

# sedos

## Bulletin 2003

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## *Editorial*

Our first Bulletin of the year 2003 opens with a contribution based on first-hand experience of going towards the other, the 'stranger'. Fr CHRYS MCVEY, O.P., a long-term missionary in Pakistan, in his paper, *Befriending: The Heart of Mission*, given last October for SEDOS, underlines the extreme importance of human openness and the will to go to encounter the other in his otherness. In this daily out-reach to meet the other, possible only if we go towards the other in the spirit, he insists on the need to overcome "single vision" to make dialogue both possible and necessary.

Fr PETER C. PHAN, professor at the Catholic University of America, gave the official conference at the SEDOS Annual General Assembly in December here in Rome. The topic *Crossing the Borders: A Spirituality of Mission in Our Times From an Asian Perspective*, was a meaningful continuation of Fr McVey's reflection two months earlier. He again underlined the importance of a humble (kenotic and reconciliatory) 'crossing-over' towards the other. He presents Jesus as the 'border-crosser' and the incarnation as a 'border-crossing', a ministry by which he chooses to 'dwell at the margins'.

In our first French article, *Introduction et importance du dialogue dans la missiologie*, Fr MAURICE PIVOT, professor of fundamental theology in Paris, reminds us that the dimension of dialogue was only slowly integrated into a theological reflection on Evangelization after Vatican II. However, if dialogue is to be effective, it must be built on conversion, pardon and humility.

Fr IGNACIO MADERA VARGAS, S.D.S., a Colombian Salvatorian, suggests in his article on *The Mysticism of Evangelisation*, that Evangelisation will become new through the new theology that sustains it, the new *areopagi* that proclaim it, and the new ministries that invigorate it. He starts from an inclusive, inter-relating masculine and feminine model.

We conclude this issue of the Bulletin with the Annual Report Fr PIERRE-PAUL WALRAET, O.S.C., a member of the SEDOS Executive Committee, presented to the Annual General Assembly in 2002.

Fr Walter Von Holzen, S.V.D.  
Acting Director of SEDOS

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***The SEDOS Secretariat would like to inform readers that, starting from this month, the SEDOS Bulletin will be published every two months. Hoping to give you, as before, the best service possible, we thank you for your collaboration and understanding.***

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# *Befriending: The Heart of Mission*

– Chrys McVey, O.P. –

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The poet, T.S. Eliot, once said that the years between 50 and 70 were the most dangerous: “You’re always being asked to do something and you’re not decrepit enough to refuse”. Some months ago I was asked by the editor of an English journal to write a reflection on the events of 11 September 2001. I felt nervous enough about it to send it to friends beforehand for comment. The Europeans and Muslim friends in Pakistan and abroad thought it ‘accurate’ and ‘good’ — and hoped it would ‘be read on the other side of the Atlantic’. Most of my American friends felt the same. The few who disagreed were rather blunt and I don’t think I have ever been called so many names before in my whole life. This surprised me: I am not used to violent reactions to what I write or preach! My first impulse was to try and see in what way I just might be some of the names I was called. I reread the article and the e-mails and letters again and again and decided I could not change anything I had written. The problem was not so much in what I had written but in the buttons I pushed, especially the one marked ‘anti-American’.

One French writer, in an early 19<sup>th</sup> century book on democracy in America, believed that ‘men will not receive the truth from their enemies, and it is seldom offered to them by their friends’. I fear I may have lost some friends, who now classify me among the enemy (and this counting of enemies seems to be the new American pastime!). It puzzles me why this should be so but I have begun to think it has to do with an unwillingness to test assumptions and adjust them in the light of new challenges.

## **Testing Assumptions**

Assumptions about ‘Mission’ used to be fairly straightforward, with an almost military precision about them. There were goals, objectives and ways of measuring success by annual reporting of conversions and baptisms. When I first arrived in Pakistan in the 1960s, Catholics still spoke of themselves as ‘the Church’, and Protestants as ‘the other mission’. Most ‘missionary’ activity was nothing more than ‘sheep-stealing’. The attitude toward non-Christians was antipathetic, apologetic, and defensive. I remember meeting one little girl walking in the church compound with a younger boy tagging along behind her. After

asking her name, I said, ‘And what is his name?’. She replied, ‘Father, he’s Muslim’, surprised that I would be interested in him!

The Church has always been ‘mission-minded’, but not always ‘other-centred’. This has meant that mission often served the Church’s agenda rather than God’s. Mission became something to do rather than attention to the mystery of what God is doing. Mission now, however, is not about ‘getting something done’ but rather learning how not to do. We are on the frontiers of a new world whose contours have yet to be mapped. Instant communication and the effects of an ambiguous globalisation, have made us aware of a world that is pluriform, in which the fastest growing religion is Islam. And we are more aware of the fact of difference. But we have also been made aware, from recent history in East Africa, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan and India, that there is often violent unwillingness to accept difference as a fact of life. Our frontier is a tottering fence.

A contemporary historian describes three ways of thinking and feeling of those who live on the frontier. There is, he writes, *a new self-awareness*: ‘We notice who we are, how we are thinking, what we are doing’. There is also *an openness to change*, for ‘when we encounter something different, our appetites are whetted for newness’. And ‘in the face of the different and unfamiliar, we seek to reassure one another as we organise our new forms of community’: there is *a new community consciousness*. These three ways are helpful in our attempts to elaborate a new way of thinking about mission in this new world.

*Self-awareness*: The theologian, Paul Tillich, described conversion as an ‘ontological necessity’, but he understands by this ‘an opening of the eyes, a revelation experience’. To come to a new self-awareness is to change — but it is always others who open our eyes and reveal to us who we are. Part of this self-awareness is the realisation that if Hindus and Muslims and Buddhists can reveal to us our true selves, then we must commit ourselves not just to dialogue but to something more than dialogue. The realisation compels us to move beyond dialogue as something we *do*, to living dialogue as *a way of life*. This is an insight into our very way of being in

this religiously pluralist world and it somehow enters into the definition of who we are as Christians.

*Openness to change:* the encounter with other believers who are not Christian offers a possibility of seeing Jesus in a new way. He is in us, as Paul says, as mystery and hope and promise of completion (Col 1:27). Jesus is alive in our world, is being completed in our world, is coming to be in our changed world. This is reinforced in some Muslim traditions, where Jesus is referred to as ‘the traveller’, or ‘the one on the path’. This suggests life and movement — and a Jesus who is elusive, never-caught-up-with, beckoning us further into the journey, not toward certainty but deeper into faith and mystery and hope of completion. Jesus makes us ready for the new ways of God!

*Community consciousness:* Meeting others influences our awareness of who we are as Church: we are a Church for others. It is the others on our frontier who invite us to move from an understanding of the Church’s mission as ‘a programme for action’ to a ‘waiting on God’. It is an invitation to share in God’s great adventure and God’s loving embrace of the world. This new awareness of who we are leads us to redefine mission as ‘cooperating with other believers so that God’s purposes might be revealed’. We even have models from history to help us. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century there was created ‘by Christian, Muslim, and Jewish forces the near-miracle of a tolerant humanism on the basis of current traditions at the court of Emperor Frederick II in Sicily’.

‘By dialogue’, as the present Pope said, ‘we let God be present in our midst; for *as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God*’.<sup>1</sup>

To come to such a realisation, living on the frontier, is to experience a conversion that is, at the same time, both painful and liberating. St Thomas Aquinas, for example, links the Beatitude of Mourning with those who seek after truth. There is mourning and grieving in leaving a truth that worked, comforted and gave meaning for a new truth, untried and uncomfortable. There is some discomfort in responding to the truth of *many* possibilities, instead of subscribing to *one* all-encompassing truth. But this is the familiar Exodus from the slavery of Egypt, through the desert (looking back in longing for the ‘leeks and onions and flesh-pots of Egypt’), into a ‘land of promise’, and into freedom. What sustains us is God’s promise that he ‘will be for us who he is’, and whom we will discover as we follow not just the ‘pillar of fire’, but ‘the pillar of cloud’.

At a time of mourning, when the cloud descends, our homes are generally full of people, some of them perfect strangers, who nevertheless reveal a side of the dead relative that had perhaps been hidden from the

family. We are sustained and aided in our journey of discovery by ‘perfect strangers’ who join us for a time to share their own meanings and reveal to us the Jesus we thought we knew.

## New Challenges

There is something adventurous about a theological journey on the frontiers, accepting the challenge of the great world religions, ‘risking Christ for Christ’s sake’, in the words of the great Indian ecumenist, M.M. Thomas. ‘Interreligious dialogue’, as David Tracy observes, ‘is a crucial issue which will transform all Christian theology in the long run.... We are fast approaching the day when it will not be possible to attempt a Christian systematic theology except in serious conversation with the other great ways’.

It is precisely ‘the challenge of religious pluralism that invites us to return to the heart of the Christian paradox as the religion of the Incarnation and the religion of the *kenosis* of God’. It is for this reason that Claude Geffré can define Christianity as ‘a religion of otherness’. This, then, is a challenge that invites us to return to ourselves, to our true identity, as people for others.

It is a challenge that is provocative and stimulating. Most significant is how this emphasis on the ‘otherness’ of Christianity, even before affecting our theology and how we think about mission, can — and indeed must — affect the way we relate to Others. ‘Taking cultural and religious pluralism seriously — engaging in global coalition building for the active promotion of coexistence and cooperation — is one of the most important global issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’. It may be *the* most important issue. I have been fascinated in recent years by the thinking of the Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, who turned philosophy upside down in his insistence that it is ethics, not metaphysics, that is the ‘first’ philosophy, so that ‘being in relationship’ is much more basic than simply ‘being’. Levinas is fond of quoting Aloyosha Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov*: ‘We are all responsible for everyone else — but I am more responsible than all the others’. This is a thought that can, as one commentator said, ‘make us tremble’, for we are then endlessly obligated to the Other, responsible for the Other, and the *good* (in the form of fraternity and discourse) takes precedence over the *true*. To be oneself is to be for others.

## Entertaining elephants

In Pakistan, almost every farmer will speak of ‘my wife, my land, my children, my cow — and my enemy’, to describe who he is. The one who is different, and dangerous, is part of one’s identity. This can, of

course, take over, and result in — what I believe is — a paranoid society. One English language journal some years ago, in a lead article, asked: ‘Pakistan without enemies: whatever would we do?’. The truth in this is, of course, that the other *does* enter into our self-definition and determines how we act. The Other comes to us in different guises: guest, friend, stranger, sometimes enemy. Each meeting is important because in each is the ethical challenge to embrace responsibility and, ‘by being for others, to be oneself’. This carries with it risk, daring and surprise. Ancient Persian wisdom advises: ‘Do not welcome elephant trainers into your tent unless you are prepared to entertain elephants’.

The scriptural criterion for good action, according to the Books of the Law and the message of the prophets, was always dependent on how the orphan, the widow and the stranger were treated. Thus, in Deuteronomy: ‘The Lord your God ... is not partial. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the stranger, therefore, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ (10:17-19). Leviticus is even more specific: ‘When a stranger sojourns with you in the land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ (19:33-34). And Exodus gives this as the reason for not oppressing the stranger: ‘You know the heart of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ (23:9).

### The company of strangers

The classic passage of welcoming and surprise is Abraham’s welcoming the three strangers at Mamre (Gn 18:1-15), preparing a meal for them, after which they turn out to be angels bearing a message of a future far different from the one Abraham and Sarah imagined. And it is this meeting that the writer of Hebrews has in mind, recommending: ‘Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares’ (13:2).

The theme of mealtime hospitality is characteristic of the Gospels. Jesus and his disciples did not seem to work, left their nets, their regular family life, and enjoyed the hospitality of many, both poor and rich. ‘The community of disciples gathered around Jesus ... came from various socio-economic strata .... John Koenig [in *New Testament Hospitality*] imagines that “Jesus and his disciples must have confused their Galilean contemporaries”, since they were so diverse and depended so heavily upon “the giving and receiving of welcomes”. Tax collectors and fishermen were not usual companions, and given the subsequent conflicts among them, they were not “one big happy family”.

To the contrary, they might best be described ... as “the company of strangers. Whom Jesus not only welcomed but sought out and invited”.

‘Giving and receiving’ is most extreme in Jesus’ giving of himself. ‘God’s giving includes self-sacrifice. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and wine and gave himself to the company of strangers who were his disciples. He linked these actions and words regarding his fate and ministry to the breaking in of God’s realm. In this meal, through his self-giving, self-sacrificing presence, their lives were opened up to and through the “stranger”.

St Paul condemns the Corinthians because when they assemble as a Church they maintain ‘divisions’ and ‘factions’ — they remain strangers — so that ‘it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk’ (1 Cor 11:20-21). This insight leads him, in the same Letter, to be very cautious about ‘speaking in tongues’. Its usefulness depends on its being understood by others: ‘If you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking to the moon. There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning; but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a stranger to the speaker and the speaker a stranger to me’ (14:9-11).

Just as the appeal in the Book of Exodus (about knowing the heart of the stranger, ‘for you were strangers in Egypt’) is to a shared human experience as providing common ground, so is Paul’s vision of strangers becoming community rooted in the experience of what God did in Jesus. ‘In Christ God was *making friends* with the world ... and entrust[ed] to us the task of making friends’ (2 Cor 5:19). This is why he entreats the Romans to ‘practice hospitality’ (12:13). But to be ‘hospitable’, to welcome them as guests, strangers have to be looked at as ‘like us’ in needs, experiences, and expectations. ‘It was not sufficient’, writes Christine D. Pohl, ‘that strangers be vulnerable; hosts had to identify with their experiences of vulnerability and suffering before they welcomed them’. Perhaps linked to this obligation to hospitality is the awareness of our own culpability as part of a social system which produces strangers, displaced and vulnerable.

### The role of imagination

One commentator on the horrific events of September 2001, saw them as a failure of imagination: had the terrorists been able to imagine themselves as passengers on those planes, they would never have done what they did. It might be useful to think about what it

is that causes a failure of imagination. Timothy Radcliffe, in an address to Yale University in 1996, saw the university as a place ‘where one learned how to talk to strangers’. He quotes the poet William Blake to expose what he believes to be one of the blocks to communication: ‘May God keep us/from single vision...’. Singleness of vision led to the September attacks; it is responsible for the brutal murders of the seven Trappist monks and Bishop Claverie in Algeria in 1996 and four attacks on churches in Pakistan this year alone. Singleness of vision is a characteristic of all religious fundamentalism, whether Muslim or Christian; and singleness of vision is also endorsed by the present U.S. administration in its response to terrorism. ‘The more the U.S. mobilises for war, the more ordinary Americans must be persuaded to reduce their view of the world to good versus evil, Western liberalism versus Islamic terrorism, or, most primitively, “us versus them”. Nuance, balance, and any sense of reciprocity must cease. Learning to see the world from varying points of view must be eliminated so that only one view will predominate. Anyone who questions it must be denounced for siding with the terrorists and cast out off the community of faith’.

There is a huge difference between imagination and delusion. There is a story from my part of the world about Mullah Nasiruddin, whom a friend came across one night in the middle of the road, under a bright, shining moon. Mullah was on his hands and knees. The friend asked, ‘Mullah, what are you doing?’. ‘I’m looking for my key’, said Mullah. ‘I’ll help you’, said the friend, and he too got down on his hands and knees and began looking through the dust. After an hour of searching, the friend said, ‘Mullah, where did you lose it?’. ‘Over there, by the door’, said Nasiruddin. ‘Then, why don’t you look over there?’ said the friend. ‘Don’t be stupid’, said Mullah, ‘there’s more light here!’.

The moral, of course, is that ideal conditions are never there in the search for keys or answers. A laboratory with controlled experiments yields results that can be trusted. Life is much messier and unpredictable. And attempts to impose order result rather in totalitarian violence and the obliteration of individual differences by ethnic cleansing. To break the cycle of violence and vengeance the scriptural remedy is uncompromisingly clear: ‘love your enemies’ (Mt 5:43), ‘extend hospitality to strangers’ (Rom 12:13).

### ‘Taking to oneself’

The Greek word used in the New Testament for hospitality or welcome (*proslambanomai*: compound of *lambano*, ‘take, receive, possess’) is not about taking aside a brother whose conduct is not in harmony with ours.

The verb indicates that we must also ‘take him with us’ and ‘introduce him warmly into our fellowship’. This ‘taking to oneself’ and what it really involves is seen in another word Paul uses in Romans (12:13), where hospitality is *philoxenia*. Not just welcoming but ‘loving the stranger’. We know what *xenophobia*, ‘hatred of the stranger’, is, for it is a word and a reality we are quite familiar with today. We may not be as familiar with the word *philoxenia*, but it is the original name of Rubilev’s famous icon of the three angels (which we know as the Trinity). The angels are seated around a table with an empty place in the foreground set for the guest/stranger. It is good to link the two names, ‘love of the stranger’ and ‘the Trinity’ because it is in the Trinity that we find the model and the motive for ‘loving the stranger’.

‘Christianity’, as Gregory of Nyssa says, ‘is the imitation of God’s nature’. This finds an echo in Aquinas, who teaches that ‘we are made, not in the image of the Son, as many think, but in the image of the Trinity’. The Trinity is in our very genes! And the Trinity is a mystery of relationship. We are made not for isolation but for interdependence and the summit of this relationship is when ‘my brother and I arrive at that moment when we reach out to touch each other in mutual healing’.

Meister Eckhart, the great 14<sup>th</sup> century Dominican, once said, ‘You may call God love, you may call God good, but the best name for God is compassion’. It is this that best describes our relationship with the Trinity: God relates to us in mercy, and it is mercy that best describes mission. It is not the great ‘commissioning texts’ at the end of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (‘Go and baptize ...’) that are foundational for mission, but rather passages like 2 Cor 1:3-7, which defines mission as *paraklesis*, as consoling or ‘comforting’. Paul writes, ‘Blessed be ... the Father of mercies and the God of all *consolation*, who *consoles* us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the *consolation* with which we ourselves are *consoled* by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our *consolation* is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your *consolation* and salvation; if we are being *consoled*, it is for your *consolation*...’.

What is interesting about this passage, like those from Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, is the appeal to experience: God consoles us so that we may console others with the same consolation we have received. Even what we suffer is for others’ consolation. There is no other motive for mission than in seeking out the vulnerable in this healing and comforting relationship.

It is God as *Paraclete*, God as comforter, who reminds us of his mercies: ‘The steadfast love of the

Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning...' (Lam 3:22-23). As God's Spirit works, so must the Church. The Church's mission, like God's mission, arises out of a passion for all that is and all that can be. The Church's task is *paraklesis*, or 'comforting appeal'.

This seems to me terribly important. If the Spirit is the first way that God sends and is sent, then the Spirit's activity becomes the foundation of the Church's own missionary nature. Its task is, like that of Jesus, to follow the Spirit's lead and to be the concrete *face* of the Spirit in the world.

It is the Spirit that makes dialogue both possible and necessary. Cyril of Alexandria, in his commentary of St John's Gospel (Bk II, II) writes about 'our unity in the Spirit ... we have all received one and the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and so in a certain sense are *mingled* with one another and with God'. Not just with other Christians. Since the Spirit is the way God is present to humankind from the beginning of its experience, we Christians are *already* in relation to women and men of other religious ways. In this world, which St Augustine called, 'a smiling place', God, in the Spirit, is making friends. And calls us to a mission of befriending.

### Embrace as a theological response

It is befriending that has to be at the heart of mission and any theology of religions. Jacques Dupuis, in a review of Michael Barnes's new book believes Barnes shows that 'any future theology of religions will have to be not only a theology *for* dialogue or *in* dialogue but a theology *of* dialogue, developed from and within the relationship between the participants'. The basic requirement is 'respecting the otherness of the other religion', i.e., not an approach centred on Christianity but on the mystery of the encounter. Not concerned with 'fitting' the Other into our own story but rather 'engaging with the meaning of the providential mystery of the stranger for the life of the Church as a whole'.

The prophet Isaiah (58:6-8) says we are all 'kin', of one flesh and blood, and perhaps never more so than now. While listening drowsily to the BBC one night, I discovered that it can be statistically established that any one of us at any given time is only 'six lengths away' from any other person: the President of the U.S., the Queen of England, a peasant in Thailand: because we all know someone who knows someone who knows someone else. Human networking is fascinating but it only makes recent history all the more painful and difficult to understand. I believe we have to search for meaning together, for without acknowledging our kinship with those who are different, we will remain with but half an answer.

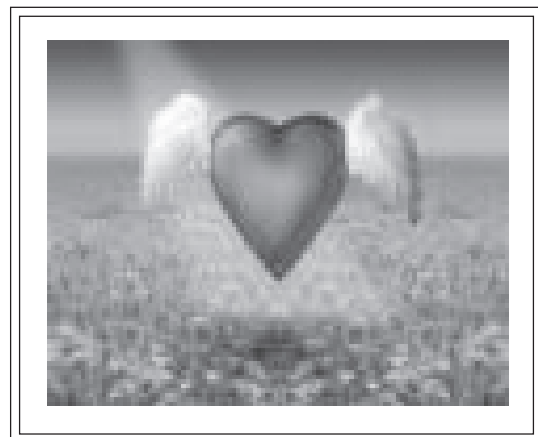
We are presented today with a disturbing reality. Otherness, the simple fact of being different in some way, has come to be defined as in and of itself evil. Miroslav Volf is a native Croatian, who, in his 'theological exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation', writes from his own experience of teaching in Croatia during the war. He contends that if the healing word of the Gospel is to be heard today, theology must find ways of speaking that address the hatred of the other, and proposes the idea of *embrace* as a theological response to the problem of *exclusion*. Increasingly we see that exclusion has become the primary sin, skewing our perceptions of reality and causing us to react out of fear and anger to all those who are not within our (ever-narrowing) circle. In light of this, Christians must learn that salvation comes, not only as we are reconciled to God, and not only as we 'learn to live with one another', but as we take the dangerous and costly step of opening ourselves to the other, of enfolding him or her in the same embrace with which we have been enfolding by God. This is not easy, but, as St John Chrysostom reminds us, it is necessary: 'It might be possible', he writes, 'for a person to love without risking danger — but this is not the case with us!'. Jesus calls us 'friends', tells us to 'befriend' and 'love one another', (Jn 15:14-17) in a risky and dangerous embrace which mirrors his own.

### Note:

1. John Paul II's *Discourse to Non-Christian Representatives* in Rajaji Hall, Madras, 5 Feb. 1986, n. 4.

Ref.: (Text for SEDOS Conference, 17 October 2002, held at the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia 476, Rome).

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# *Crossing the Borders: A Spirituality for Mission in Our Times From an Asian Perspective*

– Fr Peter C. Phan – The Catholic University of America

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One of the most enduring images of the missionary in popular imagination is that of someone leaving his or her country for a foreign land to convert the heathens. Of course, today the concept of what constitutes a heathen has changed dramatically, just as that of conversion as the goal of mission.<sup>1</sup> Even the borders which used to separate Christians from unbelievers and followers of other faiths have become so porous that they have ceased to be clear and helpful identity markers. Today there is no lack of Christians and non-Christians who claim double or triple religious belonging, and the tribes of religiously hyphenated people, both inside and outside of Christianity, are on a steady increase.<sup>2</sup>

While the concepts of paganism, conversion, and religious identity have undergone drastic changes in recent years, one aspect has nevertheless remained constant in the job description of the missionary, and that is, crossing or going over borders.<sup>3</sup> Not only has this act of crossing retained its necessity, it has also become extremely complex, since the borders between the missionary's native country and the foreign lands have grown both porous and multiple. In times past when borders were mainly geographical, crossing them might be hazardous and even deadly. Voyages from Lisbon, for instance, from which missionaries under the Portuguese *Padroado* had to depart for distant parts of the globe took years, and not a few missionaries perished during the journey.<sup>4</sup> But at least, the borders were visible, and one could be certain of having crossed them. Today, by contrast, crossing geographical boundaries has been made quick, easy and even comfortable thanks to air travel. But new boundaries have emerged which are invisible and porous, and as a result, one may not even be aware that there are boundaries at all and can easily make the mistake of assuming that everything is the same everywhere! Furthermore, borders have become so numerous and diverse that crossing them successfully requires a good deal of skill and effort on the part of the missionary.<sup>5</sup>

This predicament brings new challenges to Chris-

tian mission and calls for an appropriate spirituality. Coincidentally, in recent years missionaries have taken a strong interest in spirituality. Summarizing the presentations and discussions at the mission congress organized by SEDOS in 2000, Robert Schreiter notes: "As missionaries move into the third millennium, it is clear that the issue of spirituality has a high priority".<sup>6</sup> This interest, he suggests, is rooted in the new awareness that Christian mission is primarily *missio Dei*.

In this contribution to a border-crossing mission spirituality I shall first describe the new borders that missionaries must cross today. Next, I'll delineate some of the dispositions and virtues that would help missionaries accomplish and maintain such crossing-over. Lastly, I will attempt to ground such border-crossing spirituality theologically in the mystery of the Incarnation itself.

## New arenas of mission and new borders

Perhaps one helpful way to discern the new borders for contemporary mission is to begin with John Paul II's description of the three "situations", each with a corresponding activity of the Church.<sup>7</sup> The first situation consists of Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures, a fervent Christian life, and a commitment to mission. Here the Church's activity is "pastoral care". The second situation consists of Christian communities, both ancient and young, in which the members have lost a living sense of faith, do not even consider themselves Christian, and live lives contrary to the Gospel. Here the Church's activity is "new evangelization" or "re-evangelization". The third situation is made up of peoples, groups, and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known or in which there are no Christians mature enough to proclaim their faith to others. Here the Church's activity is "mission *ad gentes*" or "missionary activity proper".

The Pope is aware that "the boundaries between *pastoral care of the faithful, new evangelization, and spe-*



*cific missionary activity* are not clearly definable” and that there is a “real and growing *interdependence*” among these three activities.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, he maintains these distinctions in order to highlight the continuing necessity and even urgency of the mission *ad gentes* which has been on the wane and whose validity and relevance have been questioned.<sup>9</sup>

What is of interest to us here is not the usefulness or lack of it of the Pope’s distinction of the three situations with corresponding Church activities and the validity of his exclusive reservation of the terms “missionary activity proper” and “mission *ad gentes*” to the third situation.<sup>10</sup> Rather it is the fact that having reaffirmed the necessity of the mission to non-Christians John Paul II goes on to describe the various arenas in which these non-Christians are encountered today and in which a threefold activity of this mission *ad gentes* is carried out, namely, “the work of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel, building up the local Church and promoting the values of the kingdom”.<sup>11</sup> The Pope specifies that these non-Christian arenas include three distinct categories, and hence three possible kinds of border and border-crossing, namely, “peoples, groups and socio-cultural contexts”.<sup>12</sup>

First, “peoples” here may be taken to refer to the followers of other religions as well as persons of no religious affiliation (atheists and agnostics). In the recent past most of these peoples used to live in the so-called mission territories, and John Paul II, who still upholds the criterion of geography, regards certain parts of the world, in particular Asia, urgently calling for the Church’s mission *ad gentes*.<sup>13</sup> Today, however, due to frequent and extensive migrations from East to West, a growing number of non-Christians are settling in the Christianized West, especially in urban centres, where temples, pagodas, and mosques dot the landscape cheek-by-jowl with churches and synagogues. Even though the population of non-Christians in the West is still relatively small, their active and at times vocal presence makes religious pluralism, to which we will return below, a live and attractive option for many Christians. As a result, religious affiliations, which used to function as identity markers, have been blurred beyond recognition and the need for missionaries to be able to maintain religious identities and at the same time to negotiate conflicting religious claims has increased dramatically.

In terms of John Paul II’s distinction of the three situations of the Church’s mission, it is increasingly a fact – uncomfortable to many Christians – that the presence of non-Christians even in the midst of both Christian communities with solid ecclesial structures and vibrant faith, and in communities which have lost their ancient Christian roots, poses serious challenges to the mission *ad gentes*, much more complex and numerous,

than in countries where Christians still form a minority. To cross over to these non-Christians in the West requires a great deal of skill and effort on the part of the missionary, since they are much more cognizant of the problems and even scandals in the Catholic Church (e.g., the recent clergy sex abuse and the bishops’ misuse of funds and power) than their fellow believers in their native countries and are therefore less likely to “convert” to Christianity than if they had an idealistic picture of the Church.

Secondly, as far as groups are concerned, John Paul II refers to “new worlds and new social phenomena” which are said to widen immeasurably the circle of concerns for the mission *ad gentes*.<sup>14</sup> Among the groups that deserve the special attention of missionaries, the Pope singles out four categories, namely, dwellers of megalopolises, youth, immigrants and refugees, and the poor, each of whom requires specialized forms of ministry. Urbanization creates big cities where a new humanity is emerging and where new models of development are taking shape, and poses a different set of challenges for missionaries, who used to carry out their work in isolated and underdeveloped regions. Youth, who in many countries make up more than half of the population, require associations, institutions, centres, and cultural and social activities that go far beyond the ordinary means of evangelization and demand highly specialized skills not possessed by the average missionary. Immigrants and refugees, as has been pointed out above, not only raise the awareness of religious pluralism to an unprecedented level, but also create fresh opportunities for cultural and religious exchanges among them and Christian missionaries. Finally, the poor and the marginalized demand new forms of evangelization that restore their human dignity and freedom. Needless to say, these four groups create new and pluriform borders, not simply geographical but also social, economic, ethnic, and psychological, which missionaries have to be fully conscious of to marshal the requisite skills to cross.

Thirdly, with regard to socio-cultural contexts, John Paul II mentions “the modern equivalents of the *Ar-eopagus*”, namely, the worlds of communications and mass media, justice and peace, scientific research, international organizations, and religious revival.<sup>15</sup> Needless to say, most if not all of these “worlds” were totally unknown to the missionaries *ad gentes* of just a few decades past, the great majority of whom laboured in underdeveloped countries and for whom these worlds represented the exclusive concerns of the technologically advanced West. Even today, despite valiant efforts to adapt to a post-industrial society, to our Age of Information with a heavy emphasis on service economy and intellectual technology, many missionaries still find themselves incapable of crossing over into these unfamiliar

worlds, physical or virtual, whose borders seem to extend everywhere and yet remain so elusive and forbidding.

Still, there is no escaping these worlds if one wants to carry out the mission *ad gentes* effectively, even when one retreats to the remotest corners of the globe. This is so because of two other widespread contemporary phenomena, namely, globalization and what has been called “post-modernity” both of which represent the most salient features of our times. Thanks to easy transportation and communication technologies, not only has our world become a “global village” or rather a “global city” but there is also a heightened awareness of our interconnection and interdependence in all areas of life.<sup>16</sup> As a result of globalization which extends the effects of modernization to all parts of the globe and at the same time compresses both space and time, there emerges everywhere a popular, homogenizing, deterritorialized “global culture”. Of course, local cultures do not passively absorb globalization and its popular culture, hook line and sinker but react to it by rejecting it altogether, or by asserting their ethnic differences, or by returning to their pre-modern roots.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the overwhelming effect of globalization is the removal of boundaries and distinctions with a continuous flow of information, technologies, ideas, tastes, and values throughout the world. As a result, culture is no longer seen as a normative pattern of living characterized by boundedness, distinctiveness, coherence, and stability but much more as a fluid and unbounded social reality marked by openness, variability, inconsistency, and conflict. At the same time, because of globalization, today the symbols, ideas, rituals, institutions, artistic representations, and religious traditions of one culture are in constant contact and exchange with those of another resulting in greater “shared space” than before. In other words, while the old borders have disappeared, new and numerous boundaries are constantly being drawn are much less visible and identifiable than the old ones and thus make missionary crossing-over much more complicated.

The other phenomenon, more elusive but no less extensive and influential than globalization, goes under the slippery label of post-modernity. There have been extensive discussions of the historical parameters and nature of postmodernity, especially with reference to modernity and the Enlightenment, and it is not necessary to enter into such a debate here. Suffice it to note, along with Lawrence Cahoon,<sup>18</sup> that according to some commentators, there are in contemporary social and cultural patterns a number of features, pervasive, distinctive, and important enough to warrant the judgement that a new period of history has emerged, markedly different from modernity, and for lack of a better term, may be labelled postmodernity. Epistemologically, postmodernity is characterized by

a deep scepticism about our ability to know objective truth, rejection of “universal and unchanging essences” and of fixed meanings in human artifacts and language, incredulity toward “metanarratives”, preference for local and particular stories, and celebration of diversity and multiplicity.<sup>19</sup> From a theological standpoint, while postmodernism’s relativism and scepticism must be rejected, its critique of modernity and the Enlightenment is to be taken seriously, and consequently, some theologians have subjected fundamental concepts such as: God, the self, truth, and verification to a new scrutiny and reformulation.

From the missiological perspective, the challenges posed by postmodernity are immense. One of the offsprings of postmodernism is religious pluralism, according to which the diversity of religions is not merely a fact but a normative stance which allows no particular religion to make claims to universality and absolute validity. Needless to say, understood in this way, religious pluralism strikes at the heart of Christology and soteriology, and calls into question the very legitimacy of Christian mission as understood and practiced in the past.<sup>20</sup> The question is therefore whether missionaries *ad gentes* can still proclaim the Christian faith effectively and faithfully amidst the pluralistic view, widespread in popular culture and in academia, that the Christian faith is but one among many equally legitimate paths to God.<sup>21</sup> How, in other words, can the borders among religions that religious pluralism has erased be rebuilt without being exclusivistic?

In sum, today the many borders the missionaries *ad gentes* of old had to cross have disappeared but new ones have emerged, more numerous, porous, and even invisible, partly because of the new situations in which the Church has to carry out its mission, partly because of new economic, social, cultural, and religious trends such as globalization, postmodernism, and religious pluralism. New peoples, new groups, and new contexts are the addressees of evangelization. This fact was brought home by the participants of the SEDOS 2000 congress on *the future of mission* who mentioned five new contexts for mission today: globalization, religion-related violence, secularization, the mounting strength of Islam, and ecological destruction.<sup>22</sup> Different are the borders and boundaries that missionaries now have to cross, but the act of crossing still remains, which is more subtle, complex, and multiple. Is there a Christian way of living, a frame of mind, and a set of moral dispositions and virtues, in a word, a spirituality that facilitates and nurtures such crossing-over?

### **Border-crossing: a missionary way of life**

My purpose here is not to speak of missionary spirituality in general which has been treated at length in

recent times by a number of missiologists.<sup>23</sup> John Paul II himself devotes the last chapter of his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* to missionary spirituality and describes it as marked by three basic features: complete docility to the Holy Spirit, intimate communion with Christ the Evangelizer, and apostolic charity for the evangelized and for the Church. Emphasizing the priority of spirituality for mission the Pope says: "The renewed impulse to the mission *ad gentes* demands holy missionaries. It is not enough to update pastoral techniques, organize and coordinate ecclesial resources, or delve more deeply into the biblical and theological foundations of faith. What is needed is the encouragement of a new 'ardour for holiness' among missionaries and throughout the Christian community, especially among those who work most closely with missionaries".<sup>24</sup>

Assuming the three features enumerated by the Pope as undisputed givens of a missionary spirituality, I would like to single out for reflection some attitudes and practices that appear most appropriate for missionaries in a globalized, postmodern, and religiously plural context, with multiple borders and unfamiliar situations. Robert Schreiter, in his assessment of the SEDOS Congress on *the future of mission* referred to above, suggests that missionary spirituality in the future will have to develop along four trajectories: spirituality of presence, kenotic spirituality, reconciliation, and holistic anthropology. Taking my cue from the realities of Asia and from the various statements of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences and their institutes as well as from the Asian Synod and John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*.<sup>25</sup> I will elaborate on how these four features form part of a missionary spirituality envisaged as border-crossing spirituality.

Borders or boundaries seem to perform three distinct functions: as markers for one's individual and communal identity, as barriers to fence out other people different from oneself, and as frontiers from which to venture out into new horizons to expand one's knowledge and one's circle of relationships.<sup>26</sup> Corresponding to this triple role of borders, a border-crossing spirituality must first of all help the missionary respect and promote the distinctive identity and "otherness" of those to be evangelized. On the one hand, these differences must not be erased under the pretext of a common human nature; on the other, they should not be absolutized in an ideology of ethnocentrism and nationalism. Such a border-crossing spirituality must also impel the missionary to dismantle the unjust fences that powerful interest groups put up to protect their privileges and to keep the marginalized out, denying them even a decent human life. Finally, it must assist the missionary in transcending differences of all kinds and opening up new frontiers in order to build a "civilization of love" which is not merely a confirmation of

old identities but a forging of a new, common identity in which the worst in each group is overcome and the best is combined to produce truly intercultural human beings, in the image of the Triune God.

### *Spirituality of Presence*

To live in Asia is to constantly cross borders separating a dizzying variety of languages, races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions.<sup>27</sup> In addition to these traditional boundaries, there are contemporary ones created by the process of globalization such as the growing gap between the rich and the poor, religious fundamentalism, political and military conflicts among nations, and communal violence.<sup>28</sup> In Asia, perhaps more than anywhere else on earth, missionaries are called to be present in these multiple realities and to be keenly aware of the borders which are necessary for self-identity but also create many forms of exclusion.

This presence of course goes beyond physical accessibility. It demands acceptance of pluralism not as a curse but as a blessing and an opportunity for mutual collaboration and enrichment. Furthermore, it requires an affective and effective solidarity with people on both sides of the border, especially those who are marginalized and oppressed. To achieve affective solidarity with them, the FABC's Institute for Social Action recommends the method of "exposure" and "immersion," part of the four-stage "pastoral cycle," namely, exposure-immersion, social analysis, contemplation, and planning: "Exposure brought us closer to the stark reality of poverty, but immersion sought to experience reality from the perspective of the poor themselves. Exposure is like a doctor's visit for diagnosis; immersion is like the visit of a genuine friend entering into a dialogue-of-life".<sup>29</sup>

Thus, a spirituality of presence includes genuine friendship with those living on the other side of the border and a dialogue-of-life with them. Indeed, this sharing of life is part of a new way of being Church in Asia that involves a fourfold presence: "a. The *dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. b. The *dialogue of action*, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people. c. The *dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values. d. The *dialogue of religious experience*, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance, with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute".<sup>30</sup>

In Asia, this fourfold dialogue, by which the mis-

missionary is truly present to the people who are evangelized, must be carried out, according to the FABC, in three areas: with the Asians themselves, especially the poor and the indigenous peoples (integral development and liberation), with their religions (interreligious dialogue), and with their cultures (inculturation).<sup>31</sup>

This spirituality of presence is all the more necessary and the mission work performed through it all the more effective in those parts of the world, especially in Asia, where an explicit proclamation of Jesus is forbidden and religious freedom is restricted or denied. This presence in the form of “the silent witness of life” is perhaps not always congenial to Western missionaries in whose training there has been a strong emphasis on a verbal and explicit proclamation of Jesus as the only and universal Saviour and for whom anything falling short of this would be a failure in mission. Nevertheless, when this silent witness of life, rooted in the experience of God, is accompanied by a lifestyle characterized by “renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence” and by “the work of justice, charity and compassion,” it is perhaps most appropriate for Asia and forms the core of the spirituality of presence which is mission as “*contemplative action and active contemplation*”.<sup>32</sup>

Since the spirituality of presence is essentially dialogue, it demands all the virtues that make dialogue successful. For this to occur, according to the FABC’s Institute of Interreligious Affairs, nothing less than a “spirituality of dialogue” is required, especially in situations of conflict and animosity: “In a situation of prejudice brought about by fundamentalism and religious revivalism, dialogue means an abiding and genuine search for goodness, beauty, and truth following the beckoning of the Spirit who leads us into all truth.... In an atmosphere of animosity brought about by the injustice and violation of human rights, dialogue means powerlessness and vulnerability. From a position of power, one can only negotiate about terms. From a position of weakness, one can truly communicate his or her trust in the other. Trust is most real when the possibility of betrayal looms up. To dialogue then means to open one’s heart and to speak one’s mind with courage and respect. But, as our experiences have shown, the Spirit has often used powerlessness and vulnerability to effect mutual forgiveness and reconciliation among individuals, families, and communities”.<sup>33</sup> This spirituality of presence from the missionary’s position of powerlessness and vulnerability brings us to the next dimension of border-crossing spirituality, namely, kenotic spirituality.

### *Kenotic Spirituality*

What is meant by kenotic spirituality is well explained by the same Institute of Interreligious Affairs:

“To risk being wounded in the act of loving, to seek understanding in a climate of misunderstanding – these are no burdens to bear. Dialogue demands a deep spirituality which enables man, as did Jesus Christ, to hang on to his faith in God’s love, even when everything seems to fall apart. Dialogue, finally, demands a total Christ-like self-emptying so that, led by the Spirit, we may be more effective instruments in building God’s kingdom”.<sup>34</sup>

As is well known, much of Asia is suffering from the legacy of colonialism, widespread poverty, crushing foreign debts, lack of basic health care and adequate educational facilities, and ecological destruction. The missionary who comes from the First World and especially from the United States of America, which is now the sole superpower wielding absolute military power and enormous wealth, and the Catholic Church itself, a powerful and rich institution both in the West and in Asia, are often perceived by Asians as having at their disposition unlimited resources to alleviate their pain and suffering. Furthermore, from the religious point of view, the Catholic Church is often presented as possessing the fullness of truth and all the means of sanctification, and as charged with the mission of sharing these divine gifts with others. As a consequence, the missionary is vested with unrealistic expectations, and is tempted to think that part of his or her mission is to meet them.

It is here that kenotic spirituality will play a key role. As Antonio M. Pernia, the Filipino Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word, echoing the voice of the FABC, puts it: “Much of Asia, as we know, is characterized by the historical experience of colonization, a socio-economic condition of poverty, and a religious situation where Christianity is a minority. So, the Asian missionary cannot, or ought not, evangelize from a position of power or superiority. He or she must approach mission from a position of powerlessness and humility”.<sup>35</sup> This means that the Good News is not something owned by the missionary but only given to his or her stewardship: “Thus, the Asian missionary will not, or ought not, share the faith as if he or she owned it, dictating thereby the terms by which it must be understood, lived and celebrated. His or her approach to mission will be to share the faith as a gift received from God through others, conscious of himself or herself as merely its steward or servant and never its owner or master”.<sup>36</sup>

The necessity of this kenotic spirituality is even more pressing in the case of Asians going as missionaries to the First World, as happens frequently these days, when the First World imports Asian priests and religious to remedy its shortage of clergy. As Leo Kleden, an Indonesian member of the SVD, has shrewdly observed, these missionaries cannot expect to do what

missionaries from the First World have done in Asia in terms of health care, education, and social development. Asian missionaries, originating mostly from their pre-modern culture and moving into the modern and post-modern cultures of the West, come literally “empty-handed.” But this situation need not be simply weakness but also strength, says Kleden: “This kind of weakness can and should be the strength of the new missionaries. Here is a golden opportunity to follow the example of the first disciples of Jesus who were sent empty-handed but who were inspired by the Spirit of the Crucified and Risen Lord. The empty-handed approach is therefore possible if their heart is full of faith, with the willingness to serve others as the Lord Jesus. Through the Spirit of the Lord human weakness (in the socio-political sense) is transformed into evangelical *kenosis*”.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of evangelization, with kenotic spirituality missionaries cross over borders less with the attitude of givers than of receivers. They do not go into the mission lands with an advanced technology to modernize the underdeveloped, with a superior culture to civilize the barbarians, with a true religion to wipe out superstitions, with a set of revealed truths to teach the unenlightened. As Anthony Gittins has pointed out, they come primarily as strangers and as guests. As strangers, they will be perceived by the hosts as “foreign”, “abnormal”, “alien”, “odd”, “strange”. As guests, they must depend on the generosity and kindness of the hosts, respect and follow the rules and customs of the new environment, and may change the ways of life of the place only if asked or allowed. Furthermore, in many cases missionaries are not invited guests, they just invite themselves or even force their way into the hosts’ countries. This makes their condition of stranger and guest even more pronounced and precarious.

In light of these two existential predicaments of the missionary, Gittins suggests that part of the kenotic spirituality is for the missionary to “*accept our marginal and ambiguous status*. We are no longer – if we ever truly were – primary movers, but collaborators and assistants, servants”.<sup>38</sup> He goes on to say: “To allow oneself to be a stranger is to allow oneself to be placed at the disposition of the God who calls. To embrace the status of a stranger is to empower other people and to dare to infuse some trust into a world where self-interest and suspicion seem to walk unimpeded. To choose to be a stranger is, it might be argued, to be a willing disciple of Jesus”.<sup>39</sup> Kenotic spirituality also requires that as guest the missionary learn to be a gracious and grateful receiver, not only in matters of room and board, but above all in the areas of culture, moral behaviour, and religious insights and practices. In this respect, perhaps the virtues that were extolled in the past as requisites of a successful missionary such as independence, self-re-

liance, risk-taking, and creativity might no longer be appropriate, at least during the phase of incorporation into the local community, and must be replaced by willingness to give up autonomy, vulnerability, interdependence, deference, and conformity. Of course, as etiquette demands, the missionary as guest must also bring some gifts of his or her own, not to “repay” the host but to “return” the host’s graciousness. Consequently, the missionary must bear witness to Jesus Christ and present God’s gift of faith. But gifts are offered in gratitude and humility; they should never be imposed on the host.<sup>40</sup>

### *Spirituality of Reconciliation and Harmony*

It is a fact that borders do not serve simply to define and affirm identity. A good fence does not always make good neighbours. It all depends on who puts up the fence and where and what for. It may happen that the more powerful neighbour, who puts up the fence as a barrier to keep others out, places it outside the boundary of his/her property, thus encroaching upon other people’s land, or builds it up to protect the ill-gained wealth and unjust privileges she or he is enjoying. It is also a fact that not always the guest and the host are on friendly terms with each other, and hospitality turns into hostility. Then the need arises to restore harmony and make peace.

Given the increase of violence not only among nations but also within nations, not only in secular society but also in the Church since the end of communism in the Eastern European countries in 1989, the need for reconciliation has grown more acute. Among contemporary missiologists Robert Schreiter has devoted a lot of attention to reconciliation.<sup>41</sup> Schreiter warns that reconciliation must not be undertaken as “a hasty peace” by suppressing the memory of past violence, as an “alternative to liberation”, which is a pre-condition for reconciliation, and as a “managed process” to be conducted with technical rationality.<sup>42</sup> Rather reconciliation must be seen as part of Christian mission (2 Cor 5:18-19) based on the Christian redeeming narrative of violence (sin), death, cross, and blood in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Following José Comblin, Schreiter suggests that this reconciliation, which is initiated and brought about by God, is accomplished on three levels: “a christological level, in which Christ is the mediator through whom God reconciles the world to God’s self; an ecclesiological level, in which Christ reconciles Jew and Gentile; and a cosmic level, in which Christ reconciles all the powers in heaven and on earth”.<sup>43</sup> To fulfill this ministry of reconciliation, missionaries, according to Schreiter, must develop a “spirituality of reconciliation”. This spirituality consists in cultivating an

attitude of “listening and waiting”, of “attention and compassion,” and of “post-exilic existence”. By listening and waiting, one learns to retrieve the memory of suffering and violence and to wait patiently for God’s gift of peace and forgiveness; by attention and compassion, one enters into solidarity with those who suffer violence; and by post-exilic existence one begins to construct a new society with chastened optimism and hope.<sup>44</sup>

Reconciliation as restoration of harmony is also a pervasive theme in Asian theologies as embodied in the the FABC’s documents.<sup>45</sup> There is no doubt that harmony is central to Asian cultures and religions. It is said to constitute “the intellectual and affective, religious and artistic, personal and social soul of both persons and institutions in Asia”.<sup>46</sup> After expounding the concept of harmony as espoused by Asian philosophies, primal religions, and religious traditions (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and Islam), the FABC’s Theological Advisory Committee concludes: “It is clear there is an Asian approach to reality, an Asian understanding of reality that is profoundly organic, i.e., a world-view wherein the whole, the unity, is the sum-total of the web of relations, and interaction of the various parts with each other”.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, harmony is not simply “the absence of strife” but lies in “acceptance of diversity and richness”. Nor is it merely a pragmatic strategy for successful living amidst differences. Fundamentally, it is an Asian *spirituality* involving all the four dimensions of human existence: the individual self, and his or her relationships with other human beings, the material universe, and God. This is clear from the teachings of various Asian religious traditions. The *Hindu way* is marked by a quest for a harmonious integration of the whole and the parts at all levels: individual, social, and cosmic. The cosmos is sustained by a harmonious order; society is held together by the order of *dharma* (law); and the individual achieves harmony by observing the cosmic order and society’s moral and religious code.

In *Buddhism*, harmony in the individual, which leads to liberation from suffering, is achieved by following the so-called Eightfold Path: right speech, action, and livelihood (*sṣla* [morality]); right effort, mindfulness, and concentration (*samdhi* [concentration]); and right understanding and thought (*prajñ* [wisdom]). According to Zen Buddhism, harmony in the individual is the unity of body and mind in all the person’s activities and produces enlightenment and a deep sense of peace. Because of the unity between body and soul, physical practices such as proper sitting position, regulating the breath, and composing the mind are necessary conduits to spiritual enlightenment.

Harmony in the individual leads to harmony with other human beings, which, according to Confucius, include the family, the nation, and the world. Accord-

ing to the Chinese Sage, one cannot pacify the world without governing one’s nation well; one cannot govern one’s nation well without ordering one’s family rightly; and one cannot order one’s family rightly without achieving mastery over oneself. And self-mastery is achieved by living out the five relationships correctly: between ruler and subject, between husband and wife, between parent and child, between elder sibling and younger sibling, and between friend and friend. Each of these five relationships implies a set of obligations and duties, and if one fulfills them correctly, one lives in harmony with oneself and with others.

Furthermore, because the human person is a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm, she or he must also be in harmony with nature or the cosmos. This harmony is particularly emphasized in *Taoism*. Chuang Tzu, the greatest Taoist after Lao Tzu, declares: “The cosmos and I were born together; all things and I are one”. In practical terms, cosmic harmony demands that humans maintain a healthy and sustainable ecosystem, avoid the pollution of the environment, reduce the consumption of energy resources, and in general develop an attitude of reverence for, a contemplative posture toward, and a sense of oneness with the Earth and non-human creation.

Finally, harmony in oneself, harmony with one’s fellow human beings, and harmony with the cosmos are rooted in and strengthened by harmony with God. This harmony with the Divine is the fundamental teaching of *Islam*, an Arabic term meaning ‘surrender’. To be in harmony with God, we must in all things submit to God’s holy will in mind, heart, and action. We must, to use a Confucian expression, learn to know and fulfill the mandate of Heaven.

When this view of harmony of Asian non-Christian religions is integrated with the Christian understanding of God’s reconciliation of the world to himself in Jesus and by the power of the Spirit, what emerges, in the view of the Theological Advisory Commission, is a new spirituality of harmony as a web of peaceful relationships, a new theology of harmony as communion, and a deeper commitment to harmony as reconciliation. The spirituality of harmony will shape human life as an unfolding of right relationships: “Starting from consciousness of the God-given harmony within oneself, one moves into harmonious relationship with one’s fellow humans; then one spreads out to be in harmony with nature and the wider universe. This unfolding and realization of right relationship within oneself, with the neighbours and the cosmos leads to the summit experience of harmony with God”.<sup>48</sup> On the basis of this spirituality, a theology of harmony is developed, not as conclusions deduced from Christian texts but as a contextual reflection on the realities of conflict in Asia, in dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, and in solidarity with the vic-

tims of discrimination and violence. In this theology of harmony, there is an emphasis on ethics as “the ethic and aesthetic of right relationships in the original harmony”, on Christ as “the sacrament of the new harmony”, and on the Church as “the sacrament of unity”. Finally, this new spirituality and theology of harmony call for an active commitment to peacemaking and reconciliation as individuals, as Church, and in collaboration with others.

For the missionary, this spirituality of reconciliation and harmony implies that in border-crossing he/she be aware that borders as markers can be made to function as barriers, especially by those who have vested economic and political interests to maintain and protect. Here the role of prophecy is indispensable. The missionary will be in solidarity with those who are marginalized and discriminated against by these borders/barriers and will courageously denounce the injustices committed against them. “Harmony”, says the Theological Advisory Commission, “is neither a compromising with conflictual realities, nor a complacency about the existing order. Harmony demands a transformative attitude and action, to bring about a change in contemporary society. This can be provided only by a prophetic spirituality which exercises charitable but courageous criticism of the situation”.<sup>49</sup>

Another aspect of mission to which the spirituality of harmony applies is interreligious dialogue and the religious boundaries that have often been manipulated to pit one religious group against another. Religions, when seen as mutually complementary, should not be barriers separating people but seen as different paths leading to God. As Michael Amaladoss has pointed out, a new approach to religions is needed, in which all religions are seen as players and collaborators in humanity’s movement towards God’s kingdom: “In promoting the kingdom, then, our enemies are Satan and Mammon, not other religions”.<sup>50</sup> This spirit of complementarity and harmony was strongly insisted upon by the Asian Bishops at the Asian Synod when speaking of the Asian cultural and religious values as forming the basis of the Asianness of the Church: “All of this indicates an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of ‘being Asian’ is built. This ‘being Asian’ is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul”.<sup>51</sup>

### *Holistic Spirituality*

The last dimension of border-crossing spirituality, intimately connected with the spirituality of harmony

and reconciliation, is holistic spirituality. Central to this spirituality is a holistic anthropology, which is already intimated above when harmony is said to embrace four dimensions: the self, fellow human beings, the cosmos, and God. Arguing for “a more cosmic and holistic anthropology” María Carmelita de Freitas suggests that it will make possible “a more integrated and open religious life, one with wider horizons, more in harmony with what is beautiful, simple, human, joyful, cheerful, with nature, and with everything”.<sup>52</sup> Only in this way, de Freitas believes, can the evils of globalization with its “neo-liberal creed” of monetary and economic stability, its “ethics of efficiency”, its “Gospel of competition”, and its “logic of exclusion” be counteracted.<sup>53</sup>

From our reflections on harmony above it is obvious that holistic spirituality is a central concern not only of the various Asian religious traditions but also of the FABC. The Fifth Plenary Assembly in 1990 insisted that a spirituality for the new millennium must “integrate every aspect of Christian life: liturgy, prayer, community living, solidarity with all and especially the poor, evangelization, catechesis, dialogue, social commitment, etc. There has to be no dichotomy between faith and life, or between love and action ....”.<sup>54</sup>

In holistic spirituality as part of border-crossing, boundaries cease to be barriers and become frontiers from which the missionary ventures forth with people on both sides of the border to create new realities out of their common assets. Among Hispanic/Latino theologians, Virgilio P. Elizondo has developed the concept of *mestizaje*, that is, a blending of two or more races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions into a “new race”, as the early Christians were called. In this new race, as Elizondo points out, “borders will not disappear, differences will not fade away, but they need not divide and keep peoples apart.... Rather than seeing them as the ultimate dividing line between you and me, between us and them, we can see borders as the privileged meeting places where different persons and peoples will come together to form a new and most inclusive humanity”.<sup>55</sup>

The spirituality of missionary border-crossing which we have elaborated in terms of presence, *kenosis*, harmony, and holistic integration is well expressed by Anthony Bellagamba in his description of the identity of missionaries as “persons of the present” and “persons of the beyond”. As “persons of the present”, missionaries must live in contact with the realities of the people they seek to evangelize: “The struggle of the people, their hopes and concerns, their vision of life, their experience of death, their cosmological theories, their methods of being community, their understanding of authority, their use of authority, their sexual drives, and their whole system of values are, or should be, of great interest to cross-cultural personnel”.<sup>56</sup> As “persons of the beyond”, they must go beyond their own

cultures, histories, values, mother tongues, native symbols, even their religions, not in the sense of rejecting them, but in the sense of “emptying” themselves of them in order to be guests and strangers among the people they evangelize and to receive and adopt as far as possible their hosts’ cultures and ways of life.

### Jesus, the border-crosser

Border-crossing spirituality, a necessity for missionaries in a culture with multiple and porous boundaries created by globalization, postmodernity, and religious pluralism, is not simply a practical strategy for successful evangelization but is a theological imperative of Christian life as *imitatio Christi*. Christian evangelization in any period of history and in any culture worthy of the name must be modelled after the way Jesus proclaimed God’s kingdom to the people of his time. There are of course many different ways to represent Jesus’ life and ministry. For example, it is possible to explain the significance of Jesus by way of the various titles the New Testament and Christian Tradition have attributed to him. Needless to say, no one title can ever exhaust the significance of Jesus’ words and deeds and the multifaceted method of his ministry. For our purpose it would be useful to explore Jesus’ life and ministry in terms of border-crossing. In this way, the missionary spirituality that has been proposed here will be seen to be rooted in the mystery of Christ the Border-Crosser himself. For reasons of space, I will limit our consideration to the Incarnation, some aspects of Jesus’ ministry, and his death and Resurrection.<sup>57</sup>

#### *The Incarnation as Border-Crossing*

The mystery of the Word of God made flesh in Jesus can certainly be viewed as an act of border-crossing. Essentially, it is the culmination of that primordial border-crossing by which the Triune God steps out of himself and eternity and crosses into the *other*, namely, the world of space and time, which God brings into existence by this very act of crossing. In the Incarnation, the border that was crossed is not only that which separates the eternal and the temporal, the invisible and the visible, spirit and matter, but more specifically, the divine and the human, with the latter’s reality of soul and body.

In this divine crossing over to the human, the border between the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus functions as the marker constituting the distinct identity of each. One is not transmuted into the other, nor is confused with it; rather, the two natures are to be acknowledged “without confusion, without

change”. As the Council of Chalcedon teaches: “The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (*prosopon*) and one *hypostasis*”.

On the other hand, the same border is no longer a barrier preventing God and the human from joining together. Indeed, by crossing the divine-human border, the Logos transforms the barrier into a frontier and creates a new reality, Jesus of Nazareth, whose humanity the Logos assumes and makes it his own, so that, as the Council of Chalcedon teaches, his two natures — divine and human — are united with each other “without division, without separation”. In this humanity the Logos now exists in a new way, not available to him before the Incarnation, and this historical mode of existence, in time and space, and above all, as we will see, in suffering and death, now belongs to God’s eternal and trinitarian life itself.

Thus, in the Incarnation as border-crossing, the boundaries are preserved as identity markers but at the same time they are overcome as barriers and transformed into frontiers from which a totally new reality, a *mestizaje*, emerges: the divine and human reconciled and harmonized with each other into one single reality. Like Jesus, missionaries are constantly challenged to cross all kinds of borders, and out of the best of each group of people these borders divide and separate, to create a new human family characterized by harmony and reconciliation.

#### *Jesus’ Ministry as Dwelling at the Margins*

A border-crosser at the very roots of his being, Jesus performed his ministry of proclaiming and ushering in the kingdom of God always at the places where borders meet and hence at the margins of the two worlds separated by their borders. He was a “marginal Jew”, to use the title of John Meier’s multi-volume work on the historical Jesus. He crossed these borders back and forth repeatedly and freely, be they geographical, racial, sexual, social, economic, political, cultural, and religious. What is new about his message about the Kingdom of God, which is Good News to some and scandal to others, is that for him it removes all borders, both natural and man-made, as barriers and is absolutely all-inclusive. Jews and non-Jews, men and women, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the healthy and the sick, the clean and the impure, the righteous and the sinners, and any other imaginable categories of peoples and groups, Jesus invited them all to enter into the house of his merciful and forgiving Father. Even in his “preferential option for the poor” Jesus did not abandon and exclude the rich and the



powerful. These too are called to conversion and to live a just, all-inclusive life.

Standing between the two worlds, excluding neither but embracing both, Jesus was able to be fully inclusive of both. But this also means that he is the marginal person *par excellence*. People at the centre of any society or group as a rule possess wealth, power, and influence. As the threefold temptation shows, Jesus, the border-crosser and the dweller at the margins, renounced precisely these three things. Because he was at the margins, in his teaching and miracle-working, Jesus creates a new and different centre, the centre constituted by the meeting of the borders of the many and diverse worlds, often in conflict with one another, each with its own centre which relegates the “other” to the margins. It is at this margin-centre that marginal people meet one another. In Jesus, the margin where he lived became the centre of a new society without borders and barriers, reconciling all peoples, “Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female” (Gal 3:28). Strangers and guests as they are, missionaries are invited to become marginal people, to dwell at the margins of societies with marginal(ized) people, like Jesus, so as to be able to create with them new all-inclusive centres of reconciliation and harmony.

### ***Dying “outside the city gate and outside the camp” (Heb 13:12-13)***

Jesus’ violent death on the cross was a direct result of his border-crossing and ministry at the margins which posed a serious threat to the interests of those occupying the economic, political, and religious centre.<sup>58</sup> Even the form of his death, that is, by crucifixion, indicates that Jesus was an outcast, and he died, as the Letter to the Hebrews says, “outside the city gate and outside the camp” (13:12-13). Symbolically, however, hung between heaven and earth, at the margins of both worlds, Jesus acted as the mediator and intercessor between God and humanity.

But even in death Jesus did not remain within the boundaries of what death means: failure, defeat, destruction. By his Resurrection he crossed the borders of death into a new life, thus bringing hope where there was despair, victory where there was defeat, freedom where there was slavery, and life where there was death. In this way, the borders of death become frontiers to life in abundance. Like Jesus, missionaries have to live out the dynamics of death and resurrection, or to use the words of Philippians 2:6-11, of self-emptying and exaltation.

Samuel Escobar’s beautiful rendering of this Christological hymn, which portrays Jesus as the border-crosser *par excellence* and summarizes well the mis-

sionary border-crossing spirituality, serves as a fitting conclusion to our reflections:

Let there be in us the same feeling and mind that was also in Christ Jesus, Who in order to reach us crossed the border between heaven and earth.

He crossed the border of poverty to be born in a stable and live without knowing where he was going to rest his head at night.

He crossed the border of marginalization to befriend women and embrace publicans and Samaritans.

He crossed the border of spiritual power to free those afflicted by legions of devils.

He crossed the border of social protest to sing truths to the Pharisees, scribes, and traffickers of the temple.

He crossed the border of the cross and death to help us all pass over to the other side.

Risen Lord, who therefore awaits us there, at every border that we have to cross with his Gospel.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For reflections on conversion as the goal of mission, see Peter C. Phan, “Conversion and Discipleship as Goals of the Church’s Mission”, *SEDOS* Vol. 34/1 (2002) pp. 19-28. On recent new directions in the theology of mission, see Peter C. Phan, “Proclamation of the Reign of God as Mission of the Church: What For, To Whom, By Whom, With Whom, and How?”, *SEDOS* Vol. 33/11 (2001) pp. 300-307. For a comprehensive theology of mission, David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991) is a classic. For reflections on the contemporary situation of mission, see *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium*, ed. William Jenkinson and Helene O’Sullivan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991) and *Toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Christian Mission*, ed. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> On hyphenated Christians, see Peter C. Phan, “To Be Catholic or Not To Be: Is It Still the Question? Catholic Identity and Religious Education Today”, *Horizons* 25/2 (1998) 159-89.

<sup>3</sup> For a collection of useful essays on the impact of “borders” on theology and the Church, see *Theology: Expanding the Borders*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> To cite one example, Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes’s trip from Lisbon to Macao took about five years (October 1618-May 1623) and his return trip from Macao to Rome three years (December 1645-June 1649). Among those who lost their lives during their trips, Bishop Ignatius Cotolendi, who was appointed the first Apostolic Vicar of Nankin, died on his way to China (1662).

<sup>5</sup> For reflections on the new frontiers of mission, see Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); *Plurality, Power and Mission: Intercontextual Theological Explorations on the Role of Religion in the New Millennium*, ed. Philip L. Wickeri, Janice K. Wickeri, and Damayanthi M.A. Niles (London: The Council for World Mission, 2000); and M. Thomas Thangaraj, *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> *Mission in the Third Millennium*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001) 159.

<sup>7</sup> See John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, henceforth RM (December 7, 1990), nos. 33-34. I have changed the order in which the Pope listed these three situations to reflect better their logical sequence.

<sup>8</sup> RM, no. 34.

<sup>9</sup> In a series of rhetorical questions John Paul II presents some of the grounds for questioning the validity and relevance of mission *ad gentes*: “Is missionary work among non-Christians still relevant? Has it not been replaced by inter-religious dialogue? Is not human development an adequate goal of the Church’s mission? Does not respect for conscience and for freedom exclude all efforts at conversion? Is it not possible to attain salvation in any religion? Why then should there be missionary activity?” (RM, no. 4).

<sup>10</sup> For a critique of the Pope’s threefold distinction, see Aylward Shorter, *Evangelization and Culture* (London: Chapman, 1994). Donald Dorr does not agree with Shorter’s critique and supports the Pope’s distinction. See his *Mission in Today’s World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000) pp. 215-17.

<sup>11</sup> RM, n. 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 33.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 37 (a): “Thus the criterion of geography, although somewhat imprecise and always provisional, is still a valid indicator of the frontiers towards which missionary activity must be directed.... Particularly in Asia, toward which the Church’s mission *ad gentes* ought to be chiefly directed, Christians are a small minority...”

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 37 (b).

<sup>15</sup> See RM, n. 37 (c) and n. 38.

<sup>16</sup> For a brief and helpful exposition on globalization and its impact on mission, see María Carmelita de Freitas, “The Mission of Religious Men and Women in Latin America Today”, in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, ed. Robert Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001) 99-111 and Robert Schreiter, “Globalization and Reconciliation: Challenges to Mission”, *ibid.*, 124-34.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Schreiter describes three ways in which local cultures react to globalization in terms of “antiglobalism”, “ethnification”, and “primitivism”. See his *The New Catholicism: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997) 21-25.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Cahoon (ed.), *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). Cahoon distinguishes three aspects of postmodernism: historical, methodological, and positive.

<sup>19</sup> Proponents of postmodernist epistemology include Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Richard Rorty. For a helpful exposition of postmodernism, see Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> See Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). An evangelical and more conservative view is proposed by Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Contemporary Christian theologies of religion are usually distinguished into three categories: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. These categories, helpful as they are as broad indicators, do not represent clear-cut and mutually exclusive classifications but a continuum of perspectives which a particular author may adopt variously, depending on the issue at hand. See Peter C. Phan (ed.), *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990) and Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). Knitter expands the threefold model and speaks of “replacement”, “fulfilment”, “mutuality”, and “acceptance” models.

<sup>22</sup> See *Mission in the Third Millennium*, 151-52.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Anthony Bellagamba, *Mission and Ministry in the Global Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), especially pp. 93-114; Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); *idem*, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998); and Anthony J. Gittins, *Bread for the Journey: The Mission of Transformation and the Transformation of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); *idem*, *Reading the Clouds: Mission Spirituality for New Times* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1999); *idem*, *Ministry at the Margins: Strategy and Spirituality for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> RM, n. 90.

<sup>25</sup> The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) is a voluntary association of Episcopal Conferences in South, Southeast, East, and Central Asia, established and approved by the Holy See in 1972. Its Plenary Assembly meets every four years in ordinary session. It has a central committee, a standing committee, a central secretariat, and several offices. The documents of the FABC and its offices are available in three volumes: *For All Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. Documents from 1970 to 1991*, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arévalo (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1992); *For All Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. Documents from 1992 to 1996*, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997); and *For All Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. Documents from 1997 to 2001* (Quezon City, Philippines, 2002). These documents will be cited as *For All Peoples*, followed by the year of publication in parentheses. As for the Asian Synod and *Ecclesia in Asia (EA)*, see *The Asian Synod: Texts*

and Commentaries, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002) and *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia*, ed. James H. Kroeger and Peter C. Phan (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> See Anne E. Patrick, "Markers, Barriers, and Frontiers: Theology on the Borderlands", in: *Theology: Expanding the Borders*, pp. 7-16.

<sup>27</sup> For a brief description of the current situation in Asia, see *EA*, nos. 5-8.

<sup>28</sup> On globalization in Asia, see *EA*, no. 39: "While acknowledging its many positive effects, they [the Synod Fathers] pointed out that globalization has also worked to the detriment of the poor, tending to push poorer countries to the margin of international economic and political relations. Many Asian nations are unable to hold their own in a global market economy. And perhaps more significantly, there is also the aspect of a cultural globalization, made possible by the modern communications media, which is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialistic". In light of this, John Paul II calls for "globalization without marginalization".

<sup>29</sup> *For All Peoples* (1992) 231.

<sup>30</sup> See *For All Peoples* (1997) 21-26; 169. See also The Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 42 (May 19, 1991). The English text is available in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. William Burrows (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993) pp. 93-118.

<sup>31</sup> See *For All Peoples*, 14-16; 22-23.

<sup>32</sup> *EA*, no. 23.

<sup>33</sup> *For All Peoples* (1992) 310-11.

<sup>34</sup> *For All Peoples* (1992) 311.

<sup>35</sup> *Mission for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder (Chicago: The Chicago Center for Global Ministries, 2001) 19.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> "Missio ad gentes: An Asian Way of Mission Today", *ibid.*, 188.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Gittins, *Gifts and Strangers: Meeting the Challenge of Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989) 132. See also his *Ministry at the Margins*, 151.

<sup>39</sup> *Gifts and Strangers*, 133-34.

<sup>40</sup> For helpful reflections on the dynamics of gift-giving and gift-receiving as a model of mission, see Anthony Gittins, *Gifts and Strangers*, 84-109 and *Ministry at the Margins*, 107-20.

<sup>41</sup> See his works already cited above. For a brief exposition, see his "Globalization and Reconciliation: Challenge to Mission", in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, 121-43, in particular 135-43.

<sup>42</sup> See R. Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 18-27.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>44</sup> See *ibid.*, 71-73.

<sup>45</sup> See in particular the lengthy document of the FABC's Theological Advisory Commission entitled *Asian Christian*

*Perspectives on Harmony in For All Peoples* (1997) 229-98.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>48</sup> *For All Peoples* (1992) 286-87.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>50</sup> M. Amaladoss, "Identity and Harmony: Challenges to Mission in South Asia", in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> *EA*, no. 6. See also the Final Statement of the FABC's Seventh Plenary Assembly in *For All Peoples* (2002) 8-9.

<sup>52</sup> M.C. de Freitas, "The Mission of Religious Men and Women in Latin America Today: A Liberating Mission in a Neoliberal World", in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, 111-12.

<sup>53</sup> See *ibid.*, 100-101.

<sup>54</sup> *For All Peoples* (1992) 288.

<sup>55</sup> V. Elizondo, "Transformation of Borders: Border Separation or New Identity", in *Theology: Expanding the Borders*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> A. Bellagamba, *Mission and Ministry in the Global Church*, 95.

<sup>57</sup> One theologian who has reflected at length on Jesus as the marginal person *par excellence* (and by implication as a border-crosser) and on Christian life as a mode of marginalization is Jung Young Lee. See his *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

<sup>58</sup> For reflections on Jesus' death in these terms, see Choan-Seng Song, *Jesus, the Crucified People* (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 89-100.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides: Latin America and World Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002) 176.

Ref.: Conference given by the author on 3 December 2002 to SEDOS General Assembly.

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# Introduction et importance du dialogue dans la missiologie

– Maurice Pivot –

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En 1991, le Groupe des Dombes<sup>1</sup> publie, peu après la célébration de son cinquantenaire, son sixième document intitulé : *“Pour la conversion des Églises”*. Il donne une nouvelle ligne directrice pour les publications qui suivront : lier constamment le dialogue œcuménique au discernement des actes concrets de conversion qu’il implique. Et il fonde son propos sur l’affirmation selon laquelle l’identité chrétienne ne saurait se constituer et persévérer sans une conversion constante et continue : “L’identité, au sens biblique, consiste donc à se tourner sans cesse... vers cet Autre qui se tourne lui-même sans cesse vers son Dieu et Père, en se tournant vers les hommes ses frères” (p. 10). Si dialogue œcuménique il y a, il s’inscrit dans cette dynamique de conversion. Même si l’on ne peut pas simplement transposer le dialogue œcuménique à d’autres formes de dialogue, il reste une des matrices de l’œuvre de l’Église. Après une période récente d’inflation du thème du dialogue, sans qu’on en mesure bien toutes les conséquences et implications, l’Église entre dans un temps de maturité : un dialogue qui provoque à la conversion, qui ouvre un chemin de conversion; une conversion à Dieu et à sa volonté qui ouvre le chemin du dialogue; une conversion et un dialogue qui sont attirés dans une dynamique d’évangélisation. C’est dans cette perspective que nous relisons l’histoire de l’introduction du dialogue dans l’œuvre d’évangélisation.

## LE DIALOGUE DANS LES MARGES DE LA VIE ECCLÉSIALE

Lorsque le thème du dialogue commence à affleurer dans une conscience d’Église, il se situe bien souvent à la périphérie des réalités ecclésiales. Et pourtant ce qui germe ainsi, en particulier dans la période du Concile de Vatican II, se révélera par la suite comme étant à la source de changements radicaux dans une manière d’être de l’Église. Il n’est pas question ici de reprendre une histoire chronologique de l’introduction de ce thème,<sup>2</sup> mais bien plutôt de repérer ces premiers germes qui par la suite se sont développés.

### *Entre “Ecclesiam suam” et “Dei Verbum”*

Avec l’encyclique de Paul VI et la constitution conciliaire, nous trouvons en germe ce qui se révélera progressivement comme le fondement radical d’une dynamique dialogale dans la vie ecclésiale. Il faudra attendre vingt années (synode extraordinaire vingt ans après le concile) pour que commence à être reconnu le rôle charnière de la constitution *Dei Verbum*. C’est parce que Dieu, dans sa révélation, a pris l’initiative d’instaurer avec l’humanité un “dialogue long et divers”, dialogue qui noue avec l’homme une conversation variée et étonnante (*Ecclesiam suam*, n. 72), que l’Église est contrainte d’entrer en dialogue. “Il faut que nous ayons toujours présent cet ineffable et réel rapport de dialogue offert et établi avec nous par Dieu le Père, par la médiation du Christ dans l’Esprit Saint pour comprendre quel rapport nous, c’est-à-dire l’Église, nous devons chercher à instaurer et promouvoir avec l’humanité” (§ 73). Ainsi, c’est ce “dialogue de salut” de Dieu avec chacun et avec toute l’humanité, avec tout ce qu’il implique de transformation de l’homme, de conversion et de naissance nouvelle, de pardon de Dieu et de libération, qui ouvre la possibilité et la nécessité d’une Église qui entre en dialogue.

### *“Nostra Aetate”, “Gaudium et Spes” et “Dignitatis Humanae”*

Avec cette constitution et ces déclarations conciliaires, ce sont des chemins de transformation du regard et de dilatation du désir qui se mettent en place dans l’Église. C’est un regard renouvelé et étonné devant des hommes de bonne volonté, devant des chercheurs de vérité et de transcendance, qui s’indique. Ce sont les conditions d’un dialogue effectif qui s’inscrivent dans une vie ecclésiale : respect de la capacité qui est en tout homme de rechercher la vérité et désir de servir la mise en œuvre de cette capacité (*Dignitatis humanae*) ; admiration devant des hommes de bonne volonté qui ouvrent des chemins d’humanisation et désir de mettre au service de la société toutes les ressources qu’une foi peut offrir pour puri-

fier, réorienter, initier ces dynamismes (*Gaudium et Spes*) ; vigilance pour accueillir toutes les prises en charge des énigmes de la condition humaine opérées par des chercheurs de transcendance (*Nostra Aetate*).

### *Vingt années de pratique ecclésiale*

Dans les années qui suivent le concile, le dialogue n'est pas encore véritablement intégré à l'œuvre de l'évangélisation, à la mission. Celle-ci se dit et se cherche en d'autres termes, développement, libération, inculturation, etc... Mais ce sont justement ces formes de la mission qui, mises en œuvre, introduisent l'Église dans une pratique de dialogue avec des hommes, des sociétés et des traditions religieuses. C'est comme en tâtonnant qu'une vie ecclésiale sort d'elle-même et va à la rencontre d'autres univers de pensée.

On peut voir là **trois formes de conversion** qui s'amorcent. Tout d'abord, *une Église qui apprend à se penser par rapport à l'unité du dessein de Dieu*. L'Église n'est pas là pour elle-même, mais pour se mettre au service de l'unité du dessein de Dieu. Celui-ci concerne toute l'humanité, et même plus largement l'univers. Il n'est pas seulement un programme ou un projet, il est ce que Dieu a mis en œuvre dès l'origine. Nous percevons alors la première conversion comme celle d'une Église appelée à ne pouvoir se comprendre que si elle ne se centre pas sur elle-même, mais sur le don et l'appel de Dieu à l'œuvre dans l'humanité.

Seconde forme de conversion, celle qui demande à une Église de *vérifier le rapport qu'elle entretient à la Vérité*. Comment prendre au sérieux la phrase de *Dei Verbum* : "l'Église ne cesse de tendre vers la plénitude de la Vérité ?". Enfin, c'est la manière de penser l'universalité de la foi chrétienne qui appelle à une troisième forme de conversion. Si l'Église ne cesse de confesser l'universalité de la Révélation en Jésus Christ, elle *apprend à reconnaître que cette universalité est à faire en elle*. La preuve de cette universalité en acte se fait là où la puissance de vie, puissance d'Esprit, vient ébranler, retourner, transformer la vie ecclésiale aujourd'hui pour l'ouvrir aux appels de Dieu et à ses dons à l'œuvre bien au-delà des frontières de l'Église, là où l'Esprit conduit les chrétiens à reconnaître tout ce qu'il y a en l'homme.

Ce sont ces conversions qui vont ouvrir en l'Église et en chaque chrétien un espace de dialogue. On peut le reconnaître dans le temps de latence qui a suivi le Concile.

### *Anthropologie et éthique du dialogue*

C'est alors que se développe une anthropologie du

dialogue. Le besoin n'est pas encore ressenti de fonder théologiquement le dialogue, mais plutôt celui de l'explorer philosophiquement. Comme l'exprime Y. Labbé, la philosophie a assez peu suivi jusqu'ici la pensée du dialogue : il faut attendre la seconde partie du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour voir naître des philosophies du dialogue, là où se mettent en place la réflexion sur la relation interpersonnelle et la philosophie du langage. L'approche anthropologique qui s'y greffe (que nous présente un autre article de ce numéro de *Spiritus*) est appelée à servir de fondement à une éthique du dialogue. Sur quels fondements le respect de l'autre et le respect de la vérité peuvent-ils grandir de pair ? Comment l'amour de la vérité peut-il répondre à la générosité de la vérité ? Comment se disposer à accueillir la vérité d'où qu'elle vienne ?

### *La Bible rendue à l'Église*

La constitution *Dei Verbum* avait donné aux évêques la charge d'ouvrir la Bible à l'ensemble des chrétiens pour qu'ils puissent s'en nourrir, tandis que les liturgies de la Parole étaient introduites en force dans les sacrements. On a pu dire que c'était la transformation la plus importante que le Concile ait introduite dans notre vie ecclésiale. C'était donner ainsi son enracinement concret au dialogue de salut entre Dieu et l'humanité. Ce travail de la Bible dans le cœur et l'intelligence des croyants ne fait que commencer. Mais il fait émerger de plus en plus de la Bible la structure dialogale, et ceci dans deux directions en particulier. Tout d'abord la mise en relief des styles, des genres littéraires de la Bible comme autant de manières par lesquelles Dieu rejoint l'humanité, sur le mode de l'initiative divine dont rend compte le récit, sur le mode de la parole prophétique ou de la prière psalmodique, etc. Et d'autre part le contenu lui-même et ses exégèses qui nous ouvrent la Bible comme cet ensemble d'écrits où le Dieu qui vient parler à l'homme ouvre dans l'humanité un espace de parole entre l'homme et la femme, une relation entre frères et un chemin entre les violences humaines.

## LE DIALOGUE AU CŒUR DE L'ÉVANGÉLISATION

C'est l'événement d'Assise en 1986 qui marque symboliquement l'entrée en force du dialogue dans la mission de l'Église. Un document du "Secrétariat pour les non chrétiens" sur les orientations concernant le dialogue et la mission (1984) avait déjà ouvert la voie. Il cherchait à répondre aux difficultés suscitées par la mise en valeur de la rencontre des religions : celle-ci ne risquait-elle pas d'affaiblir le sens de la mission ? C'était le premier document officiel donnant un fondement théologique à la réalité du dialogue, non plus comme préalable mais comme constitutif de la mission. La

rencontre d'Assise semble rompre les digues et laisser le dialogue envahir le champ de la conscience ecclésiale, en même temps qu'elle suscite des traumatismes profonds en ceux qui ne se reconnaissent pas dans cette évolution. Dans la période qui suit, le dialogue peut apparaître comme un effet de mode, qui suscite emballements et rejets, et sembler se substituer aux autres formes de la mission (s'opposent développement et libération d'une part et dialogue interreligieux de l'autre, dimension sociale de la mission et dimension religieuse, etc.). C'est dans ce contexte que vont se creuser différents sillons. En premier lieu, toute une réflexion se fait, qui apprend à *ne pas isoler le dialogue interreligieux* : celui-ci n'est pas un en-soi, il s'inscrit à l'intérieur d'un dialogue constitutif de toute vie humaine personnelle et sociale, et il s'articule avec les autres formes de la mission qui explorent divers aspects d'un service de l'homme (pas de dialogue interreligieux sans le service concret et effectif de la paix : c'est ce que nous disent la première comme la seconde rencontre d'Assise). En second lieu, *il n'y a pas de dialogue qui ne fasse entrer dans une démarche de conversion* : et ceci demande alors de devenir beaucoup plus modeste pour parler de dialogue. C'est ce qu'il nous faut maintenant explorer.

### *L'Église comme partenaire du dialogue*

*Du discours de Jean-Paul II à la Curie (décembre 1986) à "Dialogue et annonce" (mai 1991)*

L'événement d'Assise met l'Église au cœur même du dialogue; il n'est pas étonnant que la période qui suit cet événement soit liée à une intense réflexion sur la manière d'être de l'Église impliquée par ce dialogue. Comment rendre compte de ce que l'Église, loin de perdre son identité dans le dialogue, y trouve un lieu privilégié pour la découvrir et l'affermir ? Comment rendre compte des liens nécessaires entre l'annonce de l'Évangile, le dialogue et la conversion de l'Église à ce que Dieu l'appelle à être ? Il ne s'agit plus alors seulement d'une réflexion qui concerne les individus, mais l'Église tout entière. Le discours de Jean-Paul II à la Curie (dans lequel il justifie l'événement d'Assise à partir d'une relecture des documents du Concile) et le document du Conseil pontifical pour le dialogue interreligieux et de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des peuples "Dialogue et Annonce" sont les deux jalons symboliques de ce travail. Trois lignes de fond s'en dégagent tout particulièrement :

- **Une "relativisation" du christianisme**

C'est le dialogue qui introduit cette relativisation : celle-ci porte sur l'Église comme pratique historique et sociale. Parce que l'Église est appelée à renvoyer à la Vérité tout entière, elle est toujours tentée de s'identifier elle-même à cette Vérité, d'entrer dans la logique d'une

absolutisation de sa pratique. L'Église est toujours déjà traversée par l'œuvre de l'Esprit, mais cette œuvre s'inscrit dans les pesanteurs de la condition humaine. "L'Église croît lentement vers la maturité" (L. 6.5). Les chocs que provoque le dialogue permettent à la vie ecclésiale de s'ouvrir plus pleinement à la Vérité qui vient à elle. Cette relativisation est ainsi en fin de compte une relativisation provoquée par la reconnaissance du mystère, reconnaissance opérée par ceux qui sont sous le régime de la foi et non pas de la vision. C'est dans le dialogue que se discernent les étroitesse de l'accueil du mystère. L'Église n'a pas la plénitude de la Vérité, elle a "la plénitude des moyens du salut", c'est-à-dire la plénitude des moyens par lesquels l'humanité peut être reliée à la Vérité tout entière. Elle-même tend vers la plénitude de la Vérité : ce sont les expressions traditionnelles qui sont ainsi mises en relief en cette période. L'Église se découvre ainsi appelée à entrer dans ce dialogue pour mieux percevoir l'unité du dessein de Dieu sur l'humanité.

- **Une responsabilité historique par rapport à l'humanité**

Autre axe de fond : c'est dans le dialogue interreligieux que s'affine la conscience que l'apport de l'Église à l'humanité n'est pas seulement d'ordre éthique. Elle n'a pas à rappeler seulement des exigences d'éthique sociale, politique ou à se mettre au service d'un projet éthique commun à tous les hommes. Elle est au service de l'écart et de la tension entre l'éthique et la foi. Comme l'exprime un interprète de l'événement d'Assise, les deux pôles, "les deux éléments communs aux religions et décisifs pour la paix sont l'impératif de la conscience morale et la référence à un don tout autre... Reconnaître que la paix est un don déjà reçu, c'est reconnaître qu'elle a toujours à être offerte, malgré les infidélités successives ou les refus répétés de l'autre... Plus les religions s'engageront les unes envers les autres, plus elles deviendront les témoins de l'excès du don sur la réciprocité, d'une logique non de mesure mais de surabondance, où beaucoup reconnaissent Dieu, et d'aucuns Jésus Christ". (Y. Labbé, Assise, 10 ans après, pp. 152-153)

- **Quelle nécessité de l'Église pour le salut ?**

Troisième ligne de fond, qui renvoie à ce que l'Église est appelée à vivre pour entrer dans le dialogue. Trop souvent, la question est posée en termes d'appréhension, de peur vis-à-vis des risques pour la foi chrétienne. Cette interrogation n'est pas à négliger, elle est liée à une attitude prudentielle nécessaire ; mais elle risque de laisser de côté d'autres considérations plus importantes. D'une part, le fait que c'est dans le dialogue qu'une Église et des chrétiens découvrent la vérité de leur identité : ils vont à la rencontre de l'œuvre de l'Esprit sur le lieu même du dialogue. D'autre part, l'Église entre dans le dialogue dans la mesure où elle-même fait l'apprentissage de ce dialogue dans sa

propre vie. Elle est appelée à devenir, selon l'expression de Jean-Paul II, "laboratoire de dialogue", "laboratoire d'hospitalité"; elle cherche à expérimenter en elle-même ce que dialoguer veut dire, ce que le dialogue introduit comme démarche de conversion, ce qu'il en est de chercher les sources de vie et de pardon qui fondent la possibilité du dialogue. C'est cette expérience qu'il lui faut pouvoir offrir à tous. Des chrétiens dialoguent avec des musulmans; des chrétiens dialoguent avec des chrétiens qui dialoguent avec des juifs; quelle démarche de pacification des cœurs et des esprits cela demande-t-il? C'est en cela que nous pouvons accueillir la force de l'expression qui voit dans l'Église le sacrement de l'union intime avec Dieu et de l'unité du genre humain: sacrement c'est à-dire signe et germe, signe tourné vers le dialogue "ad extra", germe tourné vers le dialogue "ad intra".

### QUELLE FÉCONDITÉ POUR LE DIALOGUE ?

Le passage d'un millénaire à l'autre a suscité tout un travail de mémoire, mémoire vive du passé comme mémoire d'avenir. C'est dans ce contexte que se déplacent les centres d'intérêt concernant le dialogue dans la mission de l'Église. Le dialogue ne sera-t-il qu'un effet de mode? Ou bien deviendra-t-il effectivement constitutif d'une vie ecclésiale? Cela ne pourra se réaliser que si le dialogue révèle sa fécondité. Quelles en sont alors les expressions?

#### *La foi autorise-t-elle encore une parole décisive ?*

C'est autour de cette question que se cherche une première forme de fécondité, dans un contexte où de multiples dimensions de la vie humaine et sociale semblent privées de sens. Les "grandes énigmes de la condition humaine", le mal, la souffrance et la mort, l'amour, le travail, le vivre ensemble, l'énigme du politique et du social, ne jouent plus guère leur rôle d'ouvrir l'homme au mystère de sa vie et de sa relation à une réalité qui le dépasse. Ouvrir à une vie citoyenne, à une intégration sociale, à une vie affective et sexuelle, cela va de moins en moins de soi. Ces lieux qui pourraient être des lieux de sens sont bien souvent habités de manière déshumanisante. Et c'est là que nous retrouvons ce que le décret "Nostra Aetate" indiquait déjà: les traditions religieuses sont appelées à se retrouver là où doit s'opérer la prise en charge de ces énigmes. Les traditions religieuses, la foi chrétienne ne sont pas là pour donner du sens à ce qui n'en a pas; elles sont là pour permettre à des hommes et des femmes d'affronter eux-mêmes ces énigmes et d'y produire du sens, d'humaniser les réalités de vie dans lesquelles leur humanité doit grandir. Faire du sens, produire du sens, et cela au sein même des contradictions de notre société, c'est la première forme de fécondité du dialogue bien souvent mise en relief ces dernières années.

#### *Quel avenir proposer à l'homme d'aujourd'hui ?*

Peut-on encore parler en termes d'avenir? Bien souvent cette question d'avenir semble ne pouvoir se poser qu'en termes d'absence totale d'avenir envisageable ou de fuite vers un progrès indéfini qui se vide de plus en plus de sens au fur et à mesure de son avancée. Ici encore, la fécondité du dialogue sera appelée à se vérifier, non pas en termes d'avenir proposé à l'humanité, mais de manière de vivre dans le présent qui puisse ouvrir un avenir sans que celui-ci ne puisse jamais être maîtrisable par la pensée et l'action ("L'Évangile ne nous dit pas que nous avons un avenir en ce monde. Il nous dit ce dont nous avons besoin pour ne pas nous en préoccuper indûment"). *Cette fécondité du dialogue pensée en termes de conversion à l'espérance prend en particulier deux formes dans les documents situés entre le jubilé de l'An 2000 et le deuxième Assise (janvier 2002):*

- *Restaurer la parole dans sa force et son efficacité*, restaurer ce sans quoi notre univers devient univers de violence. C'est déjà dans toutes formes de dialogue que ce travail peut s'opérer. Mettre de la parole dans tous les échanges humains, réduire la violence par la parole, mettre de la parole dans la mise en œuvre de la sexualité, mettre de la parole dans les institutions sociales, tout cela s'apprend, demande plus radicalement une véritable initiation. Cela demande aussi que nous puissions nous reconnaître comme précédés par une parole qui vient à nous, par une réalité qui nous dépasse, fondement d'un "tenir parole" dans la durée.

- *Ouvrir l'avenir par le pardon*: le dialogue se révèle fécond là où il est initiation au pardon, pardon qui est pratique d'espérance par excellence. Comme l'exprimait John Sobrino (*Spiritus*, n. 162, pp. 12 à 26), pardonner c'est "vouloir penser avec tout le sérieux nécessaire quoi faire avec une réalité qui est péché, quoi faire avec cette réalité structurelle qui produit la mort". Et pardonner, c'est ne pas vouloir fermer l'avenir à celui qui a produit du mal. En ces derniers temps, l'invitation se fait pressante pour que les traditions religieuses cherchent en elles-mêmes les ressources de pratiques d'espérance qu'elles peuvent mettre au service de l'humanité, et pour que le dialogue les stimule en ce sens.

#### *Quelle responsabilisation de l'homme et de l'humanité ?*

Autre expression de la fécondité du dialogue: il n'y a de chemin du dialogue que là où chacun prend en charge de manière responsable la parole que l'autre lui adresse. Devenir partenaires dans un dialogue, c'est le fruit d'un long itinéraire qui demande persévérance et

conversions mutuelles. En ces derniers temps, nous écoutons aussi s'affirmer cette dimension du dialogue : au-delà de la timidité et des tâtonnements des premiers dialogues, les interpellations réciproques prennent de la force, et cela d'autant plus qu'elles peuvent renvoyer chacun à l'approfondissement de sa relation au mystère et à Dieu. Si le dialogue conduit à la repentance, cela n'est vrai que dans la mesure où celle-ci est prise en charge aujourd'hui des conséquences du péché d'une Église du passé et affinement du discernement de ce qui aujourd'hui est tentation et épreuve. Reconstruire un socle de responsabilité dans l'humanité, c'est la aussi une forme de fécondité possible du dialogue.

L'histoire de l'introduction du dialogue dans la missiologie peut faire pressentir que des étapes nouvelles vont se mettre en place dans la transformation d'une manière d'être de l'Église, à partir des germes déposés dans ce temps qui suit le concile de Vatican II, qui n'a même pas encore la durée symbolique du temps de l'Exode. Elle nous renvoie principalement aux responsabilités d'une vie ecclésiale aujourd'hui, ainsi qu'au travail de la grâce qui ne s'opère que selon un tracé que nul d'entre nous ne maîtrise.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Un des artisans du Mouvement œcuménique.

<sup>2</sup> Pour cela, voir M. Pivot, *Un nouveau souffle pour la mission*, Editions de l'Atelier, en particulier pp. 21 à 44 et 123 à 127.

Réf. : *Spiritus*, n. 169, Décembre 2002, pp. 526-537.

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# *The Mysticism of Evangelization*

– Fr Ignacio Madera Vargas, S.D.S. –

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## 1. A Necessary Confession

Rarely in my life have I had such difficulty in beginning a reflection as on this occasion. I have asked myself the cause for this and have found no answer, other than the fear of continuing to reflect a dominant patriarchal system, which has caused such heartache in those of us who want to look at the human person from the point of view of gender, that is to say, from the view point of those who want to change the patriarchal paradigm of the dominant male to be more inclusive.

The above said, I want to admit that in this presentation, it may not be always possible to maintain all the ways and means of expression of inclusive language, or for the point of view expressed here not to have the implicit unconscious expression of a male born into a male-dominated culture. Nonetheless, going beyond these fears, I will risk considering the mysticism of evangelisation in the context of what I understand as “new” evangelisation, that is, as something that is really a new way, rather than the same thing with a few changes.

## 2. New evangelisation

In talking about new evangelisation, we run the risk of making it a subject among so many others, something in vogue for a time that is quickly forgotten. This happens when, in discussing the topics and elaborating plans of action, there is no mysticism, that is, the intense experience of the Spirit, which incarnates itself in the person as a passion for the Kingdom. The Spirit that makes all things new recreates the consciousness of the urgent needs of Latin America today, creating in each believer, man or woman, a passion for transforming societies into historical realities that are closer to the Reign of God.

The new dimension in this eagerness is the passion for the Kingdom, a fascination for its presence in history. Confronted with the new paradigms of postmodernity, we cannot forget that new sensibilities must be overturned so as to transform history, not merely a solipsistic searching for subjective satisfaction. The greatest danger in fundamentalism is losing sight of the structural matrix of phenomena and limiting ourselves

to surmounting their consequences, without taking into account the corrosive basis of their causes.

We are evangelising in a new way in structures characterized by neo-liberal politics with their resulting proposals of globalisation and a free market. The lives of men and women on our continent are being sacrificed on the altar of the free market, especially the lives of women who are undervalued with regard to their abilities, who are still consigned to a domestic role, or who are the objects of concessions flowing from the obvious political objectives of men.

The redemption offered as a result of the liberalization of the economies of the South has not come about; rather we are witnessing a geometrical increase in poverty, to the plundering of cultural roots as well as to the damage being done to creation.

The new evangelisation from the point of view of gender is an invitation to rediscover the new opportunities that we have to assume together and the new methods that include the revitalizing energy of a mission that segregates no one due to gender, but that includes men and women on the basis of absolute equality, founded on the fact that we are created in the image of God as women and men.

The new evangelisation looks for the new in theology that is also marked by the voices of women, by the talent that new feminist theological reflection brings. The common searching of the sexes for a new inclusive paradigm involves the real appraisal of theology pronounced by women, who bring original contributions through their suggestive approaches regarding Scripture study, systematic hermeneutic theology, and the building of a spirituality based on the feminine person. In all of this, I want to point out that evangelisation will then be new through the new theology that sustains it, through the new *areopagi* that own it and through the new ministries that invigorate it. Based on this inclusive paradigm, I want to refer to these three elements, among so many that could be analysed in the context of a mysticism, that is, a dynamic of the Spirit that makes all things new.

### 3. A theology renewing the understanding of God

A theology that incorporates the results of the feminist hermeneutic replaces the patriarchal structures of Judaism and situates itself in the integrating perspective of woman interacting with Jesus, as one called to follow him. This requires a peaceful searching that places male and female theologians in egalitarian dialogue for the common purpose of building a new discourse that is critical and conscious of historical atavisms, and that maintains a questioning attitude towards any reflection that distorts the very meaning of Creation. In this question of the equality of the sexes, the meaning of creation, the very image of the God of Christianity and the understanding of the incarnation of God in the womb of a woman are all at play.

When the Son of God became man and pitched his tent among us, he fully assumed our humanity. He was born of a woman, like all men and women, to exemplify that woman is the bearer of life, even of the incarnated God. This was an act of the love of God in history that involves God displaying his tenderness and his passion for humanity and its history. God, who could not be defined by Israel, becomes a human being. The Trinitarian Communion that is God includes the feminine as well as the masculine. God is not man or woman, he is simply God, but he is also the creative source of femininity and masculinity. Because we were created in his image, we have the right to say that God is the source of femininity and masculinity.

If some critical voices have stamped Christian revelation with *Machism* in order to have a God who is incarnated as man, we suggest the need for a more interpretive nuance, given that, in the case of Spanish, we have to say "*la comunión trinitaria*" which is not exactly a masculine expression. The communion that is God's eternal tenderness is a love circulating in a need to overflow, to be mother, to incarnate itself and to enter into the fabulous story of humanity's searching to build itself in the image of divine communion.

As men and women together, we confess that Trinitarian Communion that negates any expression in history that is contrary to the communion between men and women. Together we are called to proclaim that any segregation, any manipulation or exploitation of the human person, any globalisation that seems to exclude the rights of so many to be equal brothers and sisters, is atheistic, that is to say, it negates the God-Communion revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. This interpretation is for women and men to explore and develop together. We confess the Communion-Trinity, and it is feminine and masculine, mother and father of all of us.

Along with Françoise Dolto, I think that we "frequently confuse father and progenitor. Only three seconds are required for man to reproduce himself. Being a father is a totally different undertaking".<sup>1</sup> Because of this, in the light of what Christian revelation refers to, we have to say clearly that we are talking about God the Father and not about God progenitor, if we can speak in these terms.

Being a father is giving a name to one's daughter or one's son, paying with one's labour for his sustenance, educating and instructing him, inviting him to realize himself in life more intensely each day, encouraging his creativity and aspirations. This entails more than reproducing oneself. It is recognizing the "other" in the daughter or son, being present without restricting or impairing the development of subjectivity immersed in a social situation which conditions and stimulates. However, paternity is conditioned by social archetypes and collective imagination. For that reason, being a father is an apprenticeship in life in flux. One learns to be a father through being a father. Because of this, a father experiences his own undertaking as a father and his own process of becoming "oneself".

All of this sheds some light on understanding the magnitude/grandeur of what Jesus of Nazareth revealed in God his Father and our Father. Saying that God is father is an affirmation that goes well beyond the ways of fatherhood of all times. We learn from the Father of Jesus what fatherhood is. The fullness of paternity is realized in him. God is Father because he has a Son and this Son was made flesh in history. He did not boast of his divinity, but became one among many (Phil 2:6-11). God has a Son and this Son reveals to us the being of God the Father.

Understanding the Father's way of being leads to a break away from the psychological models and the social practices of our people. The ways of expressing paternity in history and in our societies, established on inequality and institutionalised injustice, cause certain forms of behaviour in fathers, who through violence, alienation and alcohol abuse, seek to go beyond their unanswerable pain and their empty hopes.

As Jesus revealed to us, being Father does not condition or alienate the Son. Rather, it frees and lets the Son live the adventure of his own destiny, even if this leads to death and assassination. Thus, the Son is led to discover the source of his very self. This means that the Father is such that he makes it possible for the Son to be Son. I would add that when I am talking about becoming a Son, I am not using the metaphysical categories that our faith tradition has used with regard to the being of the Son, his person and his nature. Rather I am referring to a way of understanding that belongs to the psychological realm and to existential analysis. Confusing these domains of language can lead to interpretations that are the opposite of what we want to express with regard to this desire to understand what it means to be a Father.

The parable of the prodigal son is a wonderful lesson for understanding what type of Father the God of Jesus is. He is the God of gratuitousness, who celebrates the return of his Son, who dared to run the risk of trying to be an adult, with a feast. He assumes the freedom of the Son with all its consequences and knows how to pardon, because the Son is the beloved Son and He is Love. God is love and he who remains in love remains in God and God in Him as John the Evange-

list states. This is the exceptional definition of the Father offered by the Johannine source. This love of the Father was given to all men and women so that, sons and daughters in the Son, we can also call him Father and “Our Father”. The Father of Jesus is then the Father of all in Christ through the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of the Holy Trinity, the communion of God who gives himself to men and women through grace.

The Father is with Jesus (Jn 16:32); they are one (Jn 17:21); because of this, whoever confesses the Son possesses the Father (1 Jn 2:23) and is loved by Him (Jn 14:21). Jesus came from the Father and is going to the Father (Jn 16: 27-28; 16:17; 16:10); because of this the one who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (Jn 14:9; 6:46). We are in communion with the Father and the Son (1 Jn 1:3), because he is the one God and the Father of all, above all, for all and in all (Eph 4:6; 1 Cor 8:6). Therefore, we should glorify him (Rom 15:6; 6:4). From Him comes every perfect gift (Jas 1:17), and he loves us and calls us his children (1 Jn 3:1). Jesus revealed all of this grandeur about his Father, the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 1:3; Eph 1:3).

The Father is “ours”, not mine. Jesus teaches us to call him thus, according to the Gospels. Before Him, we kneel (Eph 3:14), because he has made us capable of participating in the inheritance of the saints (Col 1:12). Women and men are brothers and sisters because we are children of the same Father. Fraternity in humanity is born in God. The paternity of God should express itself historically in the building of fraternity among men and women in the entire world. As the Father sent Jesus, he sends us also (Jn 20:21) to be his witnesses, witnesses of unity. As He and Jesus : are one, we are also (Jn 17:21). This is the mysticism that we should express in our joint actions that reflect filial love, the eternal agape that allows no thought of domination in relationship but rather is a sign of loving and creative gratuitousness.

#### 4. The dynamism of the new *areopagi*

The dynamic of the Spirit recreating evangelising action shows that the new *areopagi* of the mission are in the forefront. They are pierced with the option for the poor, the excluded and the marginalized. They are waiting for the new dynamism of a religious life called to be the prophetic and poetic presence of a new model of the relationship between the sexes. In this there is no room for the dynamic of power of those who command and those who obey, but rather there is a loving gratitude among those who feel called to make present the Kingdom.

The great *areopagus* of the poor of the continent continues to be the hope for the always enthusiastic and critical presence of female and male religious. I must thank with deep gratitude God our Father and Mother for these women who have dared with the audacity and the conscience of martyrs to work in the slums, and in overcrowded areas. They have assumed the struggles of the displaced, of the mothers of the tortured and fallen, cruelly murdered or disappeared. In the case of Colombia, for example, women religious are present in the places of pain and violence,

which male religious often avoid by shielding themselves behind institutional sophistry or a clerical power that pierces the unconscious. A presence in alternative movements and in those small actions that create solidarity and form models of sharing that can confront the inexorable force of neo-liberal economic policies is needed more urgently than ever. Once again, this is the search whose end will come when there are no more poor. The renewed option for the poor, as an inspiring course of action of CLAR for the present and the future, flows from this.

I think that, along with a presence in the aforementioned sectors, the time has come to enter other domains with evangelical audacity: the world of culture, of the university, of the arts, of politics, of organizations that defend human rights, of organizations that operate in civil society. From the world of the poor and from a clear option for them, we need to be able to enter into a dialogue that questions and proposes alternatives, that invites watchful thinking and dreaming. We must not give way before the power and pressures that bring so much inequality and ignominy. The strength of religious life in male and female communion can be a symbol of what is possible for all who remain captives of a patriarchal and chauvinist mentality that is contrary to the project of the Kingdom. It is obvious that this approach implies a serious look at the processes of formation, on the spiritual level as well as with professional training of future religious.

This is the world of the marginalized: those displaced through violence and whatever type of institutional persecution, homosexuals, drug addicts, men and women prostitutes, gangs of delinquents, and street children. Those whom our societies exclude for better or for worse live in a marginality that testifies to the ever-present suffering face of the crucified Christ, wandering through streets and roads, paths and lanes, mountains and valleys.

We must see to the interior world of religious life and constantly recreate the formative process in the light of new circumstances and new situations. The changes presented are excessively rapid, and young religious are experiencing new pressures that must be met with deep tranquillity and calm seriousness. The culture of individualism, of consumerism and the immediate, of short-term commitments, the refusal to make an effort, struggle, sacrifice and permanent fidelity, pansexualism, new possibilities of cultural and scientific domination through Internet and satellite communication, all of these are characteristics that have come from the so-called postmodern generation.

This new universe requires consolidating the formation processes with great clarity, integrating an appropriate prophetic adaptation to the new circumstances. By this I mean that religious life, in some way, responds to new situations, and, in their midst, bears a new way of living life, a life centred in faithfulness to Christ, to fraternity, to the rights of the poor, to the common search for the will of God in the history of communities. This new way leads to martyrdom, to freedom with regard to whatever

type of alienating dependency, institutional or affective, and to the honest search for faithfulness through a clear awareness of the real and chaotic processes we can experience as human beings.

I think that we must not see formation processes as linear or circular or concentric or a combination of these. Rather, I think they are chaotic and driven, that is to say, that we are living in a certain controlled chaos. On many occasions we do not exactly know what will happen, but we continue to go forward and continue to realize actions that can show a certain orientation in human processes. However, in the search for, or the living of, determined values or aspects of contemporary religious life, we need to know how to integrate, including those moments of apparent regression or reaction in the processes of transition towards new models, which our institutions are experiencing or which we ourselves are living as people.

**5. The new ministries that give hope**

Ecclesial ministry is living an unprecedented challenge at this end of century. The number of ordained ministers living obligatory celibacy has seen a precipitous decline in most European countries, as has the number of religious. This new situation requires innovative ministerial responses or communities will be obliged to live without ministers. Parishes will remain without a pastor, monasteries will be vacant or occupied by a small number of religious, communities will be obliged to merge together, and so forth. The universal Church will need to assume new modalities of ministry, because what is at stake is the future of Christianity.

Along with ordained ministries, new ministries have to be created with regard to evangelisation and with regard to the building of communitarian models of life within human groups, where we are committed women and men preaching the Reign of God and witnessing to its presence now. The ministry of women on the continent should be recognized for its alternative ways of ecclesial presence that overcome clerical patriarchal modalities developed by men. The originality of feminine ministry will lie in its evangelising creativity, and it will be this ministry that will press for the inescapable end of official gratitude from ecclesial institutions. That is to say, that the right to ministry in all its diverse expressions, a right of women created in the image of God, and which was recognized in early Christian times, will have to implant itself in the future of our Church; I think this ministry will be stimulating and will come about on its own, if it is preceded by a search for a humankind that is unified through the equality of the communion of services to the holy People of God.

The *areopagi* referred to earlier need new ministries, ordained or not. Most urgent is the development of evangelising mysticism in women and men witnesses in the history of God made flesh, who pitched his tent among us. We must make flesh the presence of the nature of God in human history by actualising, through historical communitarian models, the tent of God pitched in contemporary history, in the midst of the big Latin-American

cities, in the vibrating hubbub of the big avenues that hide under their bridges the flesh of the same crucified God. With regard to the two genders, there must be men and women ministers fully incarnated in their fullest humanity, because the eternal Son of the living God is revealed therein, in men and women ministers who know how to discover in the mystery of the incarnation the value of the small that is beautiful and great, or, if you will, the littleness that is greatness.

The service of the minority to Christian communities, which is every ecclesial ministry, requires a more radical following of Jesus for women and men on our continent. Or in other words, it is recreating the enthusiasm of our initial commitment, making alive the meaning of our searching and continuing to dream of the possibility of a better country, although this produces, pain, sweat and tears. We proceed in the certainty that evangelisation requires a mysticism in mission that includes a deep spirituality centred in the love for a suffering humanity. The certainty that a project for the people of Latin America and each of our countries exists is what allows us to dream that it is possible to build it with enthusiasm; it is that which allows us to be together and alongside each other. We continue to believe in this joyful realization of the ever greater image of God, and to act in creation on the basis of love, gratitude and filial communion.

**Note**

<sup>1</sup> F. Dolto, "LEvangile au risque de la psychanalyse", volume 1, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1977, p. 25 ff.

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# SEDOS Rapport annuel 2002<sup>1</sup>

*Le rapport que nous vous présenterons ce matin à cette assemblée générale de SEDOS, est basé sur les pensées que le Père Bernard East, o.p. - directeur exécutif jusqu'au début du mois d'octobre 2002 - a présentées aux membres du comité exécutif pendant une réunion spéciale, tenue les 29 et 30 septembre dernier. Ensuite, c'est aussi avec l'aide du secrétariat de SEDOS, que nous pouvons vous présenter ce document. Après lecture de ce rapport et au cours de cette assemblée générale, il sera clair que SEDOS passe un temps de transition, pour ne pas dire une période non dénuée de certaines difficultés.*

## SEDOS : CENTRE D'ACTIVITÉS PUBLIQUES

### 1. Conférences publiques

En 2002, SEDOS a organisé différentes conférences publiques. Suite aussi aux nombreuses critiques reçues, nous avons fait un effort pour avoir plus de conférences dans différentes langues.

D'abord vous vous souvenez certainement des deux conférences tenues le 4 décembre 2001 pendant notre Assemblée Générale. Voilà les sujets. Pour la première conférence, SEDOS avait invité le Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, le Préfet de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples. Le titre : *La Pertinence de la Mission "ad gentes" au Début de ce Nouveau Millénaire, particulièrement dans l'ère du dialogue inter-religieux*. La deuxième conférence a été présentée par le Père Yves Bériault, Dominicain. Sa conférence était particulièrement intéressante, parce qu'il a parlé sur de la liaison entre Évangélisation et Internet.

Le 26 février 2002, SEDOS pouvait tenir une conférence en espagnol, par le Père Daniel Wankun Vigil, o.p., sur l'expérience d'un missionnaire péruvien en Amazonie (Mission de Koribeni). Le sujet de la conférence était "prendre risque, le premier défi d'un missionnaire".

Le 12 septembre 2002, l'Archevêque Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, IMC, de Tunja, la Colombie, s'est adressé à l'assemblée de SEDOS en espagnol. Le sujet de sa conférence était "mission vivante aujourd'hui, dans des situations de conflit et de guerre : défis pastoraux et spirituels".

Le 17 octobre 2002, une autre conférence a été présentée par Fr. Thomas Chrys McVey, o.p. Il a parlé en anglais. Le sujet de sa conférence était "le cœur de la mission: consolation et amitié". Nous sommes heureux de dire que, bien que d'autres activités aient été tenues à Rome le même jour, nous avons eu une nombreuse assistance et la conférence, comme les autres conférences que SEDOS a organisées, a été accueillie avec enthousiasme.

### 2. Groupes de travail

Dans le numéro 11/12 de novembre / décembre 2002 de *SEDOS/Bulletin* (vol. 33), vous trouverez des informations détaillées par rapport aux activités des différents groupes de travail organisés et animés par SEDOS. Ces groupes ont été très actifs. Ils y sont quatre :

- Groupe de travail "sur la Chine", sous la direction de James Perluzzi, OFM.
- Groupe de travail "sur la dette" dirigé par Cathy Aratha, SSND.
- Groupe de travail "Qui est Jésus ?", sous la direction de Pieter M. Bouman.
- Groupe de travail "Bible et Mission" dirigé par Ludger Feldkaemper, SVD.

### 3. Séminaire interne d'Ariccia 2002

Par rapport au Séminaire résidentiel d'Ariccia 2002 (14-18 mai), nous pouvons dire qu'il a été un grand succès. Lors du séminaire de 2001, nous nous étions penchés sur le thème : "*Quelle est notre vision d'une Église missionnaire pour le vingt et unième siècle ?*". Ce séminaire constituait une première étape. SEDOS a décidé de poursuivre sur cette lancée et a choisi pour thème d'Ariccia 2002 : "*Notre vision d'une Église missionnaire. Du rêve à la réalité*".

Le but de ce dernier séminaire était de renouveler notre vision d'une Église missionnaire pour passer du rêve, à la réalité. Voici les quatre principales conférences qui ont été données lors du séminaire : deux conférences du Père Robert Schreiter, CPPS : "*Towards the Missionary Church of 2025. The past and the Future*" et "*The Missionary Church in 2025*"; Enrique Marroquín, CMF : "*Año 2025: Macrotendencias*"; Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận : "*Une Église missionnaire pour le troisième millénaire*". Le séminaire se caractérisait par le souci d'intégrer la liturgie et la prière à l'ensemble de la rencontre. Nous avons

prêté beaucoup d'importance à la dimension liturgique et à la pratique de la *Lectio Divina*. En général, le processus suivi pour parvenir au but du séminaire de 2002, a reçu une évaluation très positive.

## SEDOS : CENTRE DE PUBLICATIONS

### 4. SEDOS/Bulletin

L'an dernier nous nous sommes donné une politique éditoriale. Nous avons maintenu cette politique durant toute l'année. Voici quelques éléments de cette politique :

- les 2/3 des articles en anglais et 1/3 en français
- articles qui concernent directement la mission, la théologie de la mission, le développement social et politique, l'œcuménisme, la situation de la femme...
- articles qui sont plutôt d'ordre doctrinal (théologiques et exégétiques), des témoignages ...
- articles plus substantiels, d'autres plus faciles à comprendre
- articles relatifs aux situations africaines, asiatiques et latino-américaines, ainsi que des articles sur les activités des groupes de travail
- articles qui font avancer la réflexion...

A plusieurs reprises, nous avons pu constater que les articles publiés dans le *SEDOS/Bulletin* étaient repris par d'autres revues. Des communautés nous demandaient de reprendre des articles pour le bulletin de leur province. Quand une revue interne d'une congrégation, membre de SEDOS, reproduit dans un même numéro trois articles, publiés dans le *SEDOS/Bulletin*, c'est un signe qu'il est lu et qu'il est utile.

Par rapport aux thèmes à approfondir, une certaine unité serait souhaitable entre ce que nos membres veulent, les articles que nous publions sur *SEDOS/Bulletin* et les conférences que nous offrons. Nous croyons que nous avons pris au sérieux les souhaits exprimés par les membres de SEDOS.

### 5. Site [www.sedos.org](http://www.sedos.org)

Durant les derniers mois, nous avons grandement amélioré la présentation de notre site web, la publication électronique de SEDOS, suite aux décisions que le comité exécutif a prises. Le site du SEDOS est un site sérieux. Nous sommes émerveillés de voir combien notre site est consulté. Depuis que nous avons un compteur, soit le 27 mars 2002, plus de 7500 personnes l'ont fréquenté, en l'espace de huit mois. Assez souvent, nous recevons des lettres de professeurs ou d'étudiants, demandant des surplus d'information, à partir des articles que nous mettons sur notre site web. Cer-

tains nous envoient des réactions, par exemple quand il y a des erreurs. Une fois un jeune jésuite polonais venait à SEDOS pour faire partie du groupe de travail sur la Chine. Il avait remarqué dans la section "*Activités suivantes*" la date de la réunion de ce groupe.

Nous avons aussi pris la décision, d'abord et avant tout, pour le bien de nos membres, non seulement de publier un *SEDOS/Bulletin* sur Ariccia 2001 (volume 33, nrs 7-8, juillet – août 2001) et Ariccia 2002 (volume 34, nrs 6-7, juin – juillet 2002), mais de le rendre aussi disponible sur notre site web.

Par rapport au site web, nous nous sommes demandé si nous ne devons pas développer cet aspect important de notre service. À Ariccia, des membres exprimaient aussi le souhait que nous ayons un "*chat line*". Peut-être il serait bon que l'exécutif ait une rencontre avec quelques experts dans le domaine de l'internet pour analyser les possibilités. Il y a encore d'autres questions. Doit-on faire payer les usagers ? Si oui, il y a des conséquences. Sinon, qui financera ? La solution de faire payer n'est pas tellement pratique. Tous les membres des congrégations devront avoir le mot de passe, certains le donneront à des amis etc. Et que voulons-nous faire, quel est l'objectif profond de SEDOS ?

### 6. Nouvelle politique des publications

Dès le début de l'année 2003, nous voulons attirer plus l'attention davantage sur la publication mensuelle de nouveaux articles sur notre site web. Les articles disponibles seront aussi présentés en italien et en espagnol. Le site web de SEDOS devra prendre plus d'importance. Par conséquent, même si nous attachons de l'importance à avoir un texte entre les mains, le nombre des numéros de *SEDOS/Bulletin* sera réduit à 5 ou 6 par an. Donc le rythme de la publication sera bimensuel, au moins pour l'année 2003. Nous voulons pourtant maintenir le nombre de pages (32) dans chaque numéro. Le prix de l'abonnement du *SEDOS/Bulletin* reste invariable. Cela nous permettra de supporter les frais, soit de la publication du *SEDOS/Bulletin* soit de la publication des articles sur internet. Nous vous encourageons de consulter régulièrement notre site web. Cette nouvelle politique de publication devra certainement être évaluée sérieusement par le comité exécutif.

## SEDOS : CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION

SEDOS se définit essentiellement comme centre de recherche et de documentation. C'est un centre unique. Nous voulons de plus en plus devenir un lieu que les membres et les non-membres fréquentent, où ils travaillent et collaborent. Heureusement, surtout

depuis que nous avons publié le numéro spécial du *SEDOS/Bulletin* (septembre 2001, vol. 33, nr. 9) énumérant toutes les revues que nous recevons, il y a eu plus de visites à notre centre de documentation.

## 7. Classification

SEDOS comme “centre de documentation” continue à se développer. Nous recevons plusieurs revues d’intérêt missionnaire. Le directeur de SEDOS, avec l’aide efficace du secrétariat, a beaucoup investi dans la rentrée informatisée des articles et des livres et dans l’identification des mots-clés. Cela prend beaucoup de temps. On pourrait aussi enregistrer les articles que nous recevons de façon plus systématique. Actuellement la politique suivie, est de cataloguer seulement ce qui semble le plus utile à l’ensemble de nos membres. On pourrait faire plus et mieux. On s’est posé la question, si SEDOS doit imprimer les catalogues (selon auteurs, titres, mots-clés, géographie...) ou avoir un ordinateur où on pourrait les consulter, ou mettre l’information sur la page web.

Nous recevons plusieurs revues mais pas tellement de livres. Quoi faire pour obtenir plus de livres ? Le président P. Piero Trabucco, ICM, a pris contact avec une maison éditrice italienne. Cela a donné des résultats. Il nous faut des sponsors, parce que notre budget ne nous permet pas vraiment de faire des achats de livres. SEDOS a acheté, suite à la consultation avec le comité exécutif, 450 exemplaires de “*Mission in The Third Millennium*”. Nous avons fait une publicité permanente pour ce volume, édité par Robert Schreiter. Nous avons encore en stock presque 135 copies. Le livre contient les conférences données à l’occasion du colloque sur la mission dans le troisième millénaire, tenu à Rome en avril 2000.

## 8. Comités de lecture

Selon qui sera le prochain directeur, il faudrait penser qu’il pourrait bien avoir besoin de comités de lecture, en tenant compte aussi des langues qu’il comprend lui-même. Ces comités de lecture pourraient être utiles, pour ce qui est de l’aspect “centre de documentation” de SEDOS (classification), l’édition du *SEDOS/Bulletin* et aussi pour ce qu’on veut mettre sur la page web. Pour la lecture des revues et pour la classification, SEDOS pourrait bien avoir recours à quelques volontaires.

## POUR TERMINER

Nous espérons que ce rapport annuel vous a donné au moins une idée des activités principales que SEDOS a organisées pendant l’an 2002, de ces publications et d’autres services et projets de notre centre. À la fin de la présentation de ce rapport annuel, nous profitons de l’occasion pour remercier vous tous. Ce rapport fonctionne comme un des liens entre SEDOS et les généralats ici à Rome. Mais nous voulons également remercier et saluer tous nos frères et sœurs missionnaires dans le monde, qui ont l’opportunité de lire ce rapport dans le *SEDOS/Bulletin*. Un grand merci pour tous les contacts amicaux et fraternels que nous avons eus pendant cette année et pour toutes les paroles d’encouragement que nous avons reçues de votre part.

Nous tenons à remercier aussi la communauté de la Société du Verbe Divin, qui héberge les offices de SEDOS. Encore une fois, nous apprécions particulièrement ce que la communauté a fait pour l’embellissement des locaux mis à notre disposition.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> Ce rapport a été présenté à l’assemblée générale 2002 de SEDOS. Pour d’autres détails des activités de SEDOS pendant l’an 2002, nous référons à *SEDOS/Bulletin Vol. 34, No. 11/12 – novembre-décembre*, pp. 303 – 307.

Réf. : Rapport édité par Pierre-Paul Walraet, OSC. Membre du Comité Exécutif de SEDOS (03 Décembre 2002).

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## Coming Events

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### *2003 SEDOS Open Seminar*

The 2003 Seminar of SEDOS, co-sponsored by the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Union of Superiors General (USG), will take as its *motto*: "Called to a new vision of others and of ourselves through interreligious dialogue: focused on Islam". This year's seminar will be an open seminar instead of the usual residential one at Ariccia. It will take place in Rome, in the Aula of the Augustinianum.

The dates are 19 to 23 May 2003, each afternoon from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Dialogue is an important value in itself. It is a way of life. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims will run as a thread through the programme of the seminar. Participants will be listening to experiences from representatives of Muslim and Christian communities, encountering one another in faith through dialogue and sharing of life. Among religious institutes and ecclesial movements there is a strong desire to grow in dialogue with other religions and spirituality in order to deepen one's understanding of other faith traditions and indeed of one's own. During the seminar, particular attention will be given to initiatives, taken by religious congregations and ecclesial movements, of sharing life and faith among and with the Muslim People. A Muslim and a Christian woman will be invited to reflect and dialogue from a woman's perspective on the challenges of faith in our modern world. The seminar will also examine how the Catholic Church leadership and that of Islam practise interreligious dialogue on a global level. Moreover, the programme will offer theological reflections on religious pluralism and also on Muslim and Christian spirituality of dialogue.

In short, the 2003 SEDOS Seminar aims to be a life-giving interreligious encounter, offering to all participants, prospects and hopes for dialogue. More information will be available on the SEDOS website ([www.sedos.org](http://www.sedos.org)) and in the *SEDOS Bulletin*.

### *Working Groups*

**Tuesday, 11 February, Debt Group 15:30 hrs at SEDOS**  
**Saturday, 1 March, Bible and Mission Group 15:00 hrs at Order of the Holy Cross - Via del Velabro 19, Rome**  
**Monday, 31 March, Debt Group 15:30 hrs at SEDOS**