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Editorial

SEDOS begins volume 36 of the Bulletin with a prayer for Peace in the World and blessings for all our readers and members. We begin the New Year with the hope for a better understanding and cooperation between all the peoples in the World and a commitment to continue to proclaim the “Good News” as Jesus taught us to. A word of warm greetings to all of you from all the members of the staff and especially from myself as I begin my new service as the person in charge of this office. Counting on your unreserved cooperation SEDOS Bulletin will continue to be published every two months with 48 pages, an increase of 14 pages, so as not to change the over-all annual content.

We begin with an article by Fr Hugh MacMahon, SSC in which he challenges us to rediscover ‘*the original and precise task of mission*’. In *Rethinking Mission* he analyses our role as missionaries faced with restrictive cultures and points to possible new ways of returning to the origins.

We continue to ‘rethink mission’ in the context of the Asian Church with Fr Jojo M. Fung, SJ in “*Towards a Paradigm Shift in Mission Amongst the Indigenous Peoples in Asia*”. Contact with a new culture cannot be effective without dialogue with that culture, and before beginning to evangelise we need to allow ourselves to be evangelised by that particular culture. This is what the author calls ‘Mission in Reverse’. A missionary needs to be a ‘silent contemplative’ in order to hear the rich murmur of Asian spirituality and thus be an instrument of God’s universal plan of salvation.

In line with the Asian challenge we join Fr Michel de Gigord, MEP and the families of the immigrants. *L’émigration des Philippines: Chance ou handicap pour le pays?* offers a wealth of information on the actual situation of immigration in The Philippines and dwells on the implications not only for the political leaders but also for the mission of the Church. The Philippines has over 3 million people working abroad and this situation is causing havoc in the traditional social and religious structure of the population. There are serious implications too for the foreign communities that receive these immigrants, and Fr Adolfo Nicolas, SJ recounts what the Church in Japan is doing to serve these immigrants. *Les étrangers au Japon frappent à la porte (et au cœur) de L’Église catholique* speaks of how the Church in Japan has taken up the challenge and the leading role in making the people of Japan aware of the ‘new minority group’ who lives among them with different but specific needs.

The Bulletin ends in Oceania with an article by Fr Philip Gibbs, SVD reflecting on different interpretations of the idea of ‘inculturation’ of the Christian Church in the particular setting of Oceania. *Pearls in the Deep: Inculturation and “Ecclesia in Oceania”* looks for the pearls hidden within the documents of the Synod of Bishops for Oceania and studies the deep meaning of the concept of inculturation and makes clear the implications for the Local Churches. The Bishops have the heavy responsibility of finding dedicated men and women, committed to living their faith in a contextual Christian tradition, to teach the new generation of seminarians, sisters and lay people in Oceania.

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director

The SEDOS Secretariat would like to apologize to the Congregation NDA/OLA (Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles) and its Superior General because, in the Annual Report of the *SEDOS Bulletin*, Vol. 35, n. 11/12, December 2003, the Congregation was called Sisters of Our Lady of Africa.

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“*Rethinking Mission*,”

- Hugh MacMahon, SSC -

Thanks to restrictive cultures, such as those of China, India and the Islamic countries, we are reminded of how narrow our vision of mission has become. They do not permit what we had come to see as the normal means of mission (parish and welfare ministries run by foreigners) but that does not mean mission is impossible there. Rather we are led to rediscover the original and precise task of mission. This is fortunate because in the immediate future the number of missionaries is likely to be small and they have to be aware of where and how they can be most effective in the modern world. The following article outlines the present dilemma of mission and where the future lies.

Over the past forty years Catholic missionaries have known considerable success, the challenge of change and, finally, doubt about their very future.

Most remain convinced that there will be mission as long as there is a Church but few new candidates are joining them and their energy is diminishing.

Instinctively they turn to the latest theologies for direction and reassurance but are slow to recognise that their own valuable experience on the front lines is more likely to provide the answers they are seeking.

My own involvement in the traumatic changes in mission was in Korea and, more recently, China.

By the end of the 1980s, the main missionary societies in Korea (the M.E.P., Maryknoll, Guadalupe and Columbans) could look back on a job well done. In the previous thirty years they had established hundreds of new parishes, seen the number of believers double, and then double again. In 1967 there were 707,000 Catholics in Korea, in 1989 there were 2,613,000 and by 2002 they had risen to 4,348,000.

The missionaries had helped form a strong local clergy and both at home and abroad the Korean Church was respected for its courageous stand on human rights and social issues.

This success posed a dilemma for the missionaries: had they worked themselves out of a job? Should they stay on in supporting roles or move on to where they were needed more?

By then few other countries were seeking foreigners for key ministerial or evangelising roles. Indeed major non-Christian populations like China, India and the Islamic world prohibited direct evangelisation by foreigners. Mission, as it has been known in recent centuries, was running out of options and had to be rethought if it was to continue.

A Cutting Edge of the Local Church?

At first it seemed that a future might lie in introducing a variety of new ministries to Korea.

An example was the apostolate among the urban poor in Seoul which a number of Columbans undertook in the early 1990s. The team involved lived in a typical shack in a temporary settlement area and worked with the local Catholics and people for the wider community. Their goal was to develop a Catholic community centred on *Scripture, service and cultural sensitivity*. It could have been ground-breaking missionary work but the agenda of the local people was different and soon questioned this assumption.

Biblical Base

To deepen the people's scriptural awareness, Bible reflection gatherings were organized each month for the 15 area groups into which the Catholic families were divided. The meetings were held in one of their homes. It soon became apparent that the real interest of the people was not in Scripture but in their everyday health, family and economic concerns. Their preferred religion was one that would enable them to control good and bad fortune (and spirits) and help them forget their anxieties. Building Scripture study around miracle stories or encouraging charismatic-style prayers and singing might have satisfied their felt religious needs but the Gospels do not indicate that this is what Christ came to give them.

Service for Whom?

With encouragement the community became involved in a number of projects for the locality: a credit union, resettlement issues, medical clinics, night schools and care for children, invalids and the aged. On the leadership level there was close cooperation with a local Protestant church and a Buddhist center.

At the same time, the better-off Catholics were looking forward to the day when the community would have an imposing church, and a convent, kindergarten and doctrine halls they could be proud

of. Eventually economic progress led to their being raised to the status of parish and a local priest took over. Despite his desire to continue the former tradition of service, a five-storey church had to be built and the emphases moved from involvement in the wider community to fund raising and maintaining the ecclesiastical structure. Collaboration with other religions became a formality.

The realities of Korean society brought about this transformation but is that what is meant when we speak of establishing a truly Korean Church?

How Local the Church?

The final goal of the urban poor apostolate was to form a community that reflected Korean tradition and spirit. Again the local people showed a limited vision of what this called for. Most Catholics were content with their Church's foreignness — they liked its progressive and Western image. The fact that the Western liturgy, publications and catechetical works had been translated into Korean seemed to satisfy them.

Only a few were aware that their Church was a duplicate of a Western model which was rapidly declining in its lands of origin. In Korea itself the youth were already showing it did not meet their needs. Its emphasis on externals overshadowed its spiritual message and its efforts to draw on Korean culture were largely decorative.

Dashed Hopes

The Columban apostolate among the urban poor in Seoul came to an end when the Catholic community with which they worked became a parish. However, the difficulties encountered in trying to make it Scripture based, service centred and inculturated had shown the limitation to missionary work in a Church already firmly developed on traditional Western lines and under local leadership.

There was still hope that a role remained for missionaries in the young but vigorous Korean Church by raising mission awareness. But if mission had reached its limits in Korea where were new missionaries to be sent? The old forms of mission were no longer needed so what was the next generation of missionaries being called to do?

This missionary stalemate raised questions which few understood at that time. Later, in the context of China, I could get a better view of where the problem lay.

China: Faced with the Basics

Today mission to China is viewed as impossible by many missionary societies because there are no openings for parochial ministry, or directing social

and educational projects. This shows how narrow our thinking has become. In modern China the foreign missionary contribution is made through quiet presence and personal service. This is not a second-class way of doing mission, rather it is a reminder of how mission began and how it is best achieved.

The original role of missionaries was to sow the Gospel seed, form local leaders and hand over to them the responsibility for the growing Church. Then they moved on. It was only later that they saw their task as that of establishing churches on the Roman model and taking on the responsibility for running those churches till, sooner or later, a local clergy could share that responsibility with them. Often that took many generations and there was a reluctance to leave at all. Mission became "ministry in another culture".

It took the challenge of entering "closed" cultures like those of China, India and the Islamic countries to renew modern mission and return it to its basics. That in itself might not have been sufficient to make mission societies change their thinking but the contemporary shortage of missionary vocations forces them to consider how they can make the best use of their reduced membership. The fulltime missionaries that do exist should not be hidden away in minor roles but be placed where they can make most impact.

Before expanding on the three primary goals of mission (sowing, forming and handing over) a prior question must be addressed: is mission still necessary at all today?

Motivation for Mission

The old inspiration for going on mission — to save souls — has lost its value and the need to spread the Kingdom by defending human rights and creating sufficiency has been taken on by professional and dedicated NGOs.

What Christianity offers is at the most basic level. People are not going to adjust their life-style — even if they know it make others poorer and destroys the environment — unless they have a radical transformation of heart and this is the area in which Christianity specialises.

Reflection on the life and death of Christ, and his/her own experience, has led the missionary to find God as the living and moulding force in their own life. Because this means much to them they wish to share the discovery with others, encouraging them to change their lives if necessary. This liberating challenge of Christianity has to be asserted in all cultures but missionaries see their task as that of focusing on those who historically have had little or no opportunity to hear it.

Now we can return to the manner in which this is done.

Sowing the Seed

In order to influence others one must be present among them and the most appropriate form of Christian presence is personal service. Those who are attracted by its unselfish example will want to know the reasoning behind it and its simplicity will not distract them by seeming to offer any institutional benefit — social, educational or economic.

To answer initial enquiries the bearer of the message must be able to articulate his/her convictions in simple terms. Young people, in China and elsewhere, recognise propaganda in any form and are impressed only by a sustained life-style that challenges the superficial values around them. When they seek written materials to deepen their understanding of Christianity it should be primary sources such as the Gospels, and not doctrinal works, that are offered to them. It is the Holy Spirit that guides the seed to fruition and missionaries should be in no hurry to assume that role.

While missionaries need to be clear on what they have to offer, familiarity with the local language and culture is also essential so that local concepts and symbols are used to deepen communication and draw the seeker into dialogue.

Finding Leaders

The timing of the urban poor project in Seoul in the 1990s was too late to succeed in forming communities on personal, Scripture-based spirituality. The people had already found a certain attraction in a Catholicism based on church fellowship and a set of practical religious regulations. It provided continuity with the formality and hierarchy of their Confucian background.

At the same time, a number of people were looking for a closer relationship with God and sought Bible study and meditation groups to help deepen their spirituality. Earlier missionaries should have sought out and concentrated on such candidates. However, the theological context of the age and the widely accepted drive for rapid Church expansion encouraged missionaries to opt for large numbers. They used catechetics and public devotions to cope with the crowds and this also solved the problem for them as foreigners to share on a serious level.

Entrusting the Church

The missionary ideal would be to gather in communities those who showed an awareness of what Christianity is about so that they could support each other and enable group witness and worship. In due time such communities — in communion with the

universal Church — would be the ones to develop the institutions, sacraments and theologies of a truly local Church. They would be the ones to take evangelisation on to its later stages.

However in many countries, including China, the Church already exists in some form and even those who have found Christianity outside it will eventually come in contact with its present day reality. They may be disappointed by what they find so the missionary will have to help them cope with the situation and show them how they can contribute to the renewal of their Church.

Foreigners can also broaden the formation of local clergy, Religious and lay leaders by providing them with opportunities to experience alternative forms of Church.

Finally

Mission will be by small groups of well motivated and specially trained missionaries. Rather than getting involved in long-term “hands-on” ministries they will concentrate on finding committed Christians to take on those tasks.

Their witness will be personal rather than institutional and articulated in scriptural and spiritual language rather than theological.

Their efforts will be addressed, not to large numbers, but to potential servant-leaders who are attracted by the spiritual basis of Christianity.

Their goal will be to encourage communities of reflecting Christians to take on the responsibility, in communion with the wider Church, of developing a local Church that evolves its own theologies, liturgies and Christian identity.

If they succeed, their model of mission will have much to offer their home Churches in their efforts to recreate the Church in the modern world.

Ref.: Text from the author for SEDOS' publication. September 2003.

“Towards a Paradigm Shift in Mission Amongst the Indigenous Peoples in Asia,,

– Jojo M. Fung, SJ –

Introduction

In Asia, indigenous peoples are still being perceived as objects of charity and welfare development programmes of the Church-related and service-oriented organizations. Insufficient attempts have been made to enable them to empower themselves in order to become active and critical protagonists of their own future. Such an ecclesial orientation in relation to indigenous peoples shows an outmoded mission theology or theology of mission. As the Universal Church enters the third millennium the need to rethink missiology is all the more urgent, if the Church is to enter into solidarity with the indigenous peoples of Asia in their life-struggle.

The United Nations designated 1993 as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. It was indeed a watershed event in global history. Based on the presupposition that the primal religions are revelatory of God's salvific presence, I intend to examine the theological development of the Asian Church subsequent to this historic event. Much has been written about indigenous shamanism, but I will explain it as the symbolic core of indigenous cultures. The theoretical explanation will be supplemented by a personal experience of two shamanic rituals. Certain criteria, including theological principles, will be generated to revalue and evaluate indigenous cultures, especially indigenous shamanism. Finally, I will propose four missiological models for effective collaborative ministry between the indigenous peoples and the Church.

I. Changing Theological Landscape in Asia

Since the watershed event of 1993, there has been a noticeable shift in the theological focus and concern of the Asian Church with regard to the indigenous peoples. In September 1995, the Office of Evangelization of the FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences) organized a conference in Hua Hin, Thailand, entitled *Evangelization Among the Indigenous Peoples of Asia*. The 45 participants, bishops, priests, religious and lay people of Asia, all of whom belonged to indigenous groups, or were working with them, reflected on the theological significance of the religious heritage of the indigenous peoples. They

affirmed that “over the centuries God has been speaking to indigenous peoples through their cultures” (Eilers, ed. 1997:212). For the first time there was an open admission that the Christian Churches in Asia have unjustly treated the religious traditions and practices, and marginalized their adherents within the Church. The participants called for “a new evangelization at the heart of these cultures, a profound encounter between the core values of indigenous peoples and the biblical faith” (*ibid.*). They recommended that “the Church should support the *right of indigenous peoples to exist and to be themselves*”, and promised to “stand with them in their struggle to live as full and equal citizens of their nations and to enter the mainstream without losing their identity” (*ibid.*: 212-213). Participants advocated for a more prophetic Asian Church “we must *oppose laws that oppress and discriminate* against indigenous peoples, and educate people concerning their land rights. We must develop indigenous leaders equipped to work for their people's rights, particularly in regard to the land. When necessary, Christians must lobby governments and create public opinion in favour of the rights of indigenous peoples” (*ibid.*). The Church needs to provide formal and non-formal, vocational and professional, education suited to the actual needs of the indigenous peoples, aimed at overcoming illiteracy, and succeeding in the wider culture. Indeed, education has to “instill a sense of responsibility in educated indigenous peoples so that they do not use the tools of education to oppress their own people” (*ibid.*). Moreover, indigenous peoples must be made aware, through social and cultural analysis, of “where they are, how and why they have reached this point; and are thus able to appraise their culture critically, and decide their future” (*ibid.*). Participants acknowledged, “we need to promote a *deeper knowledge* of indigenous peoples and their history”, to be fostered “among the indigenous peoples themselves and among majority groups, so that all become aware of the indigenous peoples' identity and their contributions to society” (*ibid.*). This knowledge is accumulated through “*collecting and studying* our peoples' myths, rites, symbols, poems, and proverbs”, which could be used to promote a genuine prayer life and worship among indigenous peoples” (*ibid.*).

In 1997, the FABC Office of Theological Concerns called for a theological paradigm shift in the Church's perception of the indigenous peoples. This theological shift is evident in the document entitled *The Spirit at Work in Asia Today (FABC Papers 1998)*. The strengths of this document are manifold. First, it made a critical appraisal of the situation of the indigenous peoples in Asia.

In many Asian societies the adherents of the primal religions are not only numerically minorities but are considered to be culturally inferior, less developed; and practices are deemed to be of less value. Indigenous peoples are often referred to as tribals and aborigines, terms they reject as perpetuating stereotypes depicting them as backward. In various Asian countries the adherents of primal religions live in remote areas, isolated from the urban centres. As regards the possibilities of their having access to education and participation in the economic processes these people are marginalized and disadvantaged. In most Asian countries the growing industrialization and urbanization, coupled with exploitation of the natural resources in mining and ecological destruction of local forests, seas and wildlife, threaten the existence and livelihood of indigenous peoples who are used to traditional ways of life based on symbolic relationships with nature (*ibid.*: n. 23).

Second, the document pointed out the antiquated mission theology underlying the missionary practices, which consider their leaders and adherents to "have been under the influence of evil spirits rather than under the influence of the Holy Spirit". Even worse, the document adds:

The primal religions were often accused of propagating idolatrous and satanic practices. Their members were called people living in "darkness and far from God", because they were considered to believe in a world full of evil spirits and powers, and to depend on the intercession of dubious magicians, witch-doctors, healers and exorcists. The Christian message was presented to them as the liberating force, which, with the power of the Holy Spirit, brought light into the darkness and delivered these people from an age-old oppression and slavery to religiously false ideas, which could only be called superstitious and idolatrous (*ibid.* n. 26).

Third, the document calls for a rethinking of missiological approaches, so that the Asian Church should not only "evangelize the indigenous peoples but must be evangelized by them, and learn from them new insights in areas such as ecology, community life and the celebration of life's joys and tragedies" (*ibid.*).

Since the cultures of the indigenous peoples have been recognized as the *locus* of God's self-communication, the document postulates that "much of the indigenous peoples' world view and ethos is compatible with the Christian faith" (*ibid.*). Therefore, the "traditional beliefs, rites, myths and symbols of indigenous peoples provide material for developing indigenous theologies and liturgical ceremonies" (*ibid.*).

This paradigm shift provides the Church with a timely opportunity for a deeper understanding of the indigenous cultures, especially one of its core institutional cultural practices, known as indigenous shamanism.

II. Indigenous Shamanism

Much anthropological research has been generated with regard to indigenous shamanism. My own interactive field research since 1997 has also led me to focus more on indigenous shamanism, or the shamanistic traditions of the *Orang Asli* of West Malaysia and the *Muruts* of Sabah, East Malaysia. The former (literally translated as "original people") boasts nineteen linguistic groups, and numbers about 105,000. The latter, (literally, "hill people"), are the third largest indigenous tribe in Sabah (after the Kadazandusuns and Bajaus). The 1991 census indicated that there are 54,037 Muruts in Sabah, with about 90 per cent concentrated in the south-western part of Sabah (formerly British North Borneo).

From the outset, it is important to state that the intercultural dialogue with indigenous peoples must examine the indigenous institution of shamanism, as it is inseparably linked with the shamans and their initiation rites, their indigenous cosmology and mythology, the rituals that they perform, and the accompanying signs and symbols. It is a whole system, i.e., without the shamans and the rituals, there would be no shamanism, and *vice versa*. Therefore, E. Jean Matteson Langdon contends that "shamanism is an enduring institution that must be comprehended holistically" (Landon 1992:20).

The anthropological understanding of indigenous shamanism varies, ranging from an institution and a system, to that of a phenomenon. Mircea Eliade describes shamanism as the "most archaic and most widely distributed of occult traditions" (Eliade 1967:56 quoted in Overton 1998:27). Sandy Yule argues that "shamanism comes from the Tunguso-Manchurian word 'saman'. The noun is formed from the verb 'sa-' ('to know'): thus, 'shaman' literally means 'he (*sic*) who knows'" (Yule 1999:45). James A. Overton opines that "throughout most of the world (North and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania), the shaman fulfils, or has fulfilled in the past, the roles of healer, master of the spirits, guardian

of the psychic and ecologic well-being of his community, psychopomp, and intermediary between the natural and supernatural" (Overton 1998:27).

According to Ulla Johansen, "shamanism is not a religion ... but a phenomenon — namely, the activities of shamans — that can be found in various religions" (Johansen 1999:41). Langdon qualifies Johansen by viewing "shamanism as a globalizing and dynamic social and cultural phenomenon" (Landon 1992:4). He further adds that "South American shamanism is a religious system. It contains ideas and practices about the world and its reproduction, the worldview and reflection of the world"; and therefore, "ritual is an important and necessary expression of a belief system Ritual works because it expresses. Its efficacy lies in its power as metaphor to express and alter the human experience by altering perception" (*ibid.*:11-12). Langdon believes that "the shaman is central in ritual expression, since he is the master of the ritual and its representations. His authority to conduct ritual comes from his position as mediator between various domains and the superhuman, the natural and the cultural. He is an ambiguous or liminal figure. He is both animal and human, since he transforms into animals. He is neither inherently good nor evil, because he works for the benefit, as well as the misfortune, of others. His power derives in part from his ambiguity, since he does not fit into the mutually-exclusive category that organized the world" (*ibid.*: 12).

Seen from the viewpoint of power, Landon explains the shaman as the "possessor of power, and it is power that enables him to mediate between the extrahuman and human. This concept of power is intimately linked to the idea of energy forces, the manifestation of these forces in the soul, and the growth and development of humans": as "manifested as light or aura ... in songs"; for "the shaman's power interacts with the global energy system" (*ibid.*: 14). Indeed, shamans have the ability to draw upon "this energy through ecstatic experience, through dreams or through trances induced by drugs" (*ibid.*: 20). I fully subscribe to Langdon's notion that "the sources of the shaman's power are the sources of culture itself: and the knowledge he acquires is culture's content. Through ritual he is central to the expression of the cultural system. His role as mediator extends into the sociological domain, where he plays an important role in curing, as well as in economic, political, and other activities" (*ibid.*). In view of this, I contend that a shaman derives his power by virtue of the fact that he is an existential embodiment, and symbolic expression and content of the shaman's culture (see Fung 2000).

Sue Jennings discovers that the Temiar of Peninsular Malaysia call their shamans *halak*; though occasionally the Malay word *bomoh* or *pawang* is used.

Halak "also describes the potential for being a shaman and the meeting of an individual with a person's spirit-guide in dreams. Although most *halak* are male, there are women as well. Robert Dentan remarks that "there are varying degrees of *halak*. Women are rarely more than just a little *halak*; but a really *halak* woman is more successful than most male *hnlak* in the diagnosis and cure of diseases" (Dentan 1968: 85, quoted in Jennings 1995:138). However, the majority of the shamans, who are known as *bobolizans* among the Rungus and Kadazandusuns of Sabah, are women. So are, their apprentices. Both George N. Appell and Laura W.R. Appell consider *bobolizan* "as an intermediary between human beings and supernatural beings, both upperworld *osunduw*, and the terrestrial *rogon*, to alleviate afflictions of disease, misfortune, and crop failure.... They go into a trance to communicate with the spirit world in order to diagnose and cure illness and misfortune; and they then sing the long sacred texts that accompany the necessary sacrificial offerings to the spirit world" (Appell and Appell 1993:1920). As a result, "women are considered the authorities on the nature of the cosmos and are the interpreters of most forms of misfortune, except those relating to farming activities, where there are male experts as well" (*ibid.*: 20). The *bobolizans* effect cures through the help of the *luma'ag*, who are the spirit and the "celestial counterpart of a living individual, male or female", and sometimes "of her mother or teacher" which they call upon during trance (*ibid.*: 14). The *luma'ag* communicates to the *bobolizans* "information on the proper sacrifice to effect cures, which then involve the performance of hymns to the gods and spirits over sacrifices of pigs and chickens" (*ibid.*).

The Temiar believe that shamans are persons of knowledge and wisdom. They are divided into minor, middle and major shamans. There is even a fourth category, great shaman, to indicate the highest grade of shaman, who are tiger shamans, of whom there are very few at any one time (Jennings 1995:139). Most shamans begin as "minor shaman, following the guidance of dream revelation; spirit guides of *off-the-ground* species. Higher grades of shaman have spirit-guides from *on-the-ground* species. It is the major and great shamans who are able to accept power, not just from the head-souls of *off-the-ground* and *ground* species, but also from the heart/blood-soul, the lower body soul, of species *on-the-ground*" (*ibid.*: 140). Finally, shamans perform rituals because of "soul-sickness: either head-soul sickness or blood/ heart-soul sickness" (*ibid.*: 151). It is not uncommon that shamans "also give amulets made from wild garlic, which are tied round the neck or wrist to ward off malevolent spirits or prevent colds and chills. If an infant is unwell, the baby and its mother will wear an amulet" (*ibid.*: 145).

In the encounter with the world of shamanism, most participants with a rational (more impacted by

scientific and technocratic) mindset, normally doubt and dismiss what they witness and experience as unreal. Overton advocates the change of mindset, which involves what he calls *shamanic realism*. He defines it as “the realistic presentation of an esoteric worldview, which is not the result of the imagination of the author, but principally of a system of beliefs of ethnographic origins. Shamanic realism, therefore, transcends, as does shamanism itself, the barriers of history and geography, and therefore of the Latin American continent and of the Spanish language or of its literary tradition” (Overton 1998:25). He concludes that shamanic realism is the “result of the presence of a system of cultural beliefs whose indelible influence on the author becomes patent in his or her artistic representation” (*ibid.*: 53). Only shamanic realism enables participants to put on a shamanic perspective, which disposes them toward the experience of shamanic rituals, and better to understand indigenous shamanism. Indeed, what is experienced is real, out there, before one’s very eyes, and all one can say is, “It is what it is”.

With this theoretical explanation of indigenous shamanism and shamans, I would like to narrate a personal experience of two shamanic rituals, in which I took part upon the invitation of friends who are indigenous persons.

III. Personal Shamanic Experience

My field research on indigenous shamanism has enabled me humbly to acknowledge its positive values, without lending myself to an uncritical romanticization of this indigenous practice. Over the years, my understanding has since deepened, since I participated in the healing rituals of the *Orang Asli*, and befriended a few Murut shamans in Sabah. I am of the opinion that to interact and learn from the shamans is to allow the indigenous peoples to trust us enough to invite us to step into their worlds. I believe it is important to savour their shamanic world, because it constitutes the deepest symbolic core of their cultures.

The healing ritual I participated in is known as *sewang terang*. It was held in a Semai village, which lasted for four days, beginning at ten at night, and lasting until five in the morning, at dawn. *Sewang terang* is a healing ritual, conducted with lights switched on in the house — hence the word *terang* which means bright. There is another healing ritual conducted in the dark, known as *sewang gelap*.

In the ritual I attended, I witnessed a team of three elderly shamans, two men and a woman, one acting as the chief shaman, assisted by a woman and another man. Shamans are extraordinary and ordinary

members of the community. They are extraordinary because they have the capacity to perceive and manoeuvre the different worlds — animal, human, spirit — in the same healing ritual. As they traverse in luminosity, they mediate the powers from the different worlds, to bring about healing to the sick of the community. Yet, they are as ordinary as any other villager, because they have to work in the fields to earn their living. They have taught me the meaning of “taking off my shoes”, and leaving behind my ethnocentric and religious prejudices and biases about their cultures and belief-systems. At the same time, they have encouraged me to “walk barefoot” into the holy sanctuary of their healing rituals.

My second experience happened in early 1999. At that time I participated in a ritual commemorating the hundred days after the burial of a deceased person in a Murut Village on the Kalimantan side of the border of Sabah. To honour the wish of his late father, the son built a traditional bamboo house, with a springboard located in the middle of the house. This springboard, which the Muruts called “*papan tinago*”, is made of wooden planks, fastened to logs arranged beneath the board; and they act like springs. These logs give the “*papan tinago*” a bouncy effect, as the Muruts perform their rituals on it. An elderly shaman was called upon to inaugurate the “*papan tinago*”. He and a group of middle-aged Murut women and men chanted the benediction, and performed the traditional dance, moving gracefully across the “*papan tinago*”, as the rest of the villagers witnessed the event; and many joined in the benediction as they chanted along at intervals.

As I sat there and participated in their rituals, I was gradually able to “take off” my curiosity and “put on” the “shamanic perspective”, which enabled me to learn to “see as they see, hear as they hear, understand as they understand”, not always clearly, but in glimpses. Only in this way, gradual though the process is, I have come to participate in the “shamanic realism” of the seamless world mediated to me by the shamans. No longer do I ask the bivalent question, so typical of a Euro-American mindset (a mindset in which I was educated), traceable to a positivistic rationality, “Is this real or false?”. Rather I find myself exclaiming, in child-like awe, simplicity and wonder: “This is it! This is as real as it can get! I am actually there! I am in!”. Attending these healing rituals has humbled me; for the sacredness of the scene bespeaks a *presence* which has already preceded me; as *it is* the overshadowing presence of the Divine Mystery. The cultures of the indigenous peoples, in addition to being the *loca* of God’s speech, are the “sacred tabernacles”; where God has chosen to dwell amongst a marginal people, the way God did in the cloud and the pillar of

fire during the sojourn of the oppressed Israelites during their exodus from Egypt.

The aim of this narration of a personal shamanic experience is to highlight the importance of critical reflection on personal experience in the light of theoretical knowledge, with the hope of generating relevant criteria for revaluing and evaluating indigenous cultures.

IV. Criteria of Re-evaluation and Evaluation

Before discussing the criteria for re-evaluation and evaluation, it is important to note that the Church since Vatican II has sincerely acknowledged the positive values in the other religious traditions (see, e.g., *Ad Gentes*, nn. 3, 7, 9, 11; *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 16, 17; *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 5, 10, 28, as well as many of the documents of the FABC [Rosales and Arévalo, eds. 1992; Eilers, ed., 1997]). More so, when it comes to the document *Dialogue and Proclamation*, which unequivocally affirms the revelatory and salvific character of the other religions.

The mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit of Christ. Concretely, it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions, and by following the dictates of their conscience, that the members of other *world and primal* religions respond positively to God's invitation to receive salvation in Jesus Christ; even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their Saviour (*DP*, n. 29 — my emphasis).

Thus, given this positive ecclesial evaluation, it is necessary that some criteria be formulated, so as to facilitate the mutual enrichment and critique between the Christian message and the indigenous cultures.

The reflection above on my personal experience convinced me of the primacy of *kenosis* and *pleroma*, as the *conditio sine qua non* of any kind of evangelization activity. This criterion calls for an accompanying period of insertion and immersion amongst the indigenous peoples. Only this insertion facilitates the process of self-emptying that allows the indigenous cultures, especially, their ritualistic celebration, to enrich and evangelize us. Given these lived experiences, there has to be a subsequent process of an ongoing critical reflection on the lived experiences. The presence of such reflection will lend the generated criteria an aura of authenticity for revaluing and evaluating the cultures of the indigenous peoples.

My conversation with different people (priests, *Orang Asli* Catholics) has enabled me to discover three

helpful and useful criteria for the revaluation and evaluation of indigenous cultural symbols.

(a) Indigenous Power of Distinction. Any effective revaluation or evaluation needs to engage the wisdom embedded in indigenous epistemology, especially its capacity to make a moral distinction between what is a “service” or “disservice” to the indigenous community. The cultural nuances may differ geographically, but the moral service or disservice is well understood by indigenous peoples.

In Chicago, I met a Claretian priest from Guatemala who offered an “emic” distinction between “white magic” and “black magic”. The practitioners of these two kinds of magic differ significantly. The former never ask for a fee but a token (such as tobacco and some coins will suffice); the latter always negotiate the fee before the ritual. In a Native American healing ceremony that I participated in, I witnessed a token offering of tobacco, given to the shaman and his assistant.

An indigenous Malaysian woman activist does not speak in terms of magic, but rather of *ilmu putih* (literally: “white knowledge/science”), and *ilmu hitam* (literally: black knowledge/science”). *Ilmu* refers to a corpus of indigenous knowledge which constitutes an indigenous science, for example, in the fields of shamanism and biodiversity. *Ilmu putih* is used by their shamans to bring about the general health of the community, and healing of individual sick persons in the village. Shamans who render moral service to the community are well received in the village; and interestingly, they actually live in the midst of the villagers. However, those who use *ilmu hitam* are feared and shunned by the villagers. Their homes are not in the village, but usually on the fringe, or near to the forest.

In my conversation with the son of a renowned Murut shaman, he told me frankly that his father does not involve himself with *Setan* (satan). He qualified his father's shamanic practice as *bagus* (“good”) as opposed to *jahat* (“wicked”). In fact, the son used the Malay phrase “*Dia punya baik bukan jahat*”, which means “the power he uses is good, and not evil or satanic”. He reiterated that his father employs shamanic power only to bring healing to those who request his services. A shaman who healed my niece categorically stated that he heals with the power that comes from Jesus.

An indigenous couple matter-of-factly told me that the good spirits “are relatives of Jesus”; and “they are created by God” to become helpers of humankind to bring healing to the sick. Such spirits need to be discerned and tested against the moral life and history of the shamans, and their

contribution to the common good of the community. (In regard to these examples, I am grateful for a dialogue with Methodist pastors and lay leaders in Cameroon in March 2001).

(b) Rite of passage as sacred. All rituals associated with the indigenous rites of passage, considered sacrosanct by the community, must be valued *in themselves*. At the White River Apache Reservation in Northern Arizona, a Franciscan priest explained to me the sacredness of the puberty initiation rite for all the Apache teenage girls. Every year, he joined in the celebration as a witness. The Apache shamans perform the ritual. As a Franciscan priest, he comes in to minister a blessing at the end, when the Catholic parents request him to do so. A Malaysian diocesan priest also explained to me that he gladly participates in the burial and wedding ceremonies of the indigenous peoples. At an appropriate time, deemed necessary by the members (family and/or community), he performs the Catholic rituals. Both of these priests impressed me as persons who so value the indigenous cultures that they regard their rituals as sacred. Attitudes of profound sensitivity and respect have enabled them to appreciate and value the indigenous rituals in themselves, i.e., *on their terms not ours*. This reverence has enabled both to refrain from superseding or superimposing Christianity on their indigenous practices.

(c) Rituals effect changes. Indigenous rituals must be valued in terms of the intended consequences. I learnt this from a Nigerian professor who is a Catholic. I first met him at the anthropology department of the University of California, Berkeley. In relation to indigenous rituals, he explained to me that one of the most relevant criteria for him is *that it works*. This means that it brings about the desired effects — for instance, the sick are cured and restored to the fullness of health. In fact, I recently met one of the patients who participated in the aforementioned healing ritual of *sewang terang*. She told me that since taking part in the healing ritual, she has been healed.

These are three criteria I would like to propose for revaluing and evaluating indigenous cultural symbols *in themselves*. Besides, I postulate that the Church needs to establish biblically-based theological principles for understanding indigenous cultural symbols and practices.

V. Theological Principles

Five biblically-based principles will be elaborated as a conceptual framework for a reconsideration of indigenous cultures. They are principles in relation to creation, Christ, the incarnation, the Resurrection

and the Spirit. The last principle of the sound tree is an illustration of the difference in the perception and subsequent explanation of indigenous practices in the light of such principles and conceptual framework.

(a) Principle of Creation. The creation account reminds us that everything God has created “is good and graced with God’s presence” (Gn 1:4,10,12,18, 21, 25). After the creation of humankind in God’s image and likeness, “God saw everything that God had made and indeed, it was very good” (Gn 1:31). All the different spirits in the universe whom the shamans invoke to bring healing to the sick are part of God’s creation too. This is not to ignore the fact that there are evil spirits used by ill-intentioned shamans, upon the request of persons with evil intentions. But it must be affirmed and asserted that creation has its origin in the creative act of God. The presence of evil is never connected with Genesis I, as with Genesis 3. As Kathleen Coyle contends:

the myth traces the origin of evil not to creation *but to an ancestor of the human race*. The origin of evil is not woven into the fabric of being, for creation is good, not evil. Nor is evil older than creation, nor contemporary with the origin of things. Evil is the corruption that occurs within a creation ... the myth posits the beginning of evil as distinct from the beginning of creation that is *already* complete and good. The myth of Genesis 3 also reveals the mysterious aspect of evil, namely, that before we initiate or commit evil we discover it already there. We do not begin evil; we continue it. It has its own history, its own past, before we ever become implicated in it. As human beings, we are destined for the good and inclined to evil: “in this paradox of ‘destination’ and ‘inclination’ the whole meaning of the symbol of the Fall is concentrated. Sin is a reality antecedent to every awakening of consciousness; it has a communal dimension that cannot be reduced to individual responsibility; and it is a power that binds us and holds us captive” (Coyle 1990: 289, quoting Ricoeur 1974: 284).

At this juncture, it is worthwhile considering the account of physical healing in the Book of Tobit (11: 5-17). Raphael said to Tobit, “You must put the fish’s gall to his (Tobias, Tobit’s father) eyes; the medicine will smart and will draw a filmy white skin off his eyes. And your father will be able to see and look on the light”. Tobias went towards him (he had the fish’s gall in his hand. He breathed on his eyes and said, steadying him, “Father, have confidence!”. With this he applied the medicine, left it there a while; then, with both hands peeled away a filmy skin from the corner of his eyes. Then his father fell on his neck and wept. He exclaimed, “I can see,

my son, the light of my eyes!”. From a shamanic perspective, this account relates a shamanic ritual of healing. The shamanic power comes from outside of Tobit, symbolized by Raphael. The power is meditated through the use of fish gall. Once administered, healing takes place. Is there a possibility that Tobit exercised a kind of ancient Hebrew shamanic ritual of healing, which was familiar to him by virtue of the process of acculturation’?

(b) Christological Principle. God has come *in person* to bring healing to the world. Jesus is the divine-human embodiment of God. In healing a blind man at Bethsaida (Jn 9:1-7; also see Mk 8:22), Jesus “spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, ‘Go, wash yourself in the Pool of Siloam’ (which means sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see” (v. 7). From a shamanic perspective, the use of mud and saliva reminds us of some of the things shamans do during the healing rituals. Though not exactly in the same manner, some shamans actually suck water into the mouth and spread it onto the sick. In this account, Jesus’ mediatory role qualifies him to be the salvific intermediary between the God-world and the human world of the sick. More than that, Jesus can be seen as the existential embodiment and symbolic expression of the power of God. As a mediatory symbol, it is little wonder that Jesus remarked that “‘someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me’” (Lk 8:46). In the light of this explanation, can Jesus be construed as a shaman? Can he be said to have practiced an ancient form of Nazarene shamanism?

(c) Principle of Incarnation. God has created all persons and things good, and they are pleasing in God’s sight. In Jesus, God has come *personally* to affirm that goodness in persons and the world. Through the incarnation God has restored wholeness to human beings and society, so that abundant or fullness of life means good health, justice and peace in society, harmony between creation/environment/nature and humankind. God has done it through many persons (prophets, priests, Jesus and the apostles), God’s presence continues through the abiding presence of God’s Spirit. Pentecost can be understood as God’s *pneumatological incarnation* in the world. The world, including indigenous shamanism (with its shamanic knowledge of the many worlds) is “shot through” with God’s pneumatological presence. All spirits are under the influence of God’s abiding Spirit, except for those spirits which continue the history of sin through the mediation of ill-intentioned shamans. God, who once was God-in-person and now is God-with-us-in-Spirit, can continue God’s salvific mission through many other persons today, including

shamans, to bring bodily healing, to cast out evil spirits, and restore fullness and wholeness of life to creation and humankind.

(d) Principle of Resurrection. The forces of evil and structural injustices (social sins and personal sins) can never abort (let alone bury) God’s effort to bring about wholeness and fullness of life to creation and humankind. The Cross points away from itself, always forward, to the God *who lives on and beyond* every conceivable conniving plot and lustful power-struggle of wicked humankind. The empty tomb points to a God who triumphs over the forces of death, defeating the power of the all-evil spirits in the world. The resurrection of Jesus is God’s victorious power over the death-dealing forces. Through the insurmountable power of God, God has broken *down* the walls of human conspiracy and broken Godself free from all the entombing forces. The God who has risen now becomes the life-giving Risen lord who is at liberty to use any religious system to bring God’s healing, reconciliation, justice and peace. God who is above the monopoly of any one religious system is at full liberty to choose anyone of them, even indigenous shamanism, to be the salvific means of healing and reconciliation in the world.

(e) Principle of Pneuma. All of creation is filled with God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit is life-giving and life-sustaining. The *Pneuma* recreates the primal chaos, and creation, to bring forth orderliness and splendour. The *Pneuma* has been a creative agent of God, from creation to incarnation and Pentecost and thereafter. The *Pneuma* continues to be God’s creative agent in and through the many diverse religious systems in the world today. Can God not employ the *Pneuma* as God’s salvific agent to bring about a “new creation” between the sick and the many worlds through indigenous shamanism? Especially by restoring a sense of balance, interconnectedness and harmony between the animal world, plant world, human world and the spirit world” Can we actually deny God’s *Pneuma* a creative role in and through indigenous shamanism and shamans?

(f) Principle of ‘Sound Tree’. Based on the five principles, the Church needs to recognize that indigenous shamanism is a part of God’s creation and therefore salvific, since it is inseparable from God’s redemptive plan, that was already fulfilled in Jesus and now, carried on by God’s Spirit. Shamans who practise indigenous shamanism can be regarded as salvific symbols, especially when they are well-tested and attested members of the community, who practice what is honest and honourable to uphold the common good in the community. They are “like gold in a crucible”, because they are like the sound trees that bear good fruit. Luke’s Gospel reminds us that “no

good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit: for each tree is known by its own fruit. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good; and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks, the hands perform, the feet dance, the shaman heals and exorcises (Lk 6: 43-15). Is it not true that not everyone who cries out “Lord, Lord” (Mt 7:21) will enter into the Kingdom of God, but only those who do the will of my *Abba* in heaven”? Is it not interesting that when John complained (Mk 9:38), “Master, we saw someone who is not one of us driving out devils in your name, and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him”, Jesus protested vehemently (Mk 9:39-40), ‘you must not stop him; no one who works a miracle in my name could soon afterwards speak evil of me. *Anyone who is not against us is with us?*”. Can we then conclude that shamans, who bring healing and restore wholeness of life to the sick through shamanic rituals, are doing the will of God? Since they are already in God’s Kingdom?

With the explanation of the biblico-theological principles, I would now like to attempt to “generate” some missiological models for missions that enable the Church to respond to the shifting theological landscape of Asia and the cries of the indigenous peoples.

VII. Missiological Models

First, by way of an overview, let me examine the models of the past. Gideon C. Goosen, in his study of the cultural interface between Christianity and Australian Aborigines, discussed two missionary models (Goosen 199:72-94). The first model used by the European missionaries was *total imposition*. The locals were regarded as *tabula rasa* — they were thought to have no beliefs in their cultures/lives. The aim was to make them Christians alienated from their milieu. When this failed, the *civilization model* was used instead. The motto then was *civilize and Christianize!* The locals have to become Europeans in order to become Christians. Often, the local indigenous peoples were made to despise their own culture, language and customs; and hence deny their identity (partial or outright).

With this short historical survey, I would like to propose four missiological models; namely; mission as countercultural; triple dialogue; reverse; and contemplative silence. Each of these models will be explained in relation to the indigenous peoples.

1. Mission as Countercultural

In a world where indigenous peoples are being exploited and manipulated, to act in solidarity with them in their struggle for cultural self-determination

is itself countercultural. Such countercultural praxis disposes the Church to make a prophetic difference in a given society and culture.

In the Old Testament, amidst a nation plagued by injustice, the call of the prophets to practice justice and love is a call to be countercultural. This is demonstrated by Isaiah and Hosea who challenged the Israelites to uphold a countercultural lifestyle: “Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Is 1:16-17); “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6). Only a countercultural lifestyle is symbolic of the Israelites’ covenantal fidelity to God.

The New Testament teaching of Jesus on mutual forgiveness in a culture with a vengeful spirit of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Mt 5:39) is indeed countercultural. Matthew suggests to his community “to turn the other cheek” when one is struck. He further recommends, “love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt 5:44), Matthew grounds such countercultural behaviour in the understanding of a magnanimous God “who makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteousness and on the unrighteous” (Mt 5:45).

Jesus’ unashamed and unperturbed association with sinners and tax collectors (Mt 9: 10-13, Mk 2:15-17, Lk 15:1-10) in the meal/table fellowship was a countercultural praxis which broke down the many oppressive restrictions that separated the “clean” from the “unclean”. Even more radical was Jesus’ highly countercultural and controversial declarations: “In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, showing the way of uprightness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did” (Mt 21:31). Jesus also praised the sacrifice and generosity of the poor widow more than the surplus donation of the wealthy: “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than any of them; for these have all put in money they could spare, but she gave everything she had to live on” (Lk 21:1-4).

In a Jewish culture which denied the dignity and rights of women (who are neither heard nor seen), Jesus formed a countercultural community which allowed women to claim their rightful place and voice. He has allowed women to be his disciples: “Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, an Suzanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources” (Lk 8:2-3). He forgave women their sins (even when caught in adultery) (Jn 8:11), and allowed a woman who was a

sinner to be publicly associated with him when she wiped his feet with her hair (Lk 7:37-49).

In matters of faith and salvation, Jesus shattered this contemporary insular and exclusive mentality with his counterculture pronouncements. To the Roman centurion, he said: "I tell you, nowhere in Israel have I found faith as great as this.... Go back, then: let this be done for you, as your faith demands (Mt 8:10,13). Then to the Syro-Phoenecian woman, he said, "For saying that, you may go — the demon has gone out of your daughter" (Mk 7:29).

"The countercultural model is relevant to the Church's mission in that it re-*presents* the radicality of Jesus' ministry in the Church's solidarity with the indigenous peoples. This model enjoins the Church to stand together with the indigenous people in their struggle to live as full and equal citizens, by shattering the many discriminatory and oppressive restrictions that continue to erase their cultural identity, repress their collective agency and deny their concerted efforts aimed at self-determination.

2. Mission As Triple Dialogue

Asia prides itself on its plurality of primal and traditional religions, cultures and traditions. At the same time, the scandalous poverty suffered by the marginalized and oppressed in Asia is an affront to God. In this context, the Asian Bishops explain mission as a triple dialogue: with the poor, the different cultures, and religions (Synod 1999: n. 5).

In order to carry out its triple mission effectively among the indigenous peoples, the Church's mission first and foremost is to initiate a dialogue of life that fosters a sense of solidarity with them. Only an abiding sense of solidarity will dispose the indigenous peoples to invest in a trusting relationship with the Church. This relationship becomes the basis by which they entrust their problems to the Church and call upon the Church to respond to their plight. It is expedient that the Church respond to their plight by deploying its resources, be it personnel or otherwise, that will facilitate the triple dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue with indigenous peoples of diverse cultures will certainly deepen the Church's understanding and appreciation of their aspirations, hopes, struggles, their traditional values, worldviews, beliefs, rites, myths, and cultural symbols. This familiarization with how indigenous peoples value their intimate connection between Creation/nature and humankind, community life, the sharing of goods and services, the celebration of life's joys and

tragedies, will enrich the life of the Church. At the same time, the Church will be challenged to promote these cultural values in a world so plagued by unbridled consumerism that it has little regard for the environment and the marginalized. This enrichment will enable the Church, especially in its catechesis and liturgy and theology, to express the Christian message in and through the indigenous cultures. The openness and sensitivity shown by the Church will dispose it to enter the struggle of the indigenous peoples to determine and promote their cultural identity and development.

Dialogue with the primal religions enables the Church to realize that the mystery of God is beyond the Church. God's Spirit is operative through indigenous shamanism to bring about wholeness of human life through the healing rituals for the sick. Indigenous shamans are the existential symbols of the continuity of their cultures and collective memory. The continuous practice of shamanism indicates the vibrancy of a cultural worldview which promotes the "many worlds" in the one Creation of God, regarded as a "seamless whole" by indigenous cultures. This worldview is subverting the scientific worldview that the world is merely one-dimensional. The process of globalization, manipulated by neoliberal capitalism, has lent impetus to this scientific rationality. The globally-targeted efforts to topple, and/or erase, the many cultural worldviews into one are being challenged and resisted by peoples of other cultures. As it stands, the dialectic tension is far from being resolved. In fact, the cultural battle between the "many into one" and the "many in one" will continue in the third millennium (see Fung 2000:192-193).

For reasons that the mystery of God is uniquely revealed to Christianity as *Abba* in the person of Jesus Christ, the dialogue with the primal religions need not neglect proclaiming that Jesus is the message and the agent of the message. In the words of Chito Tagle, "He is the message to be proclaimed; He is the Missioner *that must do the work*.... If Jesus is not the Message, if Jesus is not both the Message and the Missioner for us, then we might be betraying His being the Saviour. For Him to be the Only Saviour means He is not the Message but also the one who will do His mission" (quoted in Kroeger 1999:94). Yet, this proclamation in Asia is unique. It calls for the witness of Christians and of Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, *a proclamation through Christlike deeds*. For Christians in Asia to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbours of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace.

The Church in Asia has realized that God is operative in the primal religions of the indigenous

peoples too. Mission as triple dialogue will foster a richer exchange and relationship between the indigenous peoples and the Church, which has never been envisaged before. This mission will enable the Church to become truly a Church *of* rather than merely *for* the indigenous peoples.

3. Mission in Reverse

When we allow ourselves to be evangelized by the indigenous peoples, mission in reverse occurs (see Bevans, Schreiter, Doidge, eds. 2000). In other words, the Church has much to receive from those among whom the Church is inserted. A genuine interaction will allow the indigenous peoples to help the Church to unlearn its many cultural and theological biases about them.

Jesus too had to learn how to unlearn Himself. The account of a Syrophenician woman who begged Jesus to cast the demon of her daughter, his remark, "let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it the dogs" (Mk 7:27), reveals an age-old Jewish bias against the Gentiles. The Jews in Jesus' time not only despised the Gentiles but regarded them as outside of God's salvific plan. Her reply truly shattered the boundary between the Jews and the Gentiles, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (v. 28). Her argument that all persons are saved by God, as both Jews and Gentiles ate of the food from the table of God, won Jesus' heart. Jesus divested himself of an ethnocentric bias and acted upon her request, "For saying that, you may go — the demon has gone out of your daughter" (v. 29).

Only when the Church is emptied of its biases and self-importance will it be able to receive not just the richness of their cultures but their constructive criticism as well. It is when the Church is enriched that it can enrich the indigenous peoples in return. When enriched, the Church will be in a better position to respond to their needs for the basic necessities of life; and, later on, for justice, peace and human rights.

This model is necessary for the Church to shed its supposedly exclusive monopoly of God's salvific power and humbly learn that God is God of the Church and of the indigenous peoples, who may not even be baptized members of the Church; but are already *in fellowship* with God in ways yet unknown to us but know only to God.

4. Mission As Contemplative Silence

The Church enjoys a rich tradition of contemplative silence. Likewise, indigenous peoples value solitude as a

means of deepening their communion with the many worlds within their worldview.

John Paul II underlines this mission in the document *Ecclesia in Asia*. He believes that "mission is contemplative action and active contemplation", because in Asia, "home to great religions where individuals and entire peoples are thirsting for the divine, the Church is called to be a praying Church, deeply spiritual even as she engages in immediate human and social concerns" (EA 1999: n. 23). In many countries, contemplative silence is the only missionary option, because explicit celebration of the Christian faith is forbidden, due to a dire lack of religious tolerance. In such an environment, "the Church realizes that the silent witness of life still remains the only way of proclaiming God's Kingdom" (*ibid.*).

Cardinal Julius R. Darmaatmadja, President Delegate of the 1999 Asian Synod in Rome, underlined this model of mission as contemplative silence:

In Asia, the medium of approaching the Absolute or Divine is not word but silence. For Asians, Christ is most suitably made known personally, through human experiences more than through academics. The most effective and credible proclamation of the Risen Lord is the unspoken witness of a person who has undergone a deep God-experience; and whose life is transformed accordingly. The credibility of the evangelizer lies in his/her being a wo/man of God more than a scholar; in being a person who lives simply but with depth; a spiritual person rather than an expert in the field of development (Darmaatmadja 1998:9).

This model introduces the Church to the core of the mystery of God's mission in relation to the world. Much of God's mission is known, and yet unknown, to the Church. Yet, only in contemplative silence is the Church privileged with a glimpse of God's universal inclusiveness of God's people, who are steeped in their indigenous cultures and cultural practices, such as indigenous shamanism. Hopefully the Church will be able to grasp a part of God's "veiled" mission amongst the indigenous peoples of our times.

Conclusion

This continuous effort of rethinking the mission of the Asian Church in relation to the indigenous peoples is necessary in the new millennium, to enable the Church to enter into an effective collaborative ministry with the indigenous peoples. The noticeable changes in the theological landscape signify an inherent paradigm shift in missiology. This shift calls for a deeper study of indigenous cultures, especially

the practice of indigenous shamanism. Anthropological findings enable the Church to discern further, and to acknowledge that indigenous shamanism is truly the *locus* where God's salvific actions are operative for the general well-being of the indigenous communities, humankind, and creation as a whole.

With God's salvific actions operative in indigenous culture, the Church needs to honour the indigenous capacity for epistemological differentiation; and to consider the rites of passage as effective and sacred *in themselves*. The theological principles related to creation, the Christ-event and the *Pneuma* challenge the Church to accord greater credence to the practice of indigenous shamanism and shamans. The indigenous logic of "many in the one", as opposed to the rationality of "many into one", underlines the theological understanding that God is the God of all, over all and through all, because God who is Spirit is omnipresent in all cultures and the many worlds, in the one seamless Creation.

The four ensuing mission models call upon the Church to be the effective means of God's universal plan of salvation for indigenous peoples around the world. A Church that engages itself in mission, understood as a triple dialogue, mission in reverse, and contemplative silence enables the Church to be countercultural in the context of the many poor, the diverse cultures, and different religions of Asia. In other words, to be a countercultural agent, the Church needs to engage in the triple dialogue that allows its cultural and theological ethnocentricity to be critiqued and shattered by indigenous peoples. At the same time, the Church learns from indigenous peoples how to be of service to them, so as to empower them to engage effectively in their own struggle for self-determination. Ultimately, this countercultural mission allows Jesus to carry out his prophetic mission through the Church in our time, a mission that is carried out through contemplative actions and contemplative silence.

In this way, the diverse indigenous cultures in Asia are truly the *loci* of God's self-communication and salvific actions in the world. The mission of the Church is to collaborate with the God who precedes the Church, since God is already *in mission* among the indigenous peoples.

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“L’émigration des Philippins : Chance ou handicap pour le pays ?”

- P. Michel de Gigord, MEP -

[NDLR – Les Philippines sont un pays d’émigration. Le fait est connu et son importance est souvent soulignée : 10 % de la population des Philippines vivraient à l’étranger et seraient partis chercher fortune à travers près de deux cents pays de la planète. Si la dimension économique du phénomène est connue – les revenus versés chaque année aux Philippiniens par les émigrés philippins sont quantifiables — les conséquences humaines, sociales, culturelles, voire religieuses et politiques de cette émigration pour les Philippines même sont moins bien évaluées. Très peu d’études existent sur le sujet. Une administration d’Etat et l’Eglise catholique vont lancer prochainement une enquête sur les conséquences sociales de l’émigration massive des Philippins. En attendant la publication de ce travail, le P. Michel de Gigord, prêtre de la Société des Missions Etrangères, missionnaire aux Philippines de 1982 à 2002, défriche ce terrain d’études par une analyse des causes et des effets de cette émigration sur le pays, sa population et l’Eglise catholique.

Les Philippines sont sans doute l’un des pays au monde, avec le Mexique, les plus touchés par le phénomène de l’émigration. Ce n’est pas un phénomène récent. Les Philippines ont connu quatre vagues d’émigration. La première, au début du siècle dernier, concernait surtout des travailleurs envoyés dans de grandes plantations aux Etats-Unis, à Guam et à Hawaï. La deuxième, dans les années 1950, consistait essentiellement en médecins, infirmières et ingénieurs, surtout vers les Etats-Unis et l’Europe. La troisième, dans les années 1980, d’une ampleur incomparable avec les deux précédentes, consistait essentiellement en ouvriers qualifiés et non qualifiés vers les pays du Moyen-Orient. La quatrième a commencé dès le début des années 1990. Elle est d’une ampleur considérable et ne cesse de croître. Elle concerne toutes sortes de métiers. Elle est de plus en plus féminine (sur dix départs, six concernent des femmes), elle part tous azimuts.

L’émigration : un phénomène considérable

Les données permettant de chiffrer cette émigration sont rares et relativement éparpillées mais permettent d’entrevoir l’importance du phénomène. Ces chiffres proviennent essentiellement de trois sources : l’Office national des statistiques des Philippines, le Bureau philippin pour l’emploi outre-mer et la Commission épiscopale des migrants (ECMI), organe de la Conférence des évêques catholiques des Philippines. Ils couvrent les années 2000, 2001, 2002.

En 2002, la population des Philippines était de

76,5 millions personnes et le nombre des Philippins à l’étranger de 7,41 millions, soit à peu près 10% de la population totale. Ce chiffre se décompose comme suit : 3 050 000 travailleurs contractuels, 2 740 000 résidents permanents, 1 620 000 travailleurs sans papiers. Les résidents permanents se trouvent essentiellement aux Etats-Unis (2 141 000), au Canada (290 000) et en Australie (204 396). Quant aux travailleurs sous contrat, ils quittent les Philippines au rythme de 2 400 par jour !

En 2001, les principales destinations des migrants ont été les pays suivants :

	Nombre de départs en 2001	Communauté philippine totale
Arabie saoudite	190 732	626 301
Hongkong	113 583	157 831
Japon	74 093	175 033
Emirats Arabes Unis	44 631	74 450
Taiwan	38 311	178 288
Singapour	26 305	114 725
Italie	21 956	186 679
Koweït	21 641	64 459
Brunei	13 068	—
Qatar	10 769	—

En fait, on trouve des Philippins dans 193 des 224 pays que comptent les Nations Unies : 1 032 733 au Moyen-Orient, 914 146 en Asie, 498 018 en Europe, 252 776 en Amérique, 38 495 en Océanie et 26 644 en Afrique. Il s’agit ici des travailleurs contractuels seulement.

A titre indicatif, en France, selon l’ambassade des

Philippines à Paris, il y aurait de 40 à 50 000 Philippines dont la moitié vivent en région parisienne. L'ambassade se dit incapable de fournir une évaluation plus précise étant donné l'importance du nombre de Philippines résidant en France sans titre de séjour valable. Selon l'ONG Babaylan, basée aux Philippines, les Philippines vivant en France ne seraient que de 25 à 40 000.

Sur les 15 271 000 familles que comptent les Philippines, sept millions sont touchées par l'émigration. Comme on compte une moyenne de trois enfants par famille, il en ressort que plus de vingt millions d'enfants et d'adolescents sont directement affectés par l'émigration d'un ou de leurs deux parents. Cela représente un quart de la population des Philippines !

«A l'inverse des Indiens qui occupent des emplois essentiellement médicaux et technologiques, les Philippines sont présents dans tous les domaines d'activités. Ils ou elles sont domestiques, ingénieurs, infirmières, maçons, enseignants, fermiers, marins, sténographes, coiffeurs, grutiers, cuisiniers ou artistes» (Courrier International du 3-9 octobre 2002). Il faut, cependant, s'arrêter sur quatre métiers qui jouent un rôle prépondérant.

1) Les marins d'abord. Ils étaient 204 000 en 2002, soit à peu près 20% de la population totale des marins du globe, ce qui fait des Philippines le premier pays pourvoyeur de marins du monde. Ils seraient 250 000 aujourd'hui !

2) Les «artistes» ensuite. Ils forment en gros un cinquième de tous les travailleurs contractuels. S'il est vrai que les Philippines et Philippines sont de très bons musiciens, chanteurs et danseurs, il est malheureusement vrai aussi que de très nombreux travailleurs, surtout des femmes, embauchés comme artistes, finissent dans la prostitution, surtout au Japon.

3) Les employées de maison encore. Elles sont innombrables au Moyen-Orient, y sont souvent traitées comme de véritables esclaves et il n'est pas rare qu'elles soient abusées sexuellement. On trouve également un minorité d'hommes employés comme domestiques.

4) Les infirmières enfin. Elles sont environ 14 000 à partir chaque années vers 31 pays différents. Très proche de ce métier d'infirmière, il y a celui d'aide-soignante ou d'assistant à domicile (pour les hommes aussi) qui prend une ampleur de plus en plus grande. De nombreuses universités aux Philippines offrent des diplômes en ce domaine qui sont très convoités. Il y a une demande très forte provenant principalement des pays occidentaux.

Un dernier chiffre, dramatique celui-là : en moyenne, 1,75 corps de travailleurs émigrés sont rapatriés chaque jour aux Philippines. Les causes de ces décès sont multiples, allant de maladies aux accidents de travail, en passant par des meurtres et des condamnations à mort, en Arabie saoudite principalement.

Ces quelques chiffres suffisent à montrer que le problème de l'émigration aux Philippines est très loin d'être une question marginale et sans effet sur la société philippine elle-même.

Les raisons de l'émigration

Pourquoi donc une telle amplitude ? Il y a sans doute plusieurs réponses à cette question.

Un des romanciers contemporains les plus célèbres des Philippines, Francisco Sionil José, a écrit tout récemment un livre intitulé *Viajero* qu'on pourrait presque traduire par *Migrant*. Il y montre combien le voyage, le départ, le déplacement font partie de l'âme philippine, peut-être à cause de la configuration du pays, peut-être aussi à cause de son histoire.

Il y a l'attrait quasi magique qu'exercent sur les Philippines les Etats-Unis, le Canada et l'Australie, pays où, comme on l'a vu, se trouvent la majorité des Philippines en résidence permanente. Ces pays font figure de véritables pays de cocagne «où ruissent le lait et le miel», du moins c'est ce que pensent les Philippines. Mythe qui, en tout cas, est entretenu par ces pays mêmes, car, en fait, ils ont besoin de main d'œuvre étrangère et les Philippines y sont bien accueillis.

Il y a encore la pression démographique. Les Philippines ayant une superficie de 300 439 km² et une population de 76,5 millions de personnes, cela fait une densité moyenne de 254 hab./km². Mais cette population est concentrée sur les quelques rares plaines du pays et les bandes côtières où la densité devient très grande.

Il y a enfin la pauvreté économique des Philippines, due à plusieurs raisons qui ne seront pas analysées ici en détail car cela a déjà été fait dans de nombreux autres articles mais raisons qu'il est bon de mentionner ici pour mémoire :

- Pays à vocation essentiellement agricole et maritime, ses terres et ses mers ont été exploitées à outrance. On cite les chiffres de 80% de la couverture forestière, 80% des récifs de corail et 90% des palétuviers qui auraient disparu dans les cinquante dernières années. On parle aussi de l'appauvrissement des sols à cause de l'usage systématique d'engrais chimiques dans les gigantesques plantations, couvrant plusieurs milliers d'hectares chacune, de bananes, de cannes à sucre et d'ananas pour ne mentionner que les plus importantes.

- Les Philippines ne peuvent compter sur aucune «rente» provenant de l'exploitation de matières premières ou d'hydrocarbures.

- Une gestion catastrophique de l'économie surtout depuis l'époque de Marcos qui a, entre autres choses, fait des Philippines un des pays les plus corrompus du monde. On estime que la corruption a représenté 53,3 milliards de dollars en 2001, équivalent à 8% du Produit intérieur brut. Selon certains rapports, plus de 40% du budget national sont utilisés

pour le seul paiement des intérêts de la dette publique.

- Des catastrophes naturelles incessantes qui grèvent le budget de l'Etat.

- Les rébellions communiste et musulmane qui elles aussi entraînent des dépenses conséquentes, pour le maintien d'une armée importante et par les destructions qu'elles provoquent.

A elle seule, la pauvreté économique suffirait à expliquer l'importance de l'émigration que connaissent les Philippines. Plus de 50% de la population des Philippines vivent en dessous du seuil de pauvreté. En octobre 2002, le ministre de l'Emploi et du Travail estimait que, sur une population active de 33,7 millions de personnes aux Philippines, 18,6 millions avaient un emploi salarié à plein temps, les chômeurs étant 3,4 millions. Cela fait 11,4 millions d'autres qui sont en sous-emploi. Et quand on connaît les salaires de ceux qui sont en plein emploi, on comprend que les Philippins soient attirés par le travail à l'étranger !

En voici deux exemples concrets :

Selon Maria Linda Buhat, présidente de l'Association des administrateurs des Services infirmiers des Philippines, les infirmières vont à l'étranger à cause de la faiblesse des salaires aux Philippines et du manque de perspectives d'emploi. A l'étranger, les salaires peuvent monter jusqu'à 3 ou 4 000 dollars par mois alors qu'ils vont de 150 à 170 dollars dans les grandes villes philippines. Ils descendent à 75-95 dollars en zone rurale.

Dans le secteur éducatif, de nombreuses écoles se plaignent du départ de leurs enseignants aux Etats-Unis. Des sociétés américaines se sont spécialisées dans le démarchage d'enseignants philippins parce qu'ils maîtrisent bien l'anglais et sont «*efficaces, travailleurs, patients et dévoués*», témoigne Yolly Silang, responsable des opérations de *Consortium Incorporated*, société basée au Texas. Maria Edna Villania, enseignante dans une école de Makati, quartier des affaires de Manille et nettement plus prospère que la moyenne nationale, avoue être prête à dépenser 500 000 pesos pour les frais de voyage et de stage. Villania, 37 ans, espère, en travaillant à l'étranger, payer l'université à sa plus jeune sœur. Elle explique s'être décidée après avoir assisté à un séminaire d'orientation organisé par une société américaine en mars 2001 où on lui a dit que le salaire initial était de 3 000 dollars mensuels (environ 150 000 pesos), plus assurance et couverture sociale. Villania a enseigné cinq ans dans une école de Quezon où elle reçoit un salaire mensuel équivalent à 166 dollars américains (8 632 pesos).

Les effets de l'émigration sur le pays et sa population

Venons en maintenant à l'analyse des effets de

cette considérable émigration sur le pays lui-même.

Interrogé par l'auteur de cet article en mars 2003, le P. Paulo Prigol, de la Société des prêtres de Scalabrini et secrétaire général de la Commission épiscopale des migrants (ECMI, aux Philippines), dit que la «*société des Philippines en général et l'Eglise des Philippines en particulier ne sont pas vraiment conscientes de toutes les retombées de l'émigration massive sur la société et l'Eglise. Peu d'études en profondeur ont été faites sur ce sujet et il y a là un champ d'étude crucial pour l'avenir des Philippines. Aussi, une enquête de grande envergure va être lancée conjointement par un organisme de l'Etat, l'Administration pour le bien-être des travailleurs à l'étranger (OWWA, aux Philippines) et par deux organismes de l'Eglise : l'ECMI et l'Apostolat de la mer (AOS aux Philippines). Cette enquête sera menée auprès des familles restées aux Philippines et s'efforcera de tenir compte de toutes les dimensions du problème, à savoir économique, sociale, culturelle, psychologique et religieuse*». Cette enquête, selon le P. Prigol, démarrera en décembre 2003. Elle s'étalera sur plusieurs mois.

L'aspect qui a été le plus étudié pour le moment est celui des retombées économiques de l'émigration pour le pays. Mais, ce qui a été la thèse principale jusqu'ici, thèse très largement reprise sinon clairomnée par le gouvernement à savoir le bienfait économique évident de l'émigration pour le développement des Philippines, commence à être remise en question.

Jusqu'ici on ne parlait qu'en bien de l'émigration :

- Elle permettait d'alléger le problème du chômage et du sous emploi dont on a parlé brièvement plus haut.

- Elle permettait à de nombreux travailleurs d'acquérir de nouvelles qualifications qui seraient utiles au pays plus tard.

- Elle était, en quelque sorte, une vitrine du savoir-faire philippin et pouvait ainsi encourager des investisseurs à venir investir aux Philippines.

- Mais, et surtout, elle était une sorte de poumon financier dont les Philippines seraient bien incapables de se passer.

«*Les virements bancaires effectués électroniquement par les émigrés à leurs familles représentent 8,2% du Produit national brut des Philippines. Ces virements stabilisent le peso et augmentent les réserves de devises, ce qui contribue à accroître la consommation et réduire le taux de chômage. L'an passé, les émi-grés philippins ont envoyé dans leur pays 6,2 milliards de dollars. 'C'est une industrie', admet Patricia Santo Tomas, ministre du Travail et de l'Emploi*» (*Courrier International*, n° 622, 3-9 octobre 2002).

De 1995 à 2002, les sommes rapatriées aux Philippines par les émigrés ont oscillé entre 5,5 et 8,5 milliards de dollars par an. Elles constituent la deuxième source de devises pour le pays. Ces seuls chiffres montrent bien le poids économique considérable de l'émigration. Voici les quatre remarques les plus importantes qu'on entend à ce sujet.

1) La démobilisation du gouvernement : ce dernier s'appuyant sur les chiffres cités plus haut et comptant sur les besoins des pays riches qui semblent ne faire qu'augmenter pour une main-d'œuvre à bon marché ne prend pas vraiment à bras le corps le problème de la pauvreté du pays pour y trouver des remèdes. L'émigration fait fonction de soupape de sécurité par où s'écoule le «surplus» de main-d'œuvre philippine qui ne trouve pas à s'employer au pays.

2) La fuite des cerveaux : pour certains, il ne s'agit pas de fuite mais d'une véritable hémorragie. *«Tout le monde semble quitter le pays ou du moins vouloir quitter le pays. C'est bien l'impression qu'on a quand on entend parler de tant de jeunes professionnels qui ont déjà quitté le pays ou sont en train de préparer leur départ.*

Un grand nombre de ces professionnels sont des infirmiers et infirmières attirés par les appels d'offre de travail provenant des Etats-Unis et de l'Europe où les salaires, une fois convertis en peso, apparaissent comme astronomiques comparés aux miettes qu'ils reçoivent dans leur pays. Il y a de nombreuses infirmières qui quittent leur emploi une fois que leur papiers ont été approuvés ou de diplômées en infirmerie qui travaillent dans les secteurs qui n'ont rien à voir avec la médecine et qui quittent leur travail pour redevenir infirmières à l'étranger. Il y a aussi des histoires d'autres professionnels, docteurs, avocats, entrepreneurs et ingénieurs, qui retournent à l'université pour y acquérir un diplôme d'infirmier ou d'infirmière étant donné la demande incroyable qu'il y a pour ces derniers à l'étranger. Des diplômés récents ou d'autres avec une longue expérience d'enseignement quittent aussi les Philippines pour aller enseigner aux Etats-Unis, au Canada, et en Australie. Et il y a d'autres professionnels qui simplement font leurs bagages, quittent tout et recommencent à zéro n'importe où ils sont accueillis. Qu'ils aient dû lutter ou aient été performants dans leur métier, ils voient un avenir meilleur pour eux et pour leurs familles dans les pays qui les reçoivent, même si cela signifie qu'ils doivent travailler deux fois plus, au moins au départ.

*Depuis tant d'années déjà, les Philippines ont perdu au profit d'autres pays leur meilleure ressource, à savoir leurs hommes et leurs femmes, parce qu'elles ne peuvent pas fournir suffisamment de travail et ne peuvent pas offrir de salaires décentes. La fuite des cerveaux dont nous faisons l'expérience aujourd'hui est une étape particulièrement inquiétante dans l'histoire de notre émigration parce qu'elle signifie que nos professionnels sont en train de perdre espoir dans leur pays. C'est vraiment alarmant parce que tout semble indiquer que cela va continuer. Cela a de très sérieuses implications pour le pays car si l'on continue à perdre les gens qui devraient jouer un rôle vital dans les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation et de l'économie, alors, où va le pays ?» (Ce passage est une traduction de l'éditorial d'*Intersect*, journal produit par l'université jésuite de Manille, l'*Ateneo*, dont le volume 17, n° 5, de juin 2002 est entièrement consacré au problème de l'émigration).*

3) L'abaissement du niveau professionnel des émigrés : c'est une tragédie de voir que l'immense majorité des Philippins et Philippines qui travaillent à

l'étranger comme simples ouvriers, simples marins, simples employés de maison ou même comme prostitués et prostituées sont, en fait, des diplômés de l'université. Leur travail à l'étranger correspond à un accroissement de salaire mais certainement pas à une promotion professionnelle. Lorsqu'ils retournent au pays, ils ne peuvent guère participer à son développement économique. Bien sûr, il y a aussi de nombreux exemples d'émigrés qui réussissent très bien à l'étranger, acquièrent des compétences professionnelles beaucoup plus élevées que celles qu'ils avaient au départ et montent dans l'échelle sociale mais, malheureusement, la plupart de ces derniers ne reviennent plus aux Philippines.

«Pour le directeur de la Banque centrale des Philippines, Rafael Buenaventura, avoir des travailleurs qualifiés partout dans le monde est une publicité vivante pour son pays. Buenaventura aime à imaginer que des entreprises du monde entier choisissent son archipel pour venir y implanter leur siège social et leurs usines, permettant ainsi à un million de mères de ne plus travailler qu'à quelques minutes de chez elles. Pousser les Philippins à aller travailler hors des frontières nationales sera payant un jour. «Aujourd'hui, dit-il, il est trop tard pour être compétitif dans le domaine industriel. Le plus grand atout que nous ayons, c'est de la main-d'œuvre qui parle anglais. C'est pour cette raison que les entreprises étrangères pourraient choisir de se délocaliser et de venir s'établir ici. Si nous arrivons un jour à nous sortir de la situation dans laquelle nous nous trouvons, nous pourrions nous aussi, comme l'Irlande, faire revenir notre main-d'œuvre qualifiée. Il n'y aura plus de transferts de fonds, mais cela fournira du travail et permettra d'accroître les recettes d'exportation». Pour le moment, cependant, il est difficile d'imaginer le renversement du flux migratoire. De nombreux Philippins considèrent en effet leur pays d'accueil plus attrayant que le leur. Parmi les sept millions de travailleurs émigrés, plus de deux millions ont choisi de rester définitivement à l'étranger, soit en bénéficiant d'une amnistie, soit en se faisant naturaliser» (Courrier International n° 622, du 3-9 octobre 2002).

4) Le mauvais usage de l'argent rapatrié : dans la plupart des cas, l'argent envoyé par les émigrés à leurs familles aux Philippines n'est pas réinvesti dans des projets économiques contribuant au développement du pays. Il est souvent, beaucoup trop souvent, simplement dépensé pour des biens de consommation immédiate : les dettes à payer, les besoins vitaux de la famille. Régulièrement, il sert également à payer les études des enfants. Enfin, il est souvent employé dans un but ostentatoire : construction d'une maison en dur, acquisition d'appareils électroménagers, d'ensembles hi-fi les plus impressionnants possibles, etc. Tout cela montre bien que les retombées économiques de l'émigration ne sont pas aussi évidentes qu'on veut bien le dire et ce n'est là qu'un aspect du problème.

Les conséquences socio-culturelles et religieuses de l'émigration

Il faut maintenant aborder les autres aspects qui sont socio-culturels et religieux. Tout le monde sait très bien aux Philippines que l'émigration massive de tant de gens a des conséquences négatives pour le pays sur les plans culturel, familial, psychologique et religieux. Mais peu de gens aiment à en parler et, quand ils en parlent, beaucoup font comme si il n'y avait là rien de grave. L'auteur de cet article se rappelle très bien de l'incident suivant. Au cours d'un stage de cinq semaines d'approfondissement de la langue cebuano à Davao, il avait été logé dans une famille dont le père et la mère étaient très impliqués dans leur paroisse. Leur maison paraissait de l'extérieur très modeste, voire pauvre, et était située dans un quartier lui-même défavorisé. Elle était pourtant remplie d'un nombre incroyable de toutes sortes d'appareils les plus modernes. Ces appareils leur étaient ramenés régulièrement du Japon où travaillaient trois de leurs filles, soi-disant comme chanteuses et danseuses. A voir les photos des filles là-bas au Japon, il était absolument évident qu'elles n'étaient pas que chanteuses et danseuses. Et pourtant leurs parents semblaient — ou plutôt avaient décidé d'être — complètement aveugles. Comme s'ils acceptaient sans question ce qui arrivait à leurs filles ! Contradiction vraiment difficile à comprendre de la part de personnes croyantes et fort sympathiques au demeurant.

Ou bien encore ce cas de parents offrant littéralement leur fille de 18 ans à un vieux sexagénaire étranger dans l'espoir d'un gain financier en retour. Ces cas sont d'ailleurs devenus si fréquents aux Philippines que certaines ambassades, comme celle de la France, ont un bureau spécial pour s'en occuper, essayant de décourager au maximum les candidats des deux côtés.

Ces deux exemples font ressortir un des aspects très graves de l'émigration : une espèce de perte du sens de la dignité de la personne alors que c'est une des qualités les plus fortes du peuple philippin. Pourvu qu'il y ait une retombée économique, on est prêt à accepter n'importe quoi pour soi ou pour un membre de sa famille. C'est dû, bien sûr, principalement à une pauvreté quelque fois vraiment effrayante (mais pas toujours) mais cela reste et restera une blessure profonde, une sorte d'insulte à la beauté et à la dignité de la personne humaine aux Philippines.

Quelques études ont malgré tout été menées aux Philippines pour étudier les conséquences sociales, psychologiques et culturelles de l'émigration mais elles n'ont pas été faites de façon systématique et ne proposent donc que des pistes de réflexion (il n'y a pas d'interviews sérieuses ni de résultats chiffrés). Parmi les meilleures on peut citer les deux suivantes :

- *Impact of Labor Migration on the Children Left*

Behind ('L'impact de l'émigration due au travail sur les enfants laissés au pays'). Il s'agit d'une étude faite en 1996 par la Commission 'Justice et paix' de la Conférence des évêques catholiques des Philippines.

- *Philippines Labour Migration – Critical dimension of Public Policy* ('L'émigration aux Philippines - Dimension critique d'une politique gouvernementale'). C'est une étude faite en 1998 par Joaquin L. Gonzales III de l'*Institute of Southeast Asian Studies* de Singapour.

Ces deux études, quelques articles plus récents et les rencontres faites par l'auteur aux Philippines en février-mars 2003 sont les sources principales de ce qui suit.

Au cours de la 17^e Journée des Migrants en mars 2003 (tous les ans, un dimanche est consacré par l'Eglise à une réflexion et une prière spéciale autour du problème de l'émigration), Mgr Pramon Arguelles, président de la Commission épiscopale pour la Pastorale des migrants (ECMI), affirmait que «*l'absence d'un ou des deux parents a forcément un impact négatif sur la croissance des enfants et sur les relations familiales, une situation qui tôt ou tard aura un effet sur la société toute entière*». Il rappelait que quelque 70% des Philippins ont au moins un parent émigré. Le même jour, le cardinal Vidal, archevêque de Cebu, demandait au gouvernement et au public en général de tout faire pour créer une situation qui permette le retour aux Philippines des émigrés. Dans son sermon à la cathédrale de Cebu, il loua les sacrifices que faisaient les émigrés et leurs familles mais il ajoutait aussitôt : «*Les milliards de dollars gagnés par les émigrés ne compenseront jamais la perte des valeurs morales et la séparation des familles que cause l'émigration*» (*Cebu Daily News*, 10 mars 2003).

Peut-on concrétiser ce que le cardinal Vidal appelle la perte des valeurs morales et la séparation des familles ? Qu'est ce que cela signifie en réalité ? Est ce vraiment une conséquence directe de l'émigration ? Il faut savoir que dans tous les livres qui parlent des Philippines, qu'ils soient écrits par des étrangers ou par des Philippins, on entend toujours dire que la famille est une institution fondamentale aux Philippines et qu'elle est d'une très grande solidité. Pour quelqu'un qui a vécu là bas pendant de nombreuses années, la chose n'est pas si évidente que cela. La famille philippine montre certes des signes de très grande force et d'unité. Les parents sont capables, par exemple, de faire des sacrifices incroyables pour que tous leurs enfants reçoivent une bonne éducation, surtout scolaire. Dans les familles nombreuses, le premier qui a fini ses études et trouve un travail consacre les trois quarts, sinon plus, de son salaire à aider ses parents pour la scolarisation de ses autres frères et sœurs. Et cela ne finit jamais car quand tous les frères et sœurs ont terminé leurs études, ils sont prêts à aider encore des cousins et puis très vite leurs neveux et nièces. C'est sans fin.

Autre exemple de la force de la famille aux Philippines : quand il y a un mort dans une famille, les funérailles ne sont faites que lorsque tous les membres de la famille sont de retour à la maison, auprès du mort. Cela peut durer très longtemps puisque beaucoup, justement, sont des émigrés. De même pour les grandes fêtes religieuses et la fête de la ville ou du village, tout le monde est censé revenir (mais pas cette fois les émigrés). On dit souvent qu'une bonne moitié des Philippins sont toujours en voyage à cause de cela. Mais, au même moment la famille philippine montre des signes de faiblesse : en particulier une infidélité conjugale très forte, une irresponsabilité du père endémique due à son infidélité, bien sûr, mais aussi au problème de l'alcoolisme et d'une grande violence (autoritarisme exagéré), une domination excessive du mari sur sa femme et, de la part de cette dernière, une soumission presque servile et, enfin, une espèce de démission vis-à-vis des garçons à qui on laisse faire presque tout dès un très jeune âge.

Ainsi l'analyse des retombées de l'émigration sur la famille dépend beaucoup de l'image qu'on a de la famille. Plus on en a une image positive, plus l'émigration apparaîtra comme négative par rapport aux dysfonctionnements de la famille aux Philippines qui, cela est une évidence, sont de plus en plus nombreux aujourd'hui.

Et pour compliquer les affaires, s'il semble vrai que ces dysfonctionnements sont dus à l'absence d'un ou des deux parents, il ne faut pas oublier que cette absence n'est pas due seulement à l'émigration mais aussi au taux croissant de séparations et de divorces dans les familles où il n'y a pas d'émigrés. Il faudrait donc pouvoir déterminer si les dysfonctionnements de la famille dus au divorce et ceux dus à l'émigration diffèrent significativement et quels sont ceux qui sont les plus graves. Ce qui est certain, en tout cas, c'est que l'ampleur à elle seule de l'émigration et donc de l'absence parentale qu'elle crée est telle qu'elle ne peut qu'avoir des répercussions sérieuses sur l'équilibre et l'harmonie des familles aux Philippines. On peut citer en vrac :

- l'infidélité redoublée des maris laissés seuls pendant plusieurs années soit à l'étranger dans le cas où ce sont eux qui émigrent, soit aux Philippines dans le cas où ce sont les femmes qui émigrent ;

- l'infidélité croissante aussi des femmes laissées seules aux Philippines (beaucoup plus que celles qui sont à l'étranger) ;

- l'affaiblissement relationnel inévitable entre les époux, de même qu'entre le ou les parents émigrés et les enfants ;

- la perte du rôle parental : le parent émigré n'est plus vu que comme un pourvoyeur d'argent et, quand il ou elle rentre à la maison pour un congé, on ne juge de sa valeur que par la quantité de choses qu'il ou elle

ramène. Et puis comme les enfants savent que leur père ou leur mère repartiront très vite, ils ne les écoutent pas. Il y a aussi comme un réflexe de défense : pourquoi s'efforcer de rétablir une relation émotionnelle avec son père ou sa mère puisque, de toute façon, il ou elle va repartir ?

- l'indépendance grandissante, donc, des enfants vis-à-vis de leurs parents avec tout ce que cela peut avoir de positif mais aussi de négatif, car c'est une indépendance qui parfois, malheureusement, se transforme en manque de respect, voire en rejet total. Mais cela reste très rare encore dans le contexte philippin.

Le P. Roland Doriot, jésuite, est à la fois aumônier de marins et aumônier de deux ou trois grandes écoles maritimes à Cebu. En tant que tel il connaît bien la situation des marins et celle de leurs familles restées aux Philippines. L'aumônerie du port qui s'appelle *Stella Maris Seaman's Center* publie un bulletin trimestriel *Ahoy* (c'est un cri typique des marins sur leurs bateaux). Dans ce bulletin, on trouve des témoignages intéressants et émouvants de femmes de marins et de leurs enfants. C'est ce genre de documents dont il faudrait multiplier l'étude pour se faire une idée précise des effets de l'émigration aux Philippines. Voici quelques extraits du bulletin *Ahoy* :

Dans la livraison de janvier-mars 2002, on trouve un article intitulé : « *Histoires jamais racontées de familles de marins* ». On peut y lire ceci : « *Quand on demande à des enfants de marins de dire quels sont les avantages d'avoir un père marin, à part la possibilité d'avoir une meilleure éducation, ce qui revient le plus souvent sur les lèvres des enfants interrogés, ce sont les avantages matériels*. Une fille de 15 ans : « *On peut lui demander facilement de l'argent* ». Un garçon : « *L'avantage pour moi, c'est qu'on peut avoir des vêtements à la mode et toutes les choses matérielles dont on a besoin* ». Un autre : « *J'apprécie la chance que j'ai quand mon père m'apporte une belle paire de chaussures mais il y a plus que les choses matérielles. Si je pouvais partager avec mon père une réelle joie, ce serait différent parce que la joie demeure, pas les chaussures* ». Cette citation montre que le besoin des enfants va bien au-delà des effets matériels. En fait, quelques uns des enfants interrogés voient derrière les cadeaux que leur font leurs pères un complexe de culpabilité. « *Je pense que, pour mon père, m'apporter des cadeaux est un moyen de compenser pour tout le temps qu'il n'a pas passé avec nous* », dit un jeune homme de 19 ans. La fille d'un marin dit à peu près la même chose : « *Je pense que mon père essaye de nous faire oublier son absence. Il a beau dire que c'est un cadeau, j'ai le sentiment profond qu'il veut se racheter pour tout le temps où il n'a pas été avec nous* ». La mémoire de ce « *temps perdu* » et de l'absence de leur père reste avec les enfants longtemps. C'est surtout la mémoire des jours particuliers comme Noël ou un anniversaire ou le jour de la remise d'un diplôme. « *C'est surtout ces jours spéciaux quand on a réussi quelque chose et que vous voulez le partager avec votre famille. Et puis, vous réalisez*

qu'un des membres de votre famille n'est pas là et donc ne peut pas partager votre bonheur. Il y a ainsi des jours où vous ressentez avec très grande force le besoin de votre père. Et il n'est pas là».

Les longues absences de leurs pères ont aussi des aspects négatifs quant à la relation de leurs enfants avec eux. Comme le dit une jeune fille, *«le lien avec mon père a été cassé dès mon enfance. Nous ne parlons jamais. Nous n'avons jamais échangé d'idées ou quoi que ce soit».* Une autre dit ceci : *«Je me suis habituée à l'idée que mon père n'est pas là. J'étais une petite fille quand il est parti, c'est pourquoi je suis habituée maintenant. Il me manque un peu, je lui envoie des lettres quelquefois mais la vie est ainsi, il n'y a rien à faire».*

Sans aucune exception, les enfants interrogés disent que, si leur père était à la maison, ils se sentiraient plus en sécurité et la famille serait plus complète. Toutefois s'ajuster à l'arrivée de leur père n'est pas chose facile. Un enfant l'exprime en ces termes : *«Quand mon père est là, c'est comme si on était un des marins de son bateau. Il y a des moments où il n'arrête pas de dire : «Tu dois finir cela maintenant» et «Tu dois faire cela avant ceci». Il y a des tas d'ordres. On doit se lever le matin quand il se lève. Il ne veut pas s'asseoir et se reposer. Il veut toujours que nous fassions quelque chose. Il veut que tout le monde travaille, travaille et travaille. Peut-être c'était comme cela sur son bateau».* On sent la tension entre le désir de la présence du père pour plus de sécurité et d'unité et la difficulté de l'ajustement à sa présence.

Les questions financières rentrent également en ligne de compte. Comme un enfant le dit, *«mon père et ma mère ne font que se quereller à propos de l'argent, ma mère se plaignant que papa n'en a pas ramené assez et mon père accusant maman de ne pas assez économiser en dépensant trop pour nous».* Les enfants sont conscients de la chance qu'ils ont d'avoir un père qui gagne tant d'argent mais, quand on le leur répète sans arrêt, cela a des effets négatifs sur eux. Ils le ressentent comme un poids. Comme le dit une fille, *«au premier semestre, j'ai raté deux matières et cela m'a fait me haïr parce que je veux prouver à mon père que son argent n'est pas gâché. Mais j'ai raté, je suis donc un poids pour la famille et j'en ai marre».*

Il y a enfin l'aspect psychologique du décalage entre les parents et leurs enfants. Pendant les neuf mois d'absence du père, de grands changements physiques et émotionnels peuvent prendre place chez leurs enfants et ces derniers se plaignent souvent du fait que leurs pères ne s'en aperçoivent pas. Comme le dit une adolescente, *«quand nos pères reviennent à la maison, ils pensent nous retrouver comme les petites filles que nous étions quand ils nous ont quittées. Ils n'arrivent pas à comprendre que nous ne sommes plus celles qu'ils avaient aimées avant».* Voilà donc pour les réactions des enfants. Si ce qui est dit dans cet article par rapport aux enfants des marins est vrai, alors que les marins reviennent en moyenne tous les neuf mois, combien plus le sera-t-il pour les enfants des autres émigrants qui eux peuvent s'absenter pendant plusieurs années d'affilée sans jamais revenir !

Dans un autre bulletin daté octobre/décembre 2001, on pouvait lire un article intitulé : *«Les femmes de marins laissées derrière».* On y trouve ce témoignage d'une épouse de marin : *«Quand je pris la décision de me marier à mon fiancé marin, personne n'était là pour me mettre au courant des conséquences d'un tel mariage pour le reste de ma vie. Personne ne me prit à part pour me parler des risques d'une histoire d'amour à distance. Après deux mois de lune de miel bienheureuse, je réalisai soudain que je passerais 80% de ma vie sans mon mari. Sur les vingt-et-une années de ma vie de mariage, nous n'avons en fait passé qu'un total de six ans ensemble et les périodes de retour de mon mari ne furent que de longues périodes difficiles d'ajustement continu entre nous et avec les enfants. Je fus forcée de devenir une femme et une mère mature à toute vitesse. Tout de suite, il me fallut apprendre à prendre des décisions importantes toute seule. Etre mariée à un marin est à la fois une grande aventure et un grand sacrifice. En un sens, c'est anormal. En échange d'une stabilité financière et d'un plus grand confort, l'épouse et les enfants perdent la force spéciale qui vient de la présence du père. La femme ne connaît pas les joies physiques et émotionnelles de tout couple normal. Parmi celles-ci, la joie partagée au moment de la naissance d'un enfant. Combien de fois aurais-je voulu pouvoir aussi prendre appui sur l'épaule de mon mari !»* Une autre femme dit ceci : *«De m'être mariée à un marin a changé toute ma personnalité. J'ai dû tuer la femme en moi et devenir homme parce que mes enfants ont besoin de la figure du père. J'ai donc dû être forte. Mes enfants ne veulent pas d'une mère faible, tremblante et gaînarde. J'ai donc arrêté de me plaindre de ne pas avoir un homme à côté de moi. Je me suis pensée comme homme».*

Une fois de plus, si cela est vrai dans les familles de marins, combien plus dans les familles de migrants qui ne retournent à la maison que tous les deux ou trois ans. Il faudrait en fait beaucoup plus de témoignages de femmes et d'enfants *«laissés derrière»* pour mieux comprendre tout l'impact qu'a le phénomène d'émigration sur les dysfonctionnements de la famille aux Philippines.

Il faudrait par exemple étudier l'impact que l'émigration a sur les performances scolaires des enfants, sur leur instabilité psychologique, sur leur rapport avec l'autorité en général, étudier aussi si il y a un lien de cause à effet entre l'émigration et l'accroissement très net de l'usage de drogues et de l'alcoolisme parmi les jeunes aux Philippines, de même qu'entre l'émigration et la baisse de la pratique religieuse chez les jeunes, pratique cependant encore très forte aux Philippines comparée à tant d'autres pays. Ce dernier problème devient de plus en plus important parce que, comme on l'a vu plus haut, l'émigration est de plus en plus féminine et, aux Philippines comme partout ailleurs, ce sont surtout les mères qui transmettent la foi.

Il y a un autre aspect de l'émigration qui mériterait une étude approfondie : c'est celui de la transformation des valeurs. Il est évident que les

migrants qui passent des années entières dans des pays différents du leur ne peuvent pas ne pas être profondément influencés par les valeurs ayant cours dans ces pays. De nombreuses études faites sur les migrants eux-mêmes parlent de tous les problèmes auxquels ils ont à faire face à cause de l'écart qu'il y a entre le système de valeurs dans lequel ils ont baigné toute leur enfance aux Philippines et celui auquel ils sont confrontés dans le pays où ils émigrent. Cela est d'autant plus vrai quand ils émigrent dans le monde occidental. Là, l'écart est énorme et l'adaptation est très dure. Il y a une telle différence de points de vue ! Pour n'en mentionner que quelques uns :

- le Philippin est essentiellement relationnel et l'Européen individuel ;

- le Philippin est avant tout émotionnel et l'Européen cérébral ;

- le Philippin fonctionne surtout au niveau de l'être et l'Européen au niveau du faire ;

- le Philippin a une notion du temps élastique alors que l'Européen calcule toujours son temps ;

- pour le Philippin tout est sacré, pour l'Européen il y a une division stricte entre le profane et le sacré.

Qu'il le veuille ou non, quelle que soit la difficulté de l'exercice, le migrant finit toujours par être influencé de façon significative par le pays où il vit. Mais le plus grand problème, c'est quand il retourne aux Philippines et qu'il se voit complètement décalé par rapport à sa famille et ses amis qu'il retrouve. L'observation de l'auteur après bien des années aux Philippines, c'est que malheureusement, le plus souvent, c'est ce qu'il y a de moins bon dans le monde occidental que le migrant ramène chez lui : les gadgets, des expressions artistiques au rabais, une certaine dureté relationnelle et un laxisme moral soi-disant libérateur ; et, dans le même temps, il a oublié les plus beaux aspects de la culture philippine qu'il tend parfois, voire souvent, à mépriser et à ridiculiser. Cependant, il faut reconnaître que l'émigration n'est pas la seule à jouer un rôle dans la transformation des valeurs. Elle ne fait, sans doute, qu'ajouter à ce qui est déjà fait de façon peut-être plus puissante encore par les médias : les films, la télévision, et, de plus en plus, Internet.

L'Eglise catholique et l'émigration

Il y a encore un aspect de l'émigration qu'il faut toucher. C'est celui de son impact sur l'Eglise aux Philippines. Il faut dire que, parmi les migrants, on doit aussi compter les prêtres et les religieuses des Philippines qui sont partis comme missionnaires. En l'an 2000, il y avait 1 329 religieuses et 206 prêtres philippins travaillant à l'étranger. Plusieurs d'entre eux sont partis pour s'occuper directement de leurs compatriotes dans les pays où ils se trouvent en grand nombre. L'épiscopat des Philippines fait un très gros effort en effet pour ne pas abandonner les migrants à

eux-mêmes dans leur vie de foi, persuadé qu'il est que ces migrants peuvent devenir des témoins vivants et de véritables évangélisateurs. Il suffit d'aller à Hongkong ou à Singapour, à Paris ou à Rome, à New York ou à Toronto pour s'apercevoir que les évêques philippins ne se trompent pas. Mais justement il y a là un problème pour le pays lui-même. Car la fuite des cerveaux dont on a parlé plus haut n'a pas de conséquences dans le seul domaine économique, elle en a aussi au niveau de l'Eglise. Cela se vérifie surtout dans les petites villes et les villages. Ce sont très souvent les gens les plus dynamiques sur tous les plans, y compris au plan de la foi, qui partent.

Bien souvent dans les petites villes et villages, l'Eglise a perdu une grande partie de ses membres les plus engagés. Même si, à nouveau, il n'y a pas eu d'études précises faites à ce sujet, il apparaît comme très probable que le départ de ces «élites» ne peut avoir qu'un effet négatif sur la vitalité des paroisses. Par ailleurs, et cela est davantage dans l'ordre du positif, face à l'ampleur de cette émigration, l'Eglise s'est vue forcée de réagir. Elle a ainsi formé un réseau de centres pour marins qui non seulement accueillent les bateaux qui arrivent, surtout à Manille, Cebu et Davao, mais qui organisent aussi toutes sortes d'activités pour les familles des marins. Ces centres sont de plus en plus efficaces et de plus en plus appréciés. Il y a aussi dans presque tous les diocèses des Philippines des branches de la Commission épiscopale pour les migrants (ECMI). Cette commission a pour but :

- de coordonner et de développer des programmes et des services pour le bien-être social et spirituel des migrants et de leurs familles ;

- de préparer et de donner des sessions de formation pour les migrants afin de les rendre conscients du rôle missionnaire qu'ils peuvent jouer dans leur pays de destination ;

- de faire des études et des recherches sur les phénomènes de l'émigration ;

- de préparer et de fournir des prêtres, des religieuses et des laïcs bien formés pour se mettre au service des migrants et de leurs familles ;

- de tout faire pour que les droits fondamentaux des migrants soient respectés où qu'ils soient ;

- de créer des liens avec les Eglises des autres pays pour qu'il y ait une communication aussi efficace que possible et un partage des ressources et expériences ;

- d'encourager le gouvernement et le secteur privé pour que tout soit fait pour le développement économique du pays et qu'il y ait ainsi une vraie alternative à l'émigration.

(Tiré du petit livret qu'on peut se procurer à l'ECMI).

C'est l'ECMI qui est aussi à l'origine du «*Dimanche des migrants*». Ce dimanche, qui est, en général le

premier dimanche du mois de mars, est célébré dans toutes les paroisses du pays. Le but principal de ce dimanche est de faire réfléchir et prier tous les habitants du pays sur le problème de l'émigration. Cela se fait par le moyen des homélies des prêtres, de dépliants et d'affiches, d'expositions dans les églises et les écoles, de rencontres et débats et, bien sûr, d'articles dans les journaux et d'entretiens à la radio et à la télévision. On peut vraiment dire qu'aux Philippines, c'est l'Eglise qui de loin s'active le plus pour faire front à l'énorme problème que pose l'émigration dont, une fois de plus, personne ne sait très bien, quelles en seront les retombées pour le pays dans quelques années.

Conclusion

Au terme de cet article, on peut se demander quels sont les défis que pose à la société et à l'Eglise des Philippines le départ massif des migrants. On peut apporter une réponse à cette question à trois niveaux :

- Au niveau du gouvernement tout d'abord : Comme cela a été mentionné dans cet article, il faut que le gouvernement fasse tout son possible pour qu'à l'exemple de plusieurs de ses voisins, les Philippines entrent enfin dans une véritable spirale de croissance. On a vraiment l'impression que, depuis l'époque Marcos, les Philippines ont perdu l'espoir de s'en sortir. C'est comme si un ressort s'était cassé. Pour l'auteur de cet article qui n'est ni un politicien ni un économiste, certaines choses paraissent fondamentales.

a) En finir une fois pour toutes avec le cancer de la corruption. Elle est tellement prévalente aux Philippines que rien ne peut vraiment changer dans aucun domaine si la corruption n'est pas combattue avec détermination. Les criminels de haut vol peuvent acheter n'importe quel policier ou juge. Les lois sur la préservation des sols, des forêts et des fonds marins sont ouvertement contournées. Les ingénieurs trichent systématiquement sur la qualité des matériaux qu'ils utilisent pour la construction des infrastructures qui manquent totalement ou bien sont dans un état lamentable. En vingt ans de présence à Mindanao, l'auteur de cet article n'a vu que quelque 400 à 500 km de routes nouvelles construites sur cette île alors qu'au même moment le même nombre et peut-être plus encore se délabrait irrémédiablement. Mindanao a une superficie de 100 000 km² et ne dispose que de cinq ou six grands axes routiers goudronnés ! Et ce n'est pas par manque d'argent. L'argent est envoyé mais il disparaît à une vitesse incroyable. Ce n'est pas qu'à Mindanao que les choses se passent ainsi. Une des conséquences les plus dramatiques de la corruption est la perte chaque année de milliards de pesos qui ne rentrent pas dans les coffres du budget de l'Etat. Tant que cette corruption durera il y a peu d'espoir que les Philippines puissent vraiment se développer de façon significative.

b) En finir aussi avec les deux rébellions communiste et musulmane. L'Etat y perd de nouveau des milliards de pesos chaque année à la fois pour maintenir son armée en état de guerre et pour réparer les dommages de guerre. Cela inclut les déplacements de personnes (on compte des dizaines de milliers de réfugiés aux Philippines), les dégâts matériels, les pertes humaines, les rançons à payer pour les kidnappings, source majeure de revenus tant pour les communistes que pour certains rebelles musulmans. Beaucoup de gens aux Philippines s'étonnent que le gouvernement n'ait pas réussi après tant d'années à résoudre ce problème et beaucoup soupçonnent que des gens haut placés, aussi bien dans l'armée que dans le gouvernement, ont tout intérêt à ce que ces rébellions ne cessent pas. N'est-il pas étonnant, en effet, que chaque fois qu'un accord de paix est sur le point d'être signé un incident majeur survient, qui remet tout en cause ?

c) Peut-être faudrait-il aussi un changement de Constitution. Pour que ne recommence jamais la tragédie du régime de Marcos, la présidente Cory Aquino fit réécrire la Constitution des Philippines en 1987. Cette Constitution stipule entre autres choses qu'un président est élu pour un mandat de cinq ans non renouvelable. C'est très bien quand on a un mauvais président mais c'est très dommage quand on en a un bien. Que peut-on vraiment accomplir en cinq ans ? L'actualité de ces dernières années avec les successions des présidents Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Ejercito Estrada et Gloria Macapagal Arroyo le montre bien. Une fois de plus, tant que les Philippines ne se développeront pas, tant qu'elles ne seront pas capables d'offrir des emplois en nombre suffisant et des salaires décents, non seulement l'émigration ne s'arrêtera pas mais elle ne fera qu'augmenter.

- Au niveau des organisations non gouvernementales : Les ONG qui, aux Philippines, sont innombrables et auxquelles une grande liberté d'agir est accordée, devraient donner une importance beaucoup plus grande qu'elles ne le font aujourd'hui au problème de l'émigration. Il y a là pour elles un vaste champ d'action.

Elles devraient s'investir pour la réinsertion des migrants quand ils reviennent définitivement au pays et pour l'aide aux familles de ces migrants. Un des rôles les plus importants qu'elles pourraient jouer serait de les aider à mieux utiliser l'argent qui est généré par le travail des migrants. On a vu plus haut qu'il s'agit de sommes considérables. On a vu aussi que la plus grande partie des sommes est utilisée pour des biens de consommation immédiate. Elles ne sont pas réinvesties dans des projets qui seraient eux-mêmes générateurs de revenus à long terme. C'est là que les ONG pourraient mettre à la disposition des migrants

et de leurs familles une expertise ainsi que des ressources financières et en personnel.

Dans son numéro de juin 2002, la revue de l'université jésuite de Manille, *Intersect*, déjà citée plus haut, parle à ce propos d'une expérience réussie. «La Banque rurale de San Leonardo dans la province de Nueva Ecija et l'ONG 'Kanlungan Center Foundation' à Manille, une ONG qui précisément se concentre sur le problème des migrants, ont formé ensemble un programme qu'ils appellent «le Centre rural de formation à la création d'entreprises». Ce centre a pour but de proposer à ceux qui le désirent une grande variété de projets correspondant aux finances et aux compétences des apprentis entrepreneurs ; de faire des recherches, de présenter et de reproduire des micro-entreprises qui ont déjà réussi ailleurs et d'aider ceux qui se lancent dans ces projets à créer des liens avec des institutions financières prêtes à les soutenir malgré la modestie de leur capital de départ. Ils ont aussi formé un groupe qui rassemble tous ceux qui se sont lancés dans cette aventure et qui se réunit régulièrement pour se soutenir et partager les expériences». Il faudrait que des initiatives de ce genre se multiplient sur l'ensemble du pays et les ONG devraient s'investir à fond dans cette direction.

- Au niveau de l'Eglise : Même s'il a été dit plus haut que l'Eglise est de loin l'institution qui, aux Philippines, s'est le plus investie dans ce gigantesque problème de l'émigration, elle peut et doit faire encore beaucoup plus. Son rôle principal concerne la formation. Il est évident que l'Eglise a une responsabilité énorme dans ce que sont les Philippines aujourd'hui. Quand on connaît le réseau incroyablement dense de paroisses qu'elle contrôle sur l'ensemble du territoire, quand on sait aussi qu'elle administre un nombre considérable d'écoles et plusieurs des universités les plus prestigieuses du pays, on peut s'étonner à juste titre que le pays connaisse, par exemple, une telle corruption. Après tout, une grande partie des élites du pays sont passées par les universités soit jésuites, soit dominicaines ou encore des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes pour ne mentionner que les plus célèbres. Il semble que beaucoup d'écoles et d'universités ont donné plus d'importance à la qualité des formations académiques qu'à l'approfondissement des valeurs morales. Il semble aussi que, dans les paroisses, plus d'importance est donnée à la célébration des rites et des dévotions qu'à une solide formation chrétienne. L'Eglise a donc dans ce domaine un immense travail à faire, à savoir, une formation systématique et continue aux grandes valeurs chrétiennes, dans les homélies, dans la catéchèse, dans les écoles et les universités, à travers des sessions pour adultes et peut-être surtout par le moyen des médias dont elle est fort bien dotée.

Dans un autre domaine, il faudrait que l'Eglise

s'investisse bien plus qu'elle ne le fait encore auprès des familles des migrants. Il faudrait que, dans toutes les paroisses où il y a un nombre significatif de gens qui sont partis, il y ait des groupes qui se forment pour aider les parents qui sont restés seuls et leurs enfants à faire front à tous les problèmes évoqués dans cet article. Il est bon, en tout cas, qu'elle ait lancé l'idée de cette grande enquête dont on a parlé au début et qu'elle a demandé au gouvernement d'y participer. Peut-être que cette enquête permettra de cerner le problème avec précision et d'y répondre d'une façon beaucoup plus pertinente. L'émigration, chance ou handicap pour le pays ? L'alternative peut être grandement atténuée si tous ceux qui sont concernés par ce problème s'y attellent avec énergie et cherchent les moyens d'en atténuer les effets négatifs. Ce n'est pas une chose très facile dans un pays dont un des traits caractéristiques les plus forts est le fameux «*bahala na*» — une expression difficile à traduire mais qui oscille entre : «*Ah, tant pis ! Il n'y a vraiment rien à y faire*» et : «*Laissez faire ! Dieu pourvoira*». Encore un domaine où l'Eglise pourrait jouer un rôle déterminant. Mais n'est-elle pas elle-même souvent prisonnière de ce «*bahala na*» ?

Réf. : E.D.A. (*Églises d'Asie*), *Dossiers et documents*, n. 383, octobre 2003, pp. 2-13.

“Les étrangers au Japon frappent à la porte (et au cœur) de l’Église catholique „

- Adolfo Nicolas, SJ -

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1. Le Centre catholique international de Tôkyô

Il y a environ dix ans, le CTIC avait pour vocation d’être un centre de sociologie pastorale. Mais, comme toujours, l’urgence a eu priorité sur toutes les autres questions nécessitant quelque peu réflexion, projet à long terme et action suivie. Le CTIC des débuts a fait du très bon travail pour aider les migrants dans l’urgence, pour des problèmes de survie, de légalisation, d’immigration, de mariage, etc.

Comme les besoins des communautés étrangères en expansion se multipliaient, l’urgence et l’importance d’un accompagnement pastoral et d’un suivi à long terme sont devenues de plus en plus évidents, si bien que l’archidiocèse de Tôkyô a fini par décider d’ouvrir un nouveau CTIC, à Meguro.¹ Ce nouveau centre est pastoral dans son but sans pour autant ignorer, bien sûr, les conditions et les nécessités propres à tout être humain. C’est pourquoi nous travaillons en ce moment à préparer divers séminaires de formation : renouveau sacramentel, communauté de vie, accompagnement et pastorale des personnes en difficulté, détention, maladie, etc. Nous voudrions développer des programmes de pastorale vivante pour et dans les paroisses et coordonner ce vaste travail au profit des communautés étrangères par un dialogue suivi avec les prêtres et les autres personnes au service des migrants et de leurs familles. Nous travaillons aussi avec le centre d’Urawa aux prises avec les mêmes problèmes et les mêmes soucis.

L’immense extension géographique de Tôkyô est un handicap quand il s’agit d’aider des groupes accaparés par leur travail et pouvant difficilement gérer leur temps et leurs déplacements en toute liberté. C’est

ce qui a amené l’archidiocèse à ouvrir un nouveau CTIC à Chiba, dans cette région où les travailleurs étrangers sont nombreux et pour lesquels des prêtres et des laïcs ont beaucoup travaillé depuis de nombreuses années. Ce nouveau centre est entré en fonction en avril 2002.

2. Situation pastorale des étrangers au Japon

Il faut peu de temps pour comprendre combien est complexe et incertaine la situation des étrangers au Japon. Beaucoup de choses ont été dites et écrites sur les conditions économiques, politiques et sociales, sur les difficultés et les problèmes que rencontrent les travailleurs étrangers dans ce pays.² Je considère toutes ces choses comme bien connues et admises dans leurs grandes lignes si bien que je peux me concentrer sur leur situation dite «pastorale». Se faisant, j’essaie de voir, au-delà de l’urgence, la réalité à long terme de ces hommes et femmes qui *«ont quitté»* leurs familles, leur pays, leur culture et leur maison et qui risquent tout pour un nouvel avenir rêvé, fut-il permanent ou temporaire.

La première et la plus évidente constatation, c’est qu’il s’agit pour eux d’une situation où ils sont *«déracinés, hors de leur propre culture»*. Ce qui représente beaucoup plus qu’une perte de leur nourriture traditionnelle, des fêtes et des danses avec lesquelles ils ont grandi. La culture a été définie comme *«un modèle de notions et de valeurs partagées, qui s’expriment à travers un réseau de symboles, de mythes et de rituels, créés par une société particulière pour s’efforcer de répondre aux défis de la vie et former ses membres à ce qui est considéré comme le moyen régulier, correct et décent de sentir, de penser et de se comporter»*. Pour un homme ordinaire, vivre en permanence ou pour de longues périodes hors de sa

propre culture signifie se retrouver dans une situation de chaos intérieur avec un sentiment profond de perte, ne plus savoir que ressentir, comment se conduire et agir envers les autres.

Pour un grand nombre de migrants, ce sentiment de perte est aggravé parce qu'il s'accompagne du sentiment que « *le religieux lui aussi s'en est allé* ». La religion a donné couleur, profondeur et horizon à bien des structures culturelles accompagnant l'étranger. Culture et religion ensemble ont conditionné les gens et leurs communautés en donnant du sens aux choses et du pourquoi à ce sens, à cet apaisement, à cette appartenance et à cette intégration tant personnelle que sociale. Il est facile de comprendre pourquoi ceux qui ne vont pas très régulièrement à l'église dans leur pays sont anxieux de pouvoir assister à la messe du dimanche quand ils sont au Japon. Pour beaucoup, ce peut être le lien entre la santé mentale et la santé spirituelle, la promesse qu'ils peuvent faire quelque chose sans sombrer, l'espoir qu'en dépit de tout, ils seront capables de surmonter les ténèbres et le chaos qui les entourent à ce moment de leur vie.

Ce besoin est tout à fait urgent parce que la situation de la plupart des étrangers qui espèrent travailler au Japon est celle d'une « *dépréciation* » d'eux-mêmes, humaine et sociale. Beaucoup de ceux qui viennent au Japon souffrent de la perte de leur statut social et surtout, plus dramatique encore, celle de l'estime de soi. Ils obtiendront un travail très en dessous de leur qualification personnelle, de leur éducation ou de leurs capacités. On les regarde de haut souvent et ils seront rarement considérés comme dignes d'être consultés, promus ou poussés à faire, davantage et mieux, un travail exigeant. C'est là une source indescriptible d'isolement. Ils sont conduits ainsi plus bas encore que la très basse opinion qu'ils ont d'eux-mêmes. C'est là une source d'insécurité douloureuse qui affecte même leur capacité à lutter, à entrer en contact avec les autres et même à s'adresser à leurs propres enfants avec la dignité et la fierté d'un homme.

Un aspect que nous avons à mieux étudier et à prendre avec plus de sérieux que nous l'avons fait jusqu'ici, c'est celui des effets de la migration sur les valeurs humaines et morales. Nous avons ici affaire à une énorme et réelle pauvreté : insécurité, chômage, instabilité sociale et politique, qui a jeté des millions de gens dans des situations inhumaines où la plupart des décisions reviennent à « *survivre* ». Comment tout cela affecte le cœur, la pensée, les valeurs, la foi de ceux qui sont touchés est un sujet urgent de dialogue et d'étude. Tout de suite après avoir décidé de faire

quelque chose pour survivre, les migrants prennent l'une ou l'autre mesure qui normalement serait considérée comme malhon-nête (se servir d'un faux passeport avec un nom d'emprunt et un âge inexact) ou immorale (comme de se marier pour obtenir un visa, ou entreprendre une relation sentimentale sans vouloir pour autant s'engager). C'est toujours une source d'étonnement de rencontrer de ces personnes et de découvrir chez elle une pureté du cœur, une compassion et une solidarité pleine de délicatesse, un certain parfum de valeurs spirituelles qui va mal avec les mensonges qu'ils ra-content ou le travail qu'ils font. Que se passe-t-il ? Comment ces faits changent-ils nos perceptions et nos définitions stéréotypées ? Où et comment l'Esprit-Saint travaille-t-il ? Nous avons entendu ce genre d'exemples dans le passé, surtout aux temps évangéliques. Mais nous ne les avons jamais rencontrés d'une telle ampleur. En quoi concernent-ils nos problèmes pastoraux et notre ministère ?

D'innombrables difficultés accompagnent notre communauté humaine mais elles deviennent plus aiguës et plus graves dans la situation d'insécurité, d'instabilité et de stress où se trouvent plongés les étrangers. Mariage, famille et éducation sont invariablement en tête de liste. Si le mariage est toujours le plus important test de maturité humaine avec ses exigences de communication interpersonnelle et de croissance partagée, il n'est pas difficile de comprendre pourquoi tant de mariages interculturels échouent. Le manque de préparation humaine, culturelle, sociale et autre en vue du mariage et de la vie de famille ; l'absence de discernement dans le choix de son partenaire, dans l'aménagement d'une nouvelle famille, dans le partage d'une nouvelle vie ; l'ignorance de ce qu'est le Japon, de ses caractéristiques culturelles, de son système d'éducation, de ses possibilités et de ses contraintes, etc. sont autant de facteurs qui font qu'un mariage interculturel est une des plus difficiles aventures à imaginer.

Les conséquences pastorales de ces questions et de beaucoup d'autres moins importantes mais toujours problématiques sont évidentes. Le besoin d'aide, d'appui, de discernement et d'accompagnement à travers ce dédale de problèmes est inouï et il frappe à la porte de l'Église et au cœur de chaque chrétien. Négliger ces migrants et leurs communautés n'est pas seulement un abandon. C'est les abandonner sur « *un dangereux marché* » avide de nouveaux clients. Je me réfère ici aux marchands de mort, stupides et avides, qui entendent faire de la faiblesse humaine et de sa souffrance un objet de stratégie commerciale. Cela va largement de la drogue et de l'alcool au recrutement mafieux et même à la

manipulation pour attirer les gens dans des sectes ou des groupements religieux.

3. L'Église devant de nouveaux défis

1. Perspectives

Les Églises chrétiennes et la société japonaise chargées en ces temps de globalisation d'accompagner la migration et le déplacement de population se trouvent ici confrontés à de multiples défis.³ Nous pouvons brièvement considérer maintenant, sous forme de *transitions*, quelques défis proposés à notre façon habituelle de voir et d'agir.

La première *transition* à laquelle nous sommes confrontés, c'est tout d'abord de devoir passer d'une certaine compréhension et d'un accueil des étrangers avec quelques changements mineurs dans notre vie paroissiale, à un réel et véritable accueil qui nous pousse dorénavant à une totale remise en cause de notre paroisse, de ses structures et de ses activités.

Ce qui nécessite une seconde *transition*, celle de passer de la présente situation où les étrangers sont encore reçus à contrecœur, tolérés et accueillis comme des invités, à une situation où ils se sentiraient membres à part entière de la communauté. Aux «*invités*», on accorde un certain espace, un certain temps et le menu minimal d'un service pas trop contraignant ; les membres à part entière jouissent, eux, d'un temps plein et de tout l'espace, de la possibilité d'un engagement et d'une participation à toutes les activités paroissiales et sont considérés comme des ministres laïques responsables.

Ceci relève d'une *transition* qui, d'une perception respectueuse mais passive d'une communauté parallèle, passerait à une action interculturelle dynamique et réelle qui aiderait tous les groupes présents à se sentir chez eux et à évoluer vers une intégration future. Ce qui appelle une autre *transition* qui, passerait d'un préjugé bienveillant, gentil, presque invisible mais réel, à un dialogue du cœur où chacun de nous serait impliqué dans la découverte d'une expérience humaine plus profonde et des motivations des autres chrétiens, étrangers ou locaux.

Nous avons également besoin d'une *transition* qui nous fasse passer d'un point de vue moralisateur étroit sur la situation de beaucoup d'étrangers aux prises avec leurs papiers d'immigration, leurs autorisations et autres références légales, à une compréhension plus large et juste de la situation humaine d'où ils viennent et

des impératifs de survie ou de libération qui affectent et limitent leurs choix de vie.

Peut-être que la plus grande *transition* serait celle d'une Église japonaise au service des chrétiens japonais, quelque peu ouverte à quelques exceptions, qui travaillerait à devenir une Église japonaise au service de l'humanité, ouverte et partageant une plus large vision chrétienne, comme celle qui nous est proposée à travers les personnes et les vies des étrangers qui viennent au Japon.

En d'autres termes, nous sommes mis au défi de faire la courageuse et risquée *transition* d'une *Église ministérielle* méthodique, capable et bien organisée pour s'occuper d'elle-même, à une *Église prophétique* vouée à vivre l'Évangile avec les autres et devenir à son tour une invitation à toute la société japonaise pour l'émergence d'une nouvelle famille humaine.

4. L'Église devant de nouveaux défis

2. Perspectives

Le changement de perspectives consiste à travailler main dans la main avec de nouveaux projets qui nous donneront une vision concrète et aideront à effectuer la transition réelle et opérationnelle. Permettez-moi de vous donner ici une liste de quelques-uns de ces difficiles projets :

4.1. Un projet pastoral intégré pour tous les chrétiens, étrangers et japonais. Ce projet doit être élaboré face aux besoins réels afin d'y répondre effectivement dans le contexte mondial. Nous pensons ici à une communauté à bâtir, à l'interaction et à la croissance 'Vie et sacrement', au développement de la foi, à la vie dans l'Esprit, au discernement social et professionnel, etc.

4.2. Un projet global s'étendant sur trois générations pour mieux être au service des chrétiens venus de l'étranger aux prises avec les urgences de la vie jusqu'à ce qu'ils trouvent à s'intégrer sérieusement dans l'Église japonaise et la société.

4.3. Une réflexion continue et un dialogue avec les migrants sur le développement biculturel de leur identité personnelle et religieuse à chaque étape de leur intégration.

4.4. Une intégration sérieuse des migrants et des itinérants dans un diocèse structuré (voir en référence la lettre de l'archevêque de Tôkyô : «*Un pas en avant*»,⁴ avec une totale et généreuse participation à tous les niveaux, partout et toujours où c'est possible ou bien là où la possibilité d'un développement progressif existe.

4.5. Des homélies du dimanche solides bien

préparées, sous-tendues par *une catéchèse pour adultes* pour aider la communauté migrante à parvenir à une vie de foi mature dans une société moderne, pluraliste et libre comme celle du Japon d'aujourd'hui.

4.6. Des programmes concrets de formation dans des techniques allant des problèmes des relations de la vie quotidienne, etc., jusqu'à ceux plus complexes de culture, de cohabitation, de résolution des conflits et des situations personnelles.

4.7. Même si elle doit s'étendre sur trois générations pour y parvenir, une intégration progressive de tous les groupes ethniques dans une communauté de croyants où «*le simple fait d'être un être humain*» devient la base opérationnelle où se bâtit l'Eglise, sur nulle autre fondation que celle du Christ.

5. Retour au CTIC

Si nous revenons au CTIC maintenant, c'est pour dire que notre travail dans ce Centre ne signifie pas pour nous prendre en charge tous les problèmes dont nous avons parlé. Pour l'Eglise, les problèmes sont comme un tout et les réponses sont là où sont les communautés chrétiennes, dans les paroisses et les activités supra paroissiales.

Notre meilleure contribution consiste à participer au processus d'intégration en offrant notre appui, notre expérience et notre aide en coordination et en coopération avec tous, mais toujours en tant que service. Ce sera une de nos tâches de réfléchir, ensemble avec ceux qui ont été et qui continuent à travailler activement et avec compétence dans l'amitié et en lien avec les différentes communautés étrangères dans et hors l'Eglise catholique. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'être sur le devant de la scène parce que la vie réelle et la croissance sont là où sont les gens et non dans les centres qui peuvent exister de par le monde. Notre joie sera d'être capables d'aider et de participer à cette vie et pour cela nous serons toujours heureux d'être aidés nous-mêmes, que ce soit par un soutien personnel, spirituel, matériel ou par des conseils. Migrants et gens du voyage au Japon continueront à nous aider à actualiser notre lecture de l'Evangile et à garder devant les yeux de nos cœurs les dramatiques problèmes de la vie humaine et la véritable source de notre espoir et de notre joie.

Notes

1. Voir *EDA*, n. 314.

2. Sur les catholiques étrangers présents au Japon, leur nombre et leur situation, voir *EDA*, nn. 231, 236, 246, 290 et le Dossier n. 6/92.

3. Depuis plus de dix ans, l'Eglise catholique au Japon s'efforce d'accueillir les étrangers : Voir *EDA*, nn. 103, 146, 181, 258, 259, 267, 273 et *EDA*, n. 283 (Cahier de documents) : «L'influence des migrants sur l'Eglise japonaise».

4. Une lettre pastorale sur l'accueil des étrangers où l'archevêque de Tôkyô demandait en particulier qu'un représentant de chaque communauté étrangère soit admis à siéger régulièrement et à part entière dans les conseils paroissiaux. (*EDA*, *The Japan Mission Journal*, janvier 2003).

Réf. : *E.D.A. (Églises d'Asie)*, Dossiers et documents n. 1/2003, Supplément n. 367, Janvier 2003, Cahier de documents, Document n. 1 E/2003.

“Pearls in the Deep: Inculturation and Ecclesia in Oceania „

- Philip Gibbs, SVD -

1. Introduction

In November 1998, after lengthy consultation with the people of the region, the Catholic Bishops of Oceania, from Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, travelled to Rome to attend the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Oceania. The focus of the Synod was the person of Jesus Christ and how to walk his way, tell his truth and live his life. There had been Synods previous to this: for the Bishops of Africa, Asia and America; and the Synod for Europe was in the final stages of preparation, however, this Synod was special in a number of aspects. It was the shortest in duration, and the smallest of the Synods in terms of numbers: with 117 members, plus the Pope, 19 auditors and 14 additional personnel. This was the only Synod in which all the bishops of the region had been invited, in fact, all except three of the bishops from the region participated. Most of the bishops already knew one another, having met at the FCBCO (Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania) Assembly in Auckland in 1994. There were others included as fraternal delegates, such as Lutheran Bishop Wesley Kigasung of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea.

The impressive opening mass in St Peter's Basilica included dancing and music from the Pacific, notably Samoa. It seems that some Roman officials were not exactly enthused at the sight of tattooed Samoan men in traditional dress dancing in the Basilica. Perhaps it is symbolic of a cultural gulf when sights that are quite "normal" in the Pacific appear so scandalous to some members of the Roman Curia?

Talks presented by the bishops during the first week were pastorally oriented and remarkably frank. For example, in his presentation referring to the shortage of priests, Bishop Kiapseni of Kavieng, PNG, said that it seems the community's right to celebrate the Eucharist has become a privilege and a rare one at that. Celebrations of the Word with Holy Com-

munion distributed by a catechist or non-ordained brother or sister is no substitute for the celebration of the Eucharist (Kiapseni, 10). These are bold words in a Roman aula. Unfortunately, so often, courageous solutions to such problems are easily dismissed by people outside of the region. Realising this, at the end of the Synod, Cardinal Williams, from New Zealand, as spokesman for the whole of Oceania said, "May I make one plea, Holy Father? It is that not only the propositions but also the interventions of the Synod's first week be a constant source of reference when the Apostolic Letter is being prepared. We tried our hardest and gave of our best in addressing themes close to our hearts and to the hearts of our priests and people".¹

The Synod ended on 12 December 1998, and then the Church in Oceania waited for the Pope's response to the propositions given to him by the Bishops. The initial proposal was for the Pope to come himself to New Caledonia to present his Post-Synodal Exhortation. However, when it became obvious that his health was not up to the long journey, it was decided to promulgate the Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* in Rome, and to send it by internet to the local Churches of Oceania. So, on the 22 November 2001, three years to the day from when the Synod began, the Church in Oceania received the official papal document.

In his speech at the presentation of *Ecclesia in Oceania*, Cardinal Williams noted that, "Communion, inculturation and a renewed proclamation of the Gospel in ways appropriate for the peoples of Oceania" were the key themes and insights which emerged from the 1998 Synod of Bishops for Oceania (Williams, 10). In this paper I intend to read the document *Ecclesia in Oceania* from the perspective of one of those themes: that of inculturation. How is the theme presented in the document? What are some of the implications for the Church in Oceania?

2. Initial reactions to the Document

Initially the media's attention focused on two

explicit apologies in the document. The first apology, in section n. 28 on “Indigenous People”, referred to the so-called “stolen generation” in Australia. Earlier in the 20th century aboriginal children had been separated from their families and placed in boarding institutions, many of them run by the Church. Secondly, in section n. 49, on “The Life of the Ordained”, the Pope apologised for the involvement of clergy and some members of religious orders in sexual abuse. Australian opposition leader Simon Crean applauded the Pope for his apology to aboriginals. Murray Ryan Jupita, one of the stolen generation, interviewed afterwards on the ABC Darwin, said that it was a justified apology to the indigenous people of Australia. He said that religious institutions had been involved in the abuse of the stolen generation. He was surprised and glad about the statement.²

After the initial comments there was silence. One person, writing from Australia, said there was some initial excitement, especially with the apologies, and then “it was as if *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the document, dropped into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared without trace”. Another commented, “Rather than having dropped off the theological radar screen, it never came onto it”. Jim Neilan, writing from New Zealand in *Tui Motu*, calls *Ecclesia in Oceania* “a very disappointing document” (Neilan: 7). Chris McGillion, the Herald’s religious affairs columnist in Australia said that Pope John Paul’s response to the Synod was “a tiny drop in Oceania”.³

My response to this criticism is: do we just leave the document submerged in the Ocean or do we venture out to see if there are some pearls there to be harvested from beneath the surface?

3. The Third “Apology”

If one looks closely, there is a third “apology” in the document – perhaps “confession” would be a better term. In section n. 7 on “Mission and Culture”, we read: “The missionaries brought the truth of the Gospel which is foreign to no one; but at times some sought to impose elements which were culturally alien to the people. There is a need now for careful discernment to see what is of the Gospel and what is not, what is essential and what is less so”. Surely, such a statement in a papal document addressed to people in Oceania, should be taken seriously.

What were these burdens laid (imposed) upon people by Catholic missionaries? Is the Pope referring to monogamy, “foreign” languages like English and French, school systems, dress codes, or bans on traditional rituals? It would most probably be difficult to come to a consensus on what was “imposed”,

however, the statement amounts to a confession that missionaries have, in one form or other, inflicted their own cultural values on indigenous people. Maybe these were “good” values, but presented in a way that demanded an external adherence without sufficient respect for the free will of the other.

The first missionaries were men and women of their time. In the late 19th century and early 20th century evolutionary thinking dominated in the sciences and in European cultural attitudes. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, Catholic theology was dominated by the mediaeval missionary paradigm, summed up in the well-known axiom, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (Outside the Church there is no salvation.) In the 1960’s, with the Second Vatican Council one finds a new openness to culture, and Council documents with statements referring to the rules of Christian ethics being already present in the customs of non-Christian nations, thanks to the action of God’s Word and the Spirit, which “enlighten all people” (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, n. 2).

Early missionaries were doing their best with the theological and missiological tools available to them at the time. Many worked hard to learn the language and culture of the people among whom they lived. Yet, we have to admit cultural imposition has occurred, intentionally or unintentionally, and as the document has noted, it is not too late for evaluation and discernment in the area of the Gospel and culture. If the Pope’s apology is to be more than empty lip-service, missionaries, along with the local Churches, need to look anew at the interaction of Gospel and cultural values today. This is fundamental to the process of inculturation.

4. Inculturation

“Inculturation” is a new term expressing an old reality in the history of the Christian Church: i.e. the insertion of Christianity into different cultures and the establishment of new kinds of Christian communities (See Zocca: 2001, 2002). Historians point to examples of inculturation in the early Jewish context, such as decisions about circumcision of Christians and the reinterpretation of Jewish dietary laws. The Church borrowed elements from Roman civilisation such as the hierarchically structured imperial system, the legal system, and the territorial division into provinces and dioceses. Through creative assimilation the Church gave new meaning to the Jewish Passover, and Christmas celebrations replaced the Roman winter festival. Later, theological concepts were reformulated in Aristotle’s philosophical categories.

However, the actual term “inculturation” has been

used only in the last 20 years. The 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops defined inculturation as signifying “an interior transformation of authentic values through their integration into Christianity, and the rooting of Christianity in various human cultures”. The theological basis here is that of “incarnation” where the eternal *Logos* was immersed in the human condition of Jesus of Nazareth, taking full part in the Jewish culture, and then critically challenging the culture from within, calling its people to conversion and change. What is more, Jesus reached out to marginalized people like prostitutes, lepers and the possessed, non-Jews and women. This model of the incarnation has been taken as a model for the inculturation of the Church in different contexts.

5. Inculturation in the Post-Synodal Exhortation

Section n. 16 of the Post-Synodal Exhortation, under the sub-heading “The Gospel and Culture” explicitly addresses the issue of “inculturation”. (In contrast, the topic merited a whole chapter in *Ecclesia in Africa*). The position in the document does little to indicate the importance given to it by the Bishops at the Synod. In fact, at the Synod, after the topic of the “Unique contribution of Oceania”, “Inculturation” was the subject of the second of the 50 propositions approved and given to the Pope. The proposition noted both modern “Western” values such as, promotion of the dignity of the person, and the ecological movement; and values from indigenous cultures such as a sense of the sacred, of joy, of community, of sharing, and of communal ownership.

The Exhortation defines inculturation as “the gradual way in which the Gospel is incarnated in the various cultures”. In some cases Christian values readily take root in a particular culture. At other times the process of inculturation involves the transformation and purification of cultural values. There is an echo here of Paul VI’s definition of evangelisation as “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 18).

In Section n. 16, the Exhortation uses expressions like “Inculturation is born out of respect for both the Gospel and the culture in which it is proclaimed”, “The word made flesh is foreign to no culture”, “In each culture the Christian faith will be lived in a unique way,” and, “the Church ... must respect each culture and never ask the people to renounce it”. Such ideals are laudable and possibly thought provoking. Implementation in practice, in today’s changing world is another issue, hardly

addressed. As Solomon Islander Henry Paroi notes, people may feel resentment today when an outsider comes talking about inculturation, “because at one time they were told that their practices were bad and evil, and now they are asked to do the very things that were rejected in the first place” (Paroi, 2000: 167).

References relevant to inculturation are not limited just to section n. 16, but occur throughout the document. For example, in the Introduction (section n. 1) we read how “from the earliest times, the peoples of Oceania were moved by the divine presence in the riches of nature and culture”. This statement is based not so much on a theology of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, but rather a protological (creation) theology, or a pneumatological model as the activity of God’s Spirit. This approach is often allied to a “Fulfillment theology” because the Gospel is seen as fulfilling the deepest longings of the human heart, and pre-Christian attempts to fulfil these longings are regarded as genuine religious practices, inspired by the Spirit, but lacking the revelation of God’s special relationship with us in Christ.

We also read how “it is the Church’s task to help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their traditions” (n. 28) and about the importance in the liturgy of the appropriate use of symbols drawn from the local cultures so as to avert the cultural alienation of indigenous people (n. 39). The Pope says that the Church in Oceania needs to study more thoroughly the traditional religions of the indigenous populations, in order to enter more effectively into the dialogue which Christian proclamation requires”. To accomplish “this the Church needs experts” in many fields “above all, theology” (n. 25). This is hardly new (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 22).

The papal document acknowledges the so-called “double aspect” of inculturation whereby the Gospel challenges cultures and requires that some values and forms are transformed or purified, while at the same time culture offers positive values and forms that enrich and modify our understanding of the Gospel. This requires a “dialogue” which involves both Gospel and cultural values. The document puts it in terms of “identifying what is and what is not of Christ”. In this way, not only will “cultures attain the fullness of life to which their deepest values have always looked and for which their people had always hoped” but also “the positive values and forms found in the cultures of Oceania will enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived” (n. 16). The Pope notes how the Synod Fathers, “recognised that the many cultures each in different ways provide insights which help the Church to understand better

and express the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (n. 17).

This acknowledgement that inculturation is a two-way street in which Christian faith is not only integrated into other cultures, but that those other cultures make their own unique contribution to the Church itself, needs to be taken seriously. There is a catch though, because, as we read in section (n. 17), “Genuine inculturation of the Christian faith must always be done with the guidance of the universal Church”, and “new expressions and forms should be tested and approved by the competent authorities”. As we have seen recently in the struggle with Roman officials to have liturgical texts with appropriate English language approved for the region, the “guidance” and “approval” of authorities in Rome can prove to be quite inhibiting in practice.

6. The Unique quality of Oceania

The Papal document notes that Oceania comprises a unique part of humanity in a unique region (n. 6). The Pacific Ocean covers 181 million sq. km., which is about one third of the earth’s surface. The population is relatively low (Hau’ofa 1993). In the year 2000, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific had a total population of 34,082,000, which was only 1.8 per cent of the world population of 6,142,000,000. Yet there is a unique diversity in the region. For example, there are (or were) almost 1,400 distinct languages (not dialects) spoken in the Pacific, or about a quarter of the world’s languages (Lynch: 25). If each language represents a distinct culture, then one can imagine the cultural richness of Oceania.*

Table 1. Pacific Languages by Region and Country (Source: J. Lynch, *Pacific Languages*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998, p. 28).

Melanesia (excluding W. Papua)	946+
Papua New Guinea	750+
Solomon Islands	63
Vanuatu	105
New Caledonia	28
Micronesia	16
Belau	1
Northern Marianas and Guam	1
Marshall	1
Kiribati	1
Nauru	1
Federated States of Micronesia	11
Fiji and Polynesia	22
Fiji, including Rotuma	3
Tonga	2
Niue	1

The Samoas	1
Tuvalu	1
Tokelau	1
Wallis and Futuna	2
Cook Islands	3
Hawai’i	1
French Polynesia	5
Easter Island	1
Aotearoa New Zealand	1
Australia (some extinct or moribund)	200
Total	1,184+

These are conservative figures. Others would put the numbers higher, particularly for Melanesia. Speakers of many of these languages now live outside their home countries, and particularly in Australia and New Zealand, immigration from other parts of the world have resulted in a much greater linguistic and cultural complexity in recent years.

A question for the Church is how to appreciate this cultural diversity in a way that can enrich the faith life of our nations.

7. Contextualisation

A term that does not appear in the Exhortation, but which is surely relevant is “contextualisation”. Too often “inculturation” is seen in terms of traditional cultural values only, or is based on models of culture that do not take social change sufficiently into account. Contextualisation puts more emphasis on inculturation in the rapidly changing context in which we find ourselves today.⁵ In most parts of Oceania, the culture that was the object of the first evangelisation no longer exists as such. People live today in a completely different world. Contextualisation tries to address the question of how to proclaim the Gospel in a way that resonates with the local experience of the people’s life and culture in a time of rapid change. The *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) for the Synod noted that the crisis of evangelisation today is more than just a crisis of faith but also a crisis of culture (*IL*, n. 21).

The Post-Synodal Exhortation acknowledges the need for new approaches to meet new situations. We read about changes today, both positive and negative (n. 7) For example, today, a tidal wave of secularism, sweeping across the Pacific, is testing the vitality of Church life. Worse than antagonism comes indifference. In Australia, weekly mass attendance has fallen from 50% in 1960 to 20% at the end of the century. In New

Zealand the number of those who declare themselves as having “no religion” has increased from 27.2% of the population in 1991 to 37% in 1998.⁶ Clearly, many people are facing a crisis of faith in institutional religion.

What sort of vision can the Church propose in such a situation? At the Synod, Archbishop Hickey of Perth, in his report asked, “Have we a vision of an evangelised culture or society? What then are the signs of an evangelised culture?”. Archbishop Hickey himself replied in terms of Mt 11:4-5: the vision Jesus gave in response to the questions of John the Baptist’s emissaries: “Go back to John and report what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead people are raised to life, and the poor have the Good News preached to them”. The Archbishop added, “Our region will only be successfully evangelised when we are able to repeat these words of Jesus”.⁷

We read in the Exhortation how the Church must respond in new and effective ways to moral and social questions (n. 7), how Christ must be represented in a way well adapted to the younger generation and the rapidly changing culture in which they live (n. 14), that the Church must incorporate the positive aspects of youth culture into the Church’s life and mission (n. 44), and that Jesus Christ wants to meet the people of Oceania in “new ways” (n. 4). The sentiments expressed are excellent, but the challenge to find new ways to put such sentiments into practice in the life of the Church is a daunting one. We can look at census statistics and, for example, bemoan the fact that relatively speaking Catholics are now 3% less in the total population of Papua New Guinea than 10 years previously. But surely that should not cloud our vision for still we have 1,391,000 people who declare that they are Catholic and what a resource that is!

There is no shortage of difficulties. As Cardinal Williams pointed out in his address at the promulgation of the Post-Synodal Exhortation, problems confronted by the local Churches in Oceania have intensified in the three years since the Synod. Social, political and economic stability have been threatened by a political coup in Fiji, the after-effects of ten years’ of conflict on Bougainville, armed insurrection in the Solomon Islands, displaced West Papuans crossing into the Papua New Guinea border provinces, Asian boat-people desperately seeking sanctuary, economic recession causing a quarter of Cook Islanders to migrate from their home islands, and Oceania’s nearest neighbours, the East Timorese suffering terrible bloodshed and devastation in revenge for their referendum vote in favour of independence. These socio-economic and political factors must be taken into account.

The problems and challenges notwithstanding, the Church in Oceania offers a unique contribution to the Universal Church. Among these are the following:

- Richness of cultures, languages and ways of expressing faith;
- Laity involved and taking responsibility in Church life;
- Closeness to the environment;
- Freshness. The region is the most recent to receive the Gospel;
- Multicultural societies;
- Tradition of small communities;
- Australian and New Zealand societies exhibit the value of tolerance;
- Societies in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific value relationships and hospitality;
- We have indigenous spiritualities as unique expressions of the sacred (See Gibbs, 1999a: 330).

These are values and resources that we can build on in contextualising the Gospel in Oceania today. As the Exhortation puts it, “The Church is challenged to interpret the Good News for the peoples of Oceania according to their present needs and circumstances” (n. 14).

8. A Companion to *Novo Millennio Ineunte*

Ecclesia in Oceania explicitly mentions *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI— “The Beginning of the New Millennium”), as a source of insight for implementing the experience of the Synod (n. 9). NMI also explicitly states that the rich legacy of reflection in the Synods must not be allowed to disappear, but must be implemented in practical ways (NMI, n. 29).

In many respects, NMI comes across as more practical than *Ecclesia in Oceania*. It calls on each local Church to reflect on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God during the Jubilee Year (NMI, n. 3) and the calls for the Church to set up a post-Jubilee pastoral plan (NMI, n. 15) At one stage it uses the appealing image of the new millennium as “opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture” (NMI, n. 58).

The renewal envisaged in NMI focuses on “holiness”, which is about the “life” of the Christian community. Bishop John Dew of Wellington spoke about this at the Synod. He pointed out how young people are struggling with life issues and the Church is called to give hope and life to them by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Our world is not going to be changed by ideas, words, sermons or books. Our world will be changed by the witness of holy lives”.⁸ How can we be holy in the most ordinary circumstances of life? The point is to help people answer

this call to holiness in ways “adapted to people’s needs” (*NMI*, n. 31). It involves discovering Christ as the one in whom God shows us his compassionate heart, lived in the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups (*NMI*, n. 40). The document notes that “This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness” (*NMI*, n. 40).

NMI continues explicitly on the theme of inculturation: “In the Third Millennium, Christianity will have to respond ever more effectively to this need for inculturation. Christianity, while remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root. In this Jubilee Year, we have rejoiced in a special way in the beauty of the Church’s varied face. This is perhaps only a beginning, a barely sketched image of the future which the Spirit of God is preparing for us” *NMI*, n. 40).

9. Where are the pearls?

What is new in the Post-Synodal document, *Ecclesia in Oceania*? Someone commented that the document reads like the minutes of a meeting at which the Pope was an observer. Maybe this is true, but if we dive deep, I think there are pearls to be harvested.

For a short time the Synod and the Post-Synodal document put Oceania on the ecclesial map, not just in controversy over bare torsos in St Peter’s but in the sheer vastness and variance of the region. The document obviously struggles with the immensity of the region and the diversity, with islands, deserts, cities and villages. Even in one nation like Papua New Guinea, we labour with diversity. For example, the *Tok Pisin* version of *Ecclesia in Oceania* translated in Rabaul used expressions and spelling that are hardly acceptable on the mainland of Papua New Guinea. Will we need to have regional pidgin translations of the document even within Papua New Guinea?

What else is new? The fulfilment model of incarnational theology is hardly new. Nor are there novel answers to questions bishops were raising about the divorced and remarried, or the shortage of priests to celebrate the Eucharist. At times it appears that Rome either did not understand or chose to side-step such issues. For example in n. 40 there is a statement

no doubt coming from our Bishops at the Synod that there is a need for “great wisdom and courage” in addressing the situation of not enough priests. Most of the Bishops were calling for solutions, like *viri probati* (ordaining mature married men) or other creative proposals. The Pope has added, “I make my own the Synod’s insistence that greater efforts be made to awaken vocations to the priestly life, and to allocate priests throughout the region in a more equitable way”. Laudable as the statement is, I doubt if that was what the Bishops wanted to hear!

In fact, there are still outstanding points of tension between the Bishops and Rome, such as consultation on the appointment of Bishops, lack of effective dialogue between the Roman offices and the local Churches, the translation of liturgical texts, consultation when documents are changed, and the problem of access of (conservative) pressure groups to the Roman Curia.

Despite these difficulties, in my opinion, the “pearls” are to be found in the combination of the three points raised by Cardinal Williams in his address at the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation: *communio, inculturation* and *a renewed proclamation of the Gospel in ways appropriate for the peoples of Oceania*. How will inculturation contribute to the building up of *communio* and to a renewed evangelisation in Oceania?

Inculturation is not an end in itself, rather a means to a more genuine and vital local Church, and a way of contributing the special gifts of the local Church to the wider Church. In section n. 16 we read how “the Church invites all people to express the living word of Jesus in ways that speak to their heart and minds”. Note the order here – heart and minds. The living word must speak to the heart of a people first. The required depth will be achieved only as part of a process of inculturation/contextualisation.

Moreover, the formation of Christian communities (*communio*) does not occur in isolation. At the Synod, Bishop Walker of Broken Bay asked, “Is the life of the Catholic community a genuine embodiment of our traditional faith which speaks meaningfully and relevantly to the society of which it is a part?”⁹ As the Exhortation rightly notes, the Church, in seeking to proclaim the Gospel in Oceania, “faces a twofold challenge... on the one hand the traditional religions and cultures, and on the other, the modern process of secularisation” (n. 20). This entails a “personal encounter” (*ibid.*, n. 20), and a “new conversation” (n. 16) as the Church respectfully listens, challenges, and invites people to come into the fullness of truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Such dialogue will be greatly facilitated by appropriate inculturation/

contextualisation in which culture and Gospel “will meet in a mutually enriching way” (n. 10).

At this point we are launching out into the deep because it is not clear where we will end up and, from the Exhortation it seems that Rome does not have the map. *NMI*, n. 29 notes that the Church already has the programme for the future – “the Gospel” and “the living Tradition”. That is correct. But the question is how to interpret the Gospel and to what degree the Church in Oceania is really free to benefit from a ‘living’ Tradition? Statements in *NMI*, n. 46 that “the unity of Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities”, notwithstanding, will Rome take the Bishops of Oceania seriously when they propose changes and new approaches suited to the context of the Church born under the Southern Cross?

10. Gospel and Living Tradition

At the Synod, Bishop Gilles Côté of Daru-Kiunga, PNG, argued for the importance of building the Church upon the strengths of culture: “The only way to build the Church, Mystery of Communion, in our Melanesian Society, is to build it with the participation of all, making sure that the key values of the culture become somehow the key values of our process of evangelisation... Our efforts and our methods used for evangelisation need to make it possible for the Catholic faith to immerse itself in our Melanesian culture and to be re-expressed according to the legitimate forms of that culture. Will the Institutional Church allow Jesus to walk the way of the people of Melanesia, just like he did in Palestine, challenging the truth of their own religious experiences, purifying and enriching their lives, not from outside or from the top, but from within?”¹⁰

Bishop Côté’s sentiments are reminiscent of the words of Pope Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975) — “What matters is to evangelise man’s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et Spes*, always taking the person as one’s starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God” (n. 20).

I believe that this is where the Church in Oceania – whether in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific or Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands — must start in the interpretation of the Gospel: with the person as the starting point and the relationships of people between themselves and with God! That is where we will discover the treasure of the living tradition found in the faith of

people in the small communities throughout Oceania. It is not a matter of magnificent new programmes to establish Ecclesial Communities from the top down, but rather to appreciate what we have and to support and nurture that (as one “cultures” pearls?).

The primary agent of inculturation must be the living community and attempts to impose change from above will most likely result in superficial forms of cultural expression which do not come from the heart. Inculturation/contextualisation will occur when the agents of inculturation get involved in people’s struggles and hopes. This means beginning with the communities themselves, encouraging them in a continuing process of conversion as they look at their own experience in the light of the Gospel (see, Gibbs 1999b).

The primary agents of inculturation are the local Churches, yet if a renewed proclamation of the Gospel entails bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new, then there will most likely be other agents besides church-going Christians. Christian communities surely offer an indispensable contribution in giving witness to Christ. But is Christ limited to the Church? One must be open to the possibility of the Good News being shared by other agents. Where would one find such dialogue partners? As I have argued elsewhere (Gibbs 1999a), they will be found where one finds witness to values such as community, compassion and care of Creation.

11. Implications

i. If “holiness” is living your ordinary life the best possible way you can, then for inculturation/contextualisation we have to ask: How does the situation you are in help or hinder you in your attempt to live your life as best you can? What is it you need to live a better life in terms of the fullness of life Jesus has offered us? Cardinal Ratzinger’s words at the Synod may be relevant here. He warned the Bishops against any false sweetening of the figure of Jesus and pointed out that the Lord warned his Disciples not to be sugar, but rather the “salt” of the earth.¹¹

ii. Theologically, we are challenged by the *kenosis*, or self self-emptying of the incarnation. Taking the example from the Pope, would now be an opportune time for the Church in Oceania to apologise for the cultural impositions of the past? If so, what form should such an apology take, and what symbols would be appropriate in such a gesture?

iii. The Pope has replied to the Synod propositions and ultimately the implementation of the points in the Exhortation lies in the hands of the Church in Oceania. Maybe *Ecclesia in Oceania* did drop into the Pacific Ocean without causing any tidal waves at the

time. However, each Church member should ask how the document challenges us in our own particular fields. Moreover, it could be a useful exercise to investigate how ideas aired in the Bishops' presentations in the first week of the Synod, but not treated in the Papal document, could still be worth consideration at the local level.

iv. In the Exhortation n. 7 we read how "there is a need now for careful discernment to see what is of the Gospel and what is not, what is essential and what is less so". What criteria can we use for such discernment in our rapidly changing world, affected by local politics and global forces? The two criteria I find work well in discussions with people here in Papua New Guinea are: Is it life-giving? Does it promote human respect/dignity? A positive response to those two questions will surely imply Gospel values.

v. The discussion on inculturation has implications for our seminaries. We are advised that Bishops are "responsible for the formation of local clergy in the context of the local culture and tradition" (n. 48). This implies, not so much geographical proximity to the home province, but rather formation and instruction by men and women, priests, brothers, sisters, and lay people, who themselves are examples of life-giving faith and cultural values in our contemporary world. To what degree is this the case at the present time? Moreover, how can we supply what is lacking in the present seminary system, so that our priests will be recognised in society, not as "big" men, or the equivalent of eunuchs, but as "true" men, living comfortably with their masculinity.

vi. What implications does inculturation in *Ecclesia in Oceania* have for our pastoral planning here in Oceania? I doubt if any Bishop needs convincing that inculturation or pastoral planning are desirable. The difficulty is in the details of how to develop pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. Here we must avoid having our canoe holed on two reefs: the top-down, hierarchical model of Church, and what *Ecclesia in Oceania* terms falling prey to ecclesial introversion (n. 19). The proposed Assembly of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea is one excellent move to initiate a process of planning that entails dialogue between the Church leadership and the grass-roots faith communities. The Assembly will benefit from the insights of the Synod and the topics chosen for the Assembly reflect the primary concerns expressed in the Post-Synodal Papal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*.

12. Conclusion

Ecclesia in Oceania mentions Blessed Mary Mackillop, saying that "the holiness demanded by the Gospel is as Australian as she was Australian" (n. 6). A similar ideal confronts Christians throughout Oceania — that their holiness be as Samoan as they

are Samoan, Melanesian as they are Melanesian. . . .

Starting with the statement from Cardinal Williams that community, inculturation and a renewed proclamation of the Gospel in ways appropriate for the peoples of Oceania are the key themes and insights which emerged from the Synod, I have argued that these themes cannot be taken in isolation and that inculturation and/or contextualisation must be an essential element in planning for the future. The Bishops have warned that the Church "must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion" (n. 19), I maintain that genuine and appropriate inculturation will make possible new encounters with Christ, and "these new encounters will become the seeds of new mission" (n. 3).

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End Notes

- ¹ Personal communication, Cardinal Williams.
- ² ABC Darwin, Interview by Fred McCue, 9.07AM AEST, Friday, 23 November, 2001.
- ³ Chris McGillion in the *Herald*, Tuesday, 27 November, 2001. McGillion continued: "Like a general who ignores the reports of his field

commanders that ammunition is low, the maps all wrong, and the shoe leather wearing thin, Pope John Paul II is urging his army on to new conquests. It is a short-sighted strategy that ultimately could prove self-defeating”.

⁴ “To achieve this, it is necessary that in each of the great socio-cultural regions, as they are called, theological investigation should be encouraged In this way it will be more clearly understood by what means the faith can be explained in terms of the philosophy and wisdom of the people, and how their customs, concept of life and social structures can be reconciled with the standard proposed by divine revelation.... Christian life will be adapted to the mentality and character of each culture, and local traditions together with the special qualities of each national family, illumined by the light of the Gospel, will be taken up into a Catholic unity” (*Ad Gentes*, n. 22).

⁵ For a recent view from the Pacific, see the paper by Sr Keiti Ann Kanongata’a, “Why Contextual”. A paper given at a conference on Contextual theology in Suva, August 2001. To be published in the *Pacific Journal of Theology*.

⁶ Source of statistics: Intervention of Archbishop George Pell at the Synod, and the Address by Cardinal Tomko to the New Zealand Bishops, reported in the *NZ Catholic*, 29 November 1988, p. 8.

⁷ Synodus Episcoporum - *Bulletin*, 04 - 23.11.1998 - 18.

⁸ Synodus Episcoporum - *Bulletin* 06 - 24.11.1998 - 5.

⁹ *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) n. 49 - 9 December 1998, p. 18.

¹⁰ Synod Intervention. Summary in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) n. 48 - 2 December 1998, p. 15. Quotation from type-written manuscript by Bp. Côté.

¹¹ In the summary of Cardinal Ratzinger's intervention, the *L'Osservatore Romano* (daily edition) Saturday 28 November 1998, p. 8, refers to “un falso addolcimento della figure di Gesù”.

Ref.: * First titled “Reflections on Inculturation in the Churches in Oceania Report”, in *Catalyst* 32.1, 2002, pp. 94-111.

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SEDOS ANNUAL REPORT 2003

I. Introduction

In a more general way, the SEDOS Secretariat has reported on the various initiatives of SEDOS that took place since December 2002 until now [cf. SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 35, 11/12 (November/December 2003)] and informed the SEDOS membership about modifications in the personnel structure of SEDOS and about its major activities.

This second part of the 2003 Annual Report comes to you on behalf of the SEDOS Executive Committee. Its nature may be less informative and more reflective: providing you with some background ideas that support the SEDOS activities.

Looking to the future of SEDOS has been a constant concern of the Executive Committee during the various meetings that took place. In this Report we will dedicate ample attention to the results of recent brainstorming about the future. First, allow us to reflect on the situation last year, giving particular attention to the SEDOS' leadership.

II. Looking at the past year

2.1. Executive Director

Since October 2002, SEDOS continued without a full time Executive Director on board. Thanks to the united efforts and the good spirit of the members of the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat Staff, SEDOS continued to offer most of its usual activities over a somewhat difficult transition time. Thanks also to Fr Ludger Feldkämper, SVD and Fr Paul Steffen, SVD, who, in addition to their personal duties, offered regular assistance in following-up the daily in-coming mail.

2.1.1. Temporary acting Executive Director

In their Report, the SEDOS Secretariat Staff, at SEDOS Office every day, expressed their sincere appreciation for the precious work done by Fr Walter von Holzen, SVD.

The Executive Committee also experienced Fr Walter's gracious presence in Rome for about four months (January – April 2004) as a great blessing. Fr Walter who, before Fr Bernard East, OP, had been in charge of SEDOS for many years, was in many ways more than helpful at this critical time. He not only followed-up the day-to-day SEDOS operations, and edited various issues of the SEDOS Bulletin, but contacted the Superiors General of numerous male and female Orders and Congregations in the search for a new Executive Director. In addition he visited the funding agencies of MISSIO Aachen, MISSIO München and MISEREOR, and shared his SEDOS *know how* with the actual Executive Committee members and with the Secretariat personnel. The SEDOS Executive Committee offers its sincere and wholehearted thanks to Fr Walter von Holzen, SVD and to his Congregation for the above services.

2.1.2. New Executive Director

Also SEDOS President Fr Piero Trabucco, Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries, continued to search for a new Executive Director, fortunately with success. The SEDOS Executive Committee is very glad to be able to present to the 2003 SEDOS General Assembly its candidate for the job of Executive Secretary, in the person of Fr Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP, who has been chosen from among the candidates who applied.

2.2. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met more often than

usual, given the situation which required a closer follow-up of the activities and operations of the organisation. Additional meetings for some Executive Committee members took place to plan the 2003 Open Seminar which was well attended and appreciated.

Most of the members of the SEDOS Executive Committee, including the President, the Vice-President and the Treasurer, are Superiors General or General Councillors. Due to the activities linked to responsibilities in their respective religious institutes, they are often out of Rome. This made meetings of the full Executive Committee difficult.

III. Looking towards the near and further future

3.1. SEDOS three year planning

On Sunday, 28 September 2003, the Executive Committee held its extraordinary Fall Meeting, which enabled the group to do some extensive future planning.

SEDOS will continue to plan activities as usual, which means one [01] residential seminar and about five [05] public conferences on a yearly basis.

In order to include in the planning the ideas, suggestions and concerns of the SEDOS membership, the Executive Committee based its plans on the very helpful orientations offered by the 2002 Residential Seminar Group (cf. SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 34, No. 6/7 – June/July, pp. 211–213). In other words, the 2002 Residential Seminar offered very useful concrete directions for the organisation of SEDOS' activities over the next three years.

3.2. SEDOS as Centre of Publication and Documentation

SEDOS continues to encourage research and study. It disseminates information through its Bulletin, the website, public lectures, working groups and seminars.

3.2.1. The SEDOS Bulletin

The publication of the Bulletin remains a major activity of SEDOS and makes the institution known worldwide. Last year, due to the absence of an Executive Director, we needed to decrease the number of issues

per year, namely 06. In the meantime, more attention was given to the publication of articles on the SEDOS Homepage.

The SEDOS Executive Committee has reviewed its Bulletin publication policy. We want to continue to issue our Bulletin, since it is important for SEDOS members and others to receive good reading material. We will keep the number of six [06] issues per year, but increase the number of pages and articles in each issue. This means 48 pages instead of the usual 32 pages per issue, of which 2/3 will be in English and 1/3 in French. Each issue will include three more articles: two [02] in English, one [01] in French. Thus, our subscribers will get almost the same amount of reading material as when SEDOS edited 10 issues per year. The printer will use a lighter type of paper so that the weight per issue will not incur higher postage costs. Only the printing costs might increase a bit. It will however not influence the subscription fee.

Keeping to six issues per year, will facilitate the editing work that needs to be done by the Executive Director. It will give him enough time to study and select good articles so that the Bulletin can be a quality resource for all who care for the Church and Mission and who want to deepen their understanding of global mission.

SEDOS would like to strongly encourage its member institutes to make a big effort to help circulate the SEDOS Bulletin to their communities world-wide, so that as many religious as possible may have the Bulletin available for reading, study and formation.

3.2.2. SEDOS Website

Since March 2002 (when the use of a counter was started), almost 18,000 people have visited the SEDOS Website on Internet [www.sedos.org]. It confirms the interest taken in the content of the site. The site is known and used especially by students.

A website is a medium that requires regular updating. The webmaster of the SEDOS Homepage does not work permanently in the office. In order to keep the site up-to-date, it would be good and helpful if one of the SEDOS Secretariat Staff could regularly, directly and quickly insert the necessary updates and changes (new articles, news announcements ...). There are simple computer programmes to this end.

SEDOS would like to encourage its member institutes to provide on their respective homepage a link to the one of SEDOS. SEDOS will make a serious

effort to improve the search engine's coverage, which increases the possibilities of the site.

3.2.3. SEDOS Documentation Centre

A lot of work and energy has been put into building the SEDOS Documentation Centre into a valuable and unique resource for study and research. The Executive Committee wishes this Centre to be used more. Efforts need to be made in order to improve the use and usefulness of this important resource.

One indispensable way is to put all the information that is available at the Documentation Centre on the SEDOS website.

The catalogue should be computerised and posted on the website.

SEDOS should look for ways to link-up our Documentation Centre — through internet — with universities, university libraries, especially the missiology department of the Urbanianum. In the coming years, under the leadership of the Executive Director, serious investigation needs to be done in this regard.

3.3. SEDOS as Centre of Study and Research

Already for many years, SEDOS has organized — in addition to its public conferences — an Annual Seminar, lasting for several days. In general these seminars have been successful international experiences: intense moments of common study and reflection on the Mission of the Church in general or on particular dimensions of its Mission (e.g. 2003 Open Seminar on Interreligious Dialogue with Islam).

3.3.1. SEDOS Residential Seminar

For various reasons, the Executive Committee decided that residential seminars should be the norm in the future. A residential seminar allows the participants to have more contacts with one another. Living together and the experience of occasional religious community building adds to the quality of the seminar. More than at an open seminar, discussion, sharing and the processing of input can take place in small groups. Even the

overall process of the seminar can be built up by the group of participants. The 2001 seminar experience was an excellent example in this regard (thanks to facilitator Mrs. Margaret Dennis).

3.3.2. SEDOS Residential Seminar 2004

In May 2004, SEDOS will once again hold a Residential Seminar. We have chosen the Salesianum (Via della Pisana, 1111) as the location for this major SEDOS event. The meeting will begin on Tuesday, 18 May 2004 and end on Saturday, 22 May 2004. The seminar will focus on: "Strategies for building reconciliation in environments of violence".

3.3.3. SEDOS Residential Seminar 2005

The Residential Seminar of 2005 will not take place as usual during the 3rd week of May. It is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, 03 May 2005 and end on Saturday, 07 May 2005. The reason for moving the date forward is because of the World Mission Conference of the World Council of Churches that will take place in Athens (Greece) from 12 to 19 May 2005. This conference is organized every seven years. SEDOS is invited to represent this event. For the first time the Catholic Church will be present at the Congress as a full member. The main thematic focus of this conference is: "*Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities*". The SEDOS 2004 Residential Seminar could be considered as preparatory to it.

3.3.4. SEDOS Public Conferences 2004

The Executive Committee brainstormed about possible topics for the public conferences for the year 2004: four (04) conferences per year (February, April, June, October) plus one (01) conference during the Annual General Assembly in December.

Suggested topics were drawn from the input of the 2002 Residential Seminar. February 2004: *Multicultural Communities*; April 2004: *Contemplative dimension of mission*; June 2004: *Formation for new leadership*; October 2004: *Inter-congregational collaboration*; December 2004: General Assembly.

It is not easy to get qualified speakers. There are however about 15 universities in Rome. The Executive Committee would like to make more use

of these resources for SEDOS purposes by inviting university professors to talk about what they are teaching. In addition, SEDOS should be informed about any qualified speakers who occasionally come to Rome for congresses and other purposes.

3.4. SEDOS — Working Groups

Research and study also takes place through the various SEDOS Working Groups. In the Annual Report of the SEDOS Secretariat, the various Working Groups provided a review. Each chairperson has presented a small account on their respective Working Group. SEDOS is grateful for the commitment of all of the members of each of these Working Groups, especially those who facilitate the groups so that significant work, study and research is done.

During its recent Fall Planning Meeting, the Executive Committee reflected on the role of the Working Groups within the overall activities and operations of SEDOS. Questions were raised as to how the Executive Committee and Executive Director could give more guidance and support to the study and research work. Working Groups could be encouraged to write or suggest articles for the SEDOS Bulletin and work towards SEDOS conferences and the yearly seminar.

IV. Issues of concern

To end the SEDOS Executive Committee wishes to voice some issues of concern to the SEDOS membership:

- How can we encourage more missionary congregations to become members of SEDOS?
- SEDOS would like to make a strong appeal for volunteers to serve in the Documentation Centre (working through the many periodicals). Religious communities in Rome may also subscribe to some of the same periodicals. So the reading could even be done at home in order to suggest good articles to the Editor of the SEDOS Bulletin.

Fr Pierre-Paul Walraet, OSC
SEDOS Executive Committee

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Coming Events

SEDOS Conference

“International Religious Communities in a Multicultural World”

by Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD

and

“Multicultural Communities: The Dynamics of Fellowship”

by Sr. Rosanna Marin, FMM

**Friday, 13 February, 2004
16:00 hrs**

Brothers of the Christian Schools,
Via Aurelia, 476 - Rome

Working Groups

Thursday, 26 February, **Debt Group** 10:00 hrs at **Palazzo S. Calisto, 16**

Tuesday, 9 March, **Bible and Mission Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**

Wednesday, 31 March, **China Group** 15:00 hrs at **SEDOS**