teaching were not very interested in doctrine but in how to live creatively in their world — to be good parents, teachers, neighbours, friends, leaders in their Church communities. In any case many of them did not have secondary, far less tertiary education, and found it difficult to grasp abstract concepts.

They were happy to have me of course — “It is such a privilege to have Father teaching us!” — but what I was teaching was not making much difference to their lives. Besides I was gone after a few sessions, leaving them with very little to hold on to.

I gradually became aware that the method I was looking for was already there in our Catholic tradition — *Lectio Divina* — the dominant theological method in the Church for its first seven centuries. It had been dormant for several centuries, but was being practiced in many parts of the world. The name was not always used but the substance was there.

The Method

The basic principle of *Lectio Divina* is that Bible reading is a personal encounter with God, a communion which resembles (though different from) the communion of the Eucharist. This goes against what has prevailed in our Church for some centuries. The text has been seen as containing a message, doctrinal or moral; once we get the message, the text has achieved its purpose. In *lectio divina*, we love the text, linger over it, read it over and over, let it remain with us.

Once we approach the text in this way, we come face to face with the fact that it speaks to the imagina-

tion. A Bible text is not like a textbook or a newspaper, providing us with objective information. It was not written like that. It stirs up feelings. We find ourselves identifying with the characters, feel for them, admire or dislike them. We are caught up in the movement of the text, its suspense, its dramatic reversals of fortune, its unanswered questions.

Gradually we “recognise” the text; we find that we have lived the sequence of events ourselves or have seen them lived in others who have touched our lives — for good or for ill. Reading the text becomes a homecoming — and a lifting up. We find ourselves caught up in the story of God’s people, “fellow citizens with the saints” (Eph 2:19); we are the lowly ones who God “lifts up from the dust and sets in the company of princes, yes the princes of his people” (Ps 113: 7-8).

Lectio Divina, like all imaginative communication, especially story telling, teaches not directly but by changing the consciousness of those who practice it. By identifying ourselves with God’s people — Jesus, the prophets and great men and women of the Old and New Testaments, we find ourselves adopting their attitudes. We also recognise ourselves in the bad characters of the text — the Pharisees, Pharaoh, the Apostles when they were jealous of each other — and find that we want to give up those attitudes.

The Bible, recognised as coinciding with our experience reveals to us the truth about life, not abstract truth, but an ideal we hunger and thirst for, and from another perspective, an evil we recoil from.

In the Bible text therefore we discover the double reality of every human person — a story of sin and a story of grace. They are not equally true however. The story of grace is the deep truth of the person, their “true name”, the wheat which God will gather into his barn; sin is the chaff that will be burnt in a fire that never goes out (cf Mt 3:12).

Lectio blossoms spontaneously into prayer in three dimensions:

- thanksgiving that Jesus is alive in the story of grace,

- humility that the story of sin is alive
- petition that the story of grace will prevail, — come Lord Jesus.

In *Lectio Divina* we experience the true meaning of theology — entering through Bible reading into the wisdom of God, or more accurately, allowing God-alive-in-the-Bible to lead us into his wisdom, humbly, gratefully, and with awe, like St Paul on the road to Damascus. The wisdom of God gives us his perspective on every aspect life, one-to-one relationships but also on economics, politics, agriculture etc.

Lectio Divina is best taught and practiced with the Church's Sunday lectionary as it was reformed after the Second Vatican Council. It has its shortcomings, but over all is a wonderfully constructed three-year programme in Bible reading.

By being faithful to the lectionary we experience ourselves in communion with the Church and through the Church with all humanity, sharing in the grace and the sin of our contemporaries. We can say of Bible reading what St Paul says of the Eucharist, we though many form one body because we partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:17).

Theological Education

Lectio Divina has taught me what theological education is all about — walking with people and discovering with them their story of grace, their greatness, their sacredness, seeing with them that where they live is a holy place. It may be a ghetto area, looked down on by the rest of society; they recognise Jesus living among them.

This is tremendously important because our culture (including our preaching unfortunately) gives our Caribbean people, especially the poor, a negative image of themselves. Through *Lectio* they enter into their holy truth.

As a teacher I discover with them that the story of grace was lived by their ancestors too, which in the Caribbean means mainly African and Asian ancestors. Here again this is tremendously important. The theology of the past few centuries has taught our Caribbean people to look down on their ancestors. Now through *Lectio Divina* they are recovering the theology of the Church of the first centuries when Romans, Gauls, Celts and Slavs experienced their faith in Jesus as the fulfilment of what was greatest and noblest in their history. For the first time in their history as members of the Church they are learning to celebrate the faith of their ancestors in the manner of Hebrews 11.

The fact that they follow the lectionary means that the people have a theological text at hand at very little cost. They gradually get the sense that the Church is theirs; it does not belong to the priest or to the ex-

perts. This again is “very good news” (“evangelisation”) because in cultures like ours, the Church is the only place where they experience their dignity and creativity. Everywhere else they are treated as inferior, even as children, and foolish ones at that.

When I have done my introductory sessions I leave them to continue on their own. I encourage them to trust in themselves, in the Bible and in the method of *Lectio Divina*. They will need books, commentaries, charts, etc, but not too many and certainly none that will make them feel inferior or “disadvantaged” in any way. We academic theologians “worry and fret about having some many texts and yet few are needed, indeed only one” — the Bible (cf Lk 10:41).

Of course they will need a refresher course from time to time; the culture of passivity which surrounds them (often in the Church too) tends to stifle their creativity and their self-confidence. Wherever I have worked I have tried to form a group of “*lectio* leaders” who serve as “consultants” to groups — and know how to leave them alone!

Vatican documents sometimes speak of the need to protect the people from erroneous interpretations. I can't say I have ever found that a problem. I have learnt to trust the community or rather the Holy Spirit at work within them. Often, because of my experience, I bring an insight which did not occur to them, but quite often too they give me one I never thought of. The highest experience of *Lectio Divina* is when I can, like Jesus, rejoice that the Father has hidden the meaning of a text from myself, the learned one, and revealed it to one who I had considered a mere child.

I have learnt how marginalised groups — women, those with little education, single parents, etc. — look on life and learnt much from them.

Nearly every group will include members who are self-righteous or fanatical or fundamentalist. Occasionally they are so disruptive that they have to be asked to leave. Usually however the group corrects itself. I often make the mistake of intervening too early; they would have corrected themselves if I had given them the chance.

I make use of the historico-critical method but only to suggest different ways in which the text corresponds to their life experience — always the basis for interpreting the text. Never in my 20 years of teaching *Lectio Divina* have I had the experience of a text which did not come alive for the community.

Personal Use

Though I came to *Lectio Divina* through lay theological formation, experience has taught me that it is a powerful instrument of renewal for priests as well. It has affected my personal life very deeply,

and has helped me to attack many of the weaknesses of the priestly culture.

For example it does away with the compartmentalisation which has been so harmful to us priests. I understand now why in the first centuries of the Church when *Lectio* was the dominant method, the same people were theologians, pastors, preachers, mystics and Bible scholars all in one.

I make no distinction in my personal life between Bible study, preparing sermons, spiritual reading and personal prayer including contemplation. I find they all flow into one another.

Every Tuesday morning I do *Lectio* with a group of ten or twelve fellowpriests, a religious sister and two lay women for an hour and a half. We spend the first half-hour looking back on the previous Sunday's homily. What it did for us personally? Did it move us? Did we enjoy it? We then move on to prepare the following Sunday's homily together. We disagree, become impatient with one another, question one another's interpretations, but we always try to be totally honest and speak only from personal experience. For all of us the meetings are an occasion for doing theology, growing spiritually, preparing sermons — and becoming friends.

Similarly I make no distinction in my ministry between giving a course in *lectio divina* and giving a retreat, even a directed retreat. If I am asked to give a retreat I do it in the form of *lectio divina*, to give a course in *lectio divina*, I see it as a retreat.

I teach *Lectio Divina* mainly in local communities, especially in poor areas, but I also do it with priests and religious — and once with Bishops. I have learnt that everyone, no matter his or her situation, standard of education, or *status* can do *lectio divina*. In every group some are very good at it and others find it difficult. The two determining factors are being free and being honest.

Church Renewal

Pope John Paul II in *Tertio millennio adveniente* asked the question: "to what extent has the word of God become more fully the soul of theology and the inspiration of the whole of Christian living as *Dei Verbum* sought?" (n. 36). My answer to that question is, only to a small extent.

Bible reading in our Church is still too much of a head exercise, a support for doctrinal and moral positions. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is one of the worst offenders. I find that *Lectio Divina* groups must struggle against the dominant culture of the Church in order to remain faithful to the method.

When I meet and read about the many men and women who are engaged in the pastoral biblical

apostolate I feel confident that the will of the Council expressed in *Dei Verbum* will prevail and that Bible reading will indeed become the soul of theology and the inspiration of the whole of Christian living. I am happy to have been in a small way part of this historical movement.

Ref.: Text from the Author.

Remerciements

Au nom de tous les participants/es du Séminaire Résidentiel d'Ariccia et des membres de l'Exécutif de SEDOS, je tiens à remercier Mlle Margaret Denis pour sa présence , comme accompagnatrice/animatrice, tout au long de ces journées de rencontres, d'échanges et de discussions.

Nous tenons à remercier également le Père Michel de Verteuil, CSSp, pour sa présence discrète à cette rencontre et tout son apport au plan de la Lectio Divina.

*Bernard East,
Directeur Exécutif de SEDOS*