

| | |
|---|------------|
| Editorial | 78 |
| Mary, Mother of the Missionary Church <i>James Kroeger, M.M.</i> | 79 |
| Proclamation of Christ in Asia Today <i>Oscar Ante, OFM</i> | 87 |
| Witness, Our Service and Mission — Asian Perspective <i>Bienvenido Baisas, OFM</i> | 91 |
| La mission actuelle de l'Église dans le contexte de la "mondialisation" <i>Mgr Olivier de Berranger</i> | 96 |
| Le missionnaire et les situations de violence <i>Guy Theunis, M. Afr.</i> | 101 |
| Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission <i>Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S</i> | 106 |
| Issues in Mission Today: Challenges for Reflection at Edinburgh 2010 | 110 |
| "It's in the Blood": Dialogue with Primal Religion in Papua New Guinea <i>Philip Gibbs, SVD</i> | 117 |
| Coming Events | 124 |

Editorial

Summer Greetings to all our readers!

All through this year we have been listening to voices reminding us of the fortieth anniversary of the Decree *Ad Gentes* and SEDOS wants to add its little voice by honouring “*Mary, Mother of the Missionary Church*”. **James Kroeger**, MM, links the ‘inherently missionary nature of the Church with the role of Mary as Mother of the Church. Social Justice, Interfaith Dialogue, Peace-building, Education and Healthcare, Life-witness and Ecology are presented as five of the principal elements for an integral concept of mission with a Marian perspective.

Oscar Ante, OFM, invites us to join in the mission sending ceremony of one of their members. The “*Proclamation of Christ in Asia Today*” further expands on the purpose of Dialogue with other Faiths as a ‘road to encounter’. Proclamation of the Gospel is seen as the ‘mission response of the Church to the challenges of Asian realities in the light of the Gospel’.

Bienvenido Baisas, OFM, continues the reflection on our ‘Proclamation’ of the Gospel realities through the power of witnessing. *Witness, Our Service and Mission* expands on the idea that ‘people in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers but as men and women whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit’ as the way forward.

Mgr Olivier de Berranger carries us further along the road of dialogue. In «*La mission actuelle de l'Église dans le contexte de la <mondialisation>*» we are presented with three dimensions for the mission of the Church: the universality of rights, formation in business ethics and the dialogue between cultures.

Guy Theunis, M. Afr., takes us one step further on the road of mission as dialogue, in which the Church must engage society. In «*Le missionnaire et les situations de violence*» Guy analyses the different forms of violence and their causes and proposes formation for ‘non-violence’ as an essential way of making people aware of the importance of a non-violent attitude towards eradicating violence.

In “*Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission*”, **Robert Schreiter**, C.P.P.S., presents the commitment to strive for reconciliation as a model of mission today, ‘revealing to us the heart of the Gospel’. He further analyses the ‘understanding of reconciliation as a process for engaging in mission, and as a goal of mission’.

Steven Bevans, SVD, in “*Issues in Mission Today*”, first reviews the concept of mission at the time of the historical Declaration of Edinburgh in 1910 and then discusses some of the main issues concerning our future involvement in mission. The centrality of Jesus Christ and the necessity of witnessing to, and proclaiming, his name with faith and conviction is seen as the most important issue today.

Phillip Gibbs, SVD, also speaks of witnessing to Christ in “*It's in the Blood: Dialogue with Primal Religion in Papua New Guinea*”. Dialogue and witnessing to Christ is part of the dialogue; but what Christ are we talking about? A Euro-ecclesial Christ? A neo-colonial Christ? A meta-cosmic Christ? Dialogue with Primal religions might shed new light on discerning the face of Christ.

SEDOS Staff:

Publications:

Ms. Ilaria Iadeluca
(redactionседos@pcn.net)

Subscriptions and Accounting:

Mrs. Margarita Lofthouse (accountingedos@pcn.net)

Documentation Centre:

Mrs. Federica Pupilli (documentationsедos@pcn.net)

Proof-reader:

English and French: Ms. Philippa Wooldridge

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director

Mary, Mother of the Missionary Church

- James Kroeger, M.M.* -

Four decades ago, on 21 November 1964, in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, a special liturgy was celebrated to close the Third Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The occasion marked the solemn promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and two lesser Decrees on Ecumenism and the Eastern Catholic Churches. In his concluding Address, Pope Paul VI noted that *Lumen Gentium*, because of its comprehensive nature and richness of thought, was certain to become a pivotal document of the Council; with evident joy, he declared: "We do not hesitate, with God's help, to promulgate this Constitution on the Church".¹

Paul VI went on to note that the Church can further understand her mystical union with Christ if she possesses a true and broad Catholic teaching on Mary. The Pope asserted that this solid theological vision is to be found in the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, a chapter which is the "crowning point" of the document, because it expresses "the Catholic doctrine on the place that should be accorded to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mystery of Christ and of the Church".²

The Pope continued and explained that he was acceding to "requests that the maternal role that the Blessed Virgin Mary fulfills with regard to the Christian people be proclaimed at this Council in explicit terms". Then, he formally noted: "And so, for the glory of the Blessed Virgin and our own consolation, We declare Mary Most Holy to be the Mother of the Church, that is of the whole Christian people.... We decree that from now on the Christian people should use this sweetest of names".³ The Pope noted how Mary would lend her "maternal aid to the Church... [as she strives] to carry out her salvific mission with renewed zeal". The Church finds "the definitive model for the perfect imitation of Christ in the Virgin Mother of God".⁴

The Second Vatican Council, in another pivotal Decree *Ad Gentes*, goes on to note the inherently missionary identity of the Church: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.... She strives to proclaim the gospel to all people" (*Ad Gentes*, 7 December 1965, nn. 1-2). Again, Paul VI reinforces the insights of the Council when he later writes: "... evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 14).

An important conclusion can be drawn from these significant words of Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council: Mary is now known as "Mother of the Church", a community of faith that is inherently and innately missionary. Therefore, without reserve, the Catholic faithful can know and address Mary as "Mother of the Missionary Church". She can serve as a *model of missionary activity* for all members of the Church. In the life and attitudes of Mary, all baptized Christians can find an example for their own diverse apostolic activities. Catholics — all Christians — can implore their mother: "Mary, Mother of the Church-in-mission, pray for us".

A Vision of Evangelization. This modest essay seeks to develop the intimate links between Mary and the Missionary Church by exploring several principle elements of the Church's evangelizing mission and by showing how these elements are manifested in the life and attitudes of the Virgin Mary. A simple logic is followed: if Mary is mother of this missionary faith-community, the Church, then, one should be able to identify the various dimensions of mission within Mary's own life and example.

Evangelization, for many Catholics, is a generally unfamiliar and relatively new term. The Second Vatican Council as well as recent popes have placed evangelization at the centre of the Church's identity and mission. A brief, workable definition of evangelization is found in a 1975 document written by Pope Paul VI, himself a great evangelizer. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* the Pope notes: "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (n. 18). For the Church, evangelization is her central mission. As noted above, "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize" (n. 14).

Note that the Pope says that *all the strata* of humanity are to be transformed by the light and power of the Gospel. This means that the Church today has adopted a wide and comprehensive vision of evangelization; many facets comprise the Church's evangelizing mission. One can identify several of the "principal elements" of evangelization: **(I)** Christian Presence and Witness of Life; **(II)** Service to Humanity through Development and Human Liberation; **(III)** Interreligious Dialogue with the Followers of Other Faiths; **(IV)** Explicit Gospel Proclamation and Catechesis; **(V)** Prayer, Contemplation, and Liturgical-Sacramental Life. In a word, the one evangelizing mission of the Church is comprised of several component elements and authentic forms. This integral or holistic vision, promoted by recent popes, has emerged in the Church over the past decades, especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).⁵

Viewing evangelization through five of its essential dimensions results in clarity, insight, and proper integration; this integral approach is a contemporary Catholic vision of evangelization. As this presentation unfolds, readers will observe that each of these five dimensions of the Church's evangelizing mission is first explored and then subsequently linked into the life-witness of Mary, who is "Mother of the Missionary Church".

(I) For Paul VI, **Christian Presence and Witness of Life** form the "initial act of evangelization" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 21). Daily activities, living together in harmony, live as individuals of integrity, duties in the community — all these are to be a basic "faith-witness" that demonstrates how Christian living is shaped by Christian faith and values. Through this wordless witness, "Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live" (*ibid.*); through their lives Christians are to give their neighbours a clear and powerful example of faith and integrity.

In today's world, people desire and respect authentic witnesses; as Pope Paul VI noted: "Modern people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*ibid.*, n. 41; cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 42; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 11,42). For example, the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, declared "Blessed" on 19 October, 2003, was known worldwide for her loving and selfless care of the poorest of the poor; she is an "icon" of Christian presence, life, and service (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 42, 7d).

The Blessed Virgin Mary gives the Church a marvellous example through her witness of life. In the narrative of the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38) the Angel Gabriel is sent on a mission to Mary. Being completely human, Mary is bewildered and "deeply disturbed" by Gabriel's message; she is troubled and afraid. Encouraged by Gabriel, Mary submits to the God's designs. She knows that "nothing is impossible to God" (Lk 1:36). "I am the handmaid [servant, slave] of the Lord ... *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*" (Lk 1:37-38).

What richness is included in that simple word: *fiat*. It is Mary's response to God's marvellous design unfolding in her daily life. Mary had to walk the road of faith; she advanced as a pilgrim on a faith-journey. Saint Augustine poetically captures Mary's profound faith when he writes: "*Maria concepit Christum in corde [mente] priusquam in carne [ventre]*".⁶ Yes, Mary's conception *in her faith* precedes the conception *in her flesh*.

Mary's witness of a deep faith-life was a constant challenge, not only a once-and-for-all response during the Annunciation. Imagine the challenge to her faith when Mary was misunderstood as a

pregnant, unmarried woman, when there was no place in Bethlehem for her to give birth, when the Holy Family had to flee as refugees into Egypt, when Jesus was lost in the Temple, when she stood under the Cross of her Son at Calvary. Mary was not spared the uncertainties, struggles, and sufferings of human life; she, as did her Son, “submitted so humbly” and “learned to obey through suffering” (Heb 5:7-8). She deeply lived the mystery of God’s design of salvation; thus, she has become a source of eternal blessing for the human race.

Christians who look to Mary as a model can appreciate that their very presence and witness of life in today’s complex world is already a positive contribution to the Church’s evangelizing mission. Dedicated parents, upright businessmen, selfless educators, idealistic youth, generous religious — all share in the Church’s task of bringing the light and power of the Gospel into the world. This task is already accomplished through one’s ordinary, daily activities. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, following the “little way” of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, her namesake, helped ordinary people understand the importance of presence and life witness: “Little things are indeed little, but to be faithful in little things is a great thing”. “It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving”.⁷

(II) A second dimension of an integral vision of evangelization is centred on commitment to the **Service of Humanity through Development and Human Liberation**, to genuine service of neighbour. This means serving the most unfortunate, witnessing to justice, defending the integrity of creation; this dimension of evangelization includes the whole area of social concerns, ranging from peace-building, education and health services, to promoting family life and good government. This area of human development or human promotion is a vast area of the Church’s evangelizing mission (cf. *EA*, nn. 32-41; *EN*, nn., 18-19, 29-33; *RM*, nn. 58-60). Love must be put into action through concrete deeds of service; faith without good works is dead.

The life of the Blessed Mother manifests several concrete instances where she put her faith into concrete deeds of service. One clear example is Mary’s service to her cousin Elizabeth, narrated by Luke in the Visitation story (Lk 1:39-45, 56). Note that the visitation scene immediately follows the annunciation narrative in Luke’s Gospel. Mary did not cling to her privilege as God’s mother; upon learning that Elizabeth was pregnant (1:36), Mary immediately went “in haste” (1:39) to be of service to her elderly kinswoman. Mary herself was pregnant, but, setting aside her own needs, she travelled “to a town in the hill country of Judah” (1:39) and served “about three months” (1:56) before returning home to Nazareth.

Mary’s wonderful hymn of proclamation, the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55) is sung daily in the Church during vespers prayer. This Spirit-inspired song of gratitude is a profound synopsis of how God’s plan of salvation unfolds: lowly servants like Mary play important roles in God’s design; God does great deeds for his faithful people; mercy and compassion extend from age to age; the world’s secular values are subverted and inverted; the poor and hungry are satisfied and God’s justice reigns.⁸

Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) in his Marian Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 37 has profound insights into Mary’s servant song: “The Church’s *love of preference for the poor* is wonderfully inscribed in Mary’s *Magnificat*.... Mary is deeply imbued with the spirit of the ‘poor of Yahweh’”. Thus, “drawing from Mary’s heart, from the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the *Magnificat*, the Church renews ever more effectively in herself the awareness that *the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble*”. The entire missionary Church looks to Mary “as Mother and Model ... in order to understand in its completeness the meaning of her own mission”.

The narrative of the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-11) also manifests Mary’s servant orientation. Mary, woman of compassion, asks her Son to intervene at a difficult moment; her personal solicitude for the other enables her to *see* human need and to *act* to remedy it. The Church’s mission of evangelization is comprehensive and needs to address both individual and social needs; it definitely includes bringing the Gospel into *all levels* of human life — including politics, economics, and social-cultural realities. Christians need a deepened appreciation of the social teachings of the

Church. If the Church's commitment to social services and effective programmes to promote justice are on the wane, a renewed commitment to this dimension of holistic evangelization is needed — following the life and example of Mary, woman and model of service.

(III) Turning to a third aspect of the Church's mission of integral evangelization, one seeks to explore the relationship of Mary to **Interreligious Dialogue with the Followers of Other Faiths**, with believers of the world's great religious traditions. To express this dimension of evangelization, the author turns to the vision of the Second Vatican Council and recent popes as well as to the role of Mary in the Islamic tradition. These sources show how Mary, who lived among people of another faith tradition during the sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt, can serve as a model for dialogue and a bridge-builder between religious traditions.⁹

The Council's document on religions (*Nostra Aetate*) has this exhortation for Catholics in their relations with believers of other faiths: "prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people, as well as the values in their society and culture" (cf. n. 2). Twenty-five years later (1990) in his mission Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II asserts: "Interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (n. 55; cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 31a).

The Council also proclaimed: "Upon the Muslims, too, the Church looks with esteem" (*Nostra Aetate*, n. 3). *Nostra Aetate* then goes on to list several reasons why the Church respects Islam; it shows parallels between Islamic belief and Christian faith.¹⁰ Among these are many common elements: Mary is clearly mentioned: "They also honor Mary, His [Jesus'] virgin mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion" (cf. n. 3).

How does Islam present Mary? In the Qur'an, Mary's name (*Maryam*) appears explicitly thirty-four times; in twenty-four of these references, she is identified as the mother of Jesus (*Isa*). Mary is mentioned more often by name in the Muslim scripture than in the Christian New Testament.¹¹ One chapter of the Qur'an (*Sura 19*) is in fact entitled "Mary" and it narrates the events of the annunciation of Jesus' birth: Mary is chosen by God and given divine favours; she is immaculately consecrated to God from her mother's womb; an angel appears to her and announces the miraculous virgin birth of a child; Mary accepts, conceives *Isa* and gives birth to him.¹²

In addition, Muslims call Mary "*Sitti Maryam*," (*Sitti* is a term of endearment), because of her privileged role as the mother of the prophet *Isa*. Mary is revered for her great faith and submission (*Islam*) to the will and designs of God (*Allah*); she is also devout and prayerful. Muhammad's attitude towards Mary was reverential and respectful. He spoke of her as a sign (*ayat*) for all Creation and a model (*mathal*) for all believers. It has been noted that "Apart from Luke, Mary has no warmer and more colourful artist than Muhammad".¹³

How then is Mary an exemplar for the Church as she engages in interfaith dialogue? Authentic dialogue demands those same virtues and attitudes manifested in Mary's life: she was an ordinary mortal, yet a woman of deep faith; she acted from a profound "God-experience" at the basis of her life; she submitted to the design of God and his plan of salvation; she was a woman of service, prayer and devotion; she was keenly attentive to the Word of God. Genuine interreligious dialogue prospers only when rooted in authentic faith — as beautifully manifested in the life and witness of Mary.¹⁴ Appropriately, one can also recall the example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, most of whose work was with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists — people who did not believe in Christianity.

(IV) In evangelization today one necessarily affirms the role of **Explicit Gospel Proclamation and Catechesis**. This dimension of evangelization includes preaching and teaching, catechesis on Christian life, communicating the content of the faith; in a word, this means "telling the story of Jesus and the Church". As the Holy Spirit opens the door and the time is opportune, Christians do tell the Jesus story, giving explicit witness and testimony to the faith. Others are invited, in freedom of conscience, to follow, to come to know Jesus. Through explicit Gospel proclamation Christians

themselves are further instructed in their faith; this is the process through which the Christian faith is communicated to the next generation of believers (cf. *EN*, nn. 22, 27, 42; *RM*, nn. 44-51; *EA*, nn. 19-20, 23).

Mary is a model and servant of proclamation; “my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (Lk 1:46). Mary is *Theotokos*, the bearer of God to the waiting world. Her entire life is a constant proclamation and epiphany of Jesus to a variety of people: to the shepherds (Lk. 2:8-20), to the magi (Mt 2:1-12), to the joyful, elderly Simeon (Lk 2:22-35), to the prophetess Anna (Lk 2:36-38), to the wedding guests at Cana (Jn 2:1-12), to the followers of her crucified Son (Jn 19:25-27), to the Church in prayer at Pentecost (Acts 1:14-2:13).¹⁵

Probably the most common portrayal of Mary and the Child Jesus in Christian art shows Mary in a “presenting-mode”, *hodegetria*; she holds the child Jesus who is turned, not toward his mother Mary’s face, but toward the viewer, the beholder. Mary is presenting, giving, proclaiming Jesus to all who will look at her and the Child. The touching scene depicted in the *Pietà* again portrays Mary presenting her Son to the world as its crucified Redeemer. In the traditional prayer, “Hail, Holy Queen”, Catholics implore Mary: “Show unto us, the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus”.

Pope Paul VI in his inspiring Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975, gave Mary the title “Star of Evangelization” and proposed that she be the model for all evangelizers.¹⁶ He wrote: “On the morning of Pentecost she watched over with her prayer the beginning of evangelization prompted by the Holy Spirit: may she be the Star of the evangelization ever renewed which the Church, docile to her Lord’s command, must promote and accomplish, especially in these times which are difficult but full of hope!” (n. 82).

(V) Finally, integral evangelization necessarily includes **Prayer, Contemplation, and Liturgical-Sacramental Life**. No one can effectively be engaged in the Church’s mission without a strong faith and prayer-life. Evangelization needs holy men and women who are themselves on fire with the love of Christ. Spreading the fire of the Gospel will be accomplished only by those already burning with an experience of Christ; a fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire (*Ecclesia in Asia*, nn. 18c, 19a, 23b). Holiness is an irreplaceable condition for evangelizers. Our “God-experience” achieved in prayer and contemplation, in sacramental and liturgical life, will illumine and transform all other dimensions of evangelization (cf. *EN*, nn. 23, 43-44, 47; *RM*, nn. 46-49, 87-92; *EA*, n. 23).

Mary is presented in Scripture as a woman of prayer and contemplation. The traditional image of Mary during the Annunciation is that of a woman at prayer (Lk 1:26-38). Luke also portrays Mary as a woman of constant reflection. In three instances, he focuses on Mary’s “response of the heart”. As the shepherds depart, Luke writes: “As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart (2:19). Simeon in the Temple predicts that “the secret thoughts of many hearts” [including Mary’s] will be laid bare” (2:34-35). When the Holy Family returned to Nazareth after Jesus was found in the Temple, “his mother stored up all these things in her heart” (2:51). In addition, out of her own rich prayer experience, Mary would have taught the boy Jesus how to pray to a loving God. Thus, Mary’s contemplative “response of the heart” is instructive for contemporary evangelizers.¹⁷

Mary is among the disciples listening to the Word of God and discerning God’s will, as well as seeking to integrate them into daily life (cf. Mt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21, 11:27-28). Only deep contemplation could sustain a mother experiencing the death of a beloved Son (Jn 19:25-27). Mary is at the heart of the Church at prayer (*ecclesia orans*) (Acts 1:14), awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Mary’s prayer and contemplation were constants in her life. They equipped her to read with insight the deep meaning of the salvific events unfolding in her life; she contemplated the wonders and mysteries of God — from Nazareth and Bethlehem to Calvary and Pentecost. Prayer, contemplation, praise and worship constantly kept Mary open to the action of the Spirit in her life.¹⁸ Christian evangelizers can look to the Mother of the Church to see how prayer and worship serve to integrate all dimensions of the Church’s holistic vision of evangelization.

Conclusion. This presentation has sought to link the inherently missionary nature of the Church with the role of Mary as Mother of the Church, viewing Mary as “Mother of the Missionary Church”. A simple schema was presented, linking the Church’s mission of integral evangelization into the life and witness of Mary. Although additional elements and insights might have been included,¹⁹ the author trusts that sufficient material has been presented to show how Mary can truly be seen as a model for missionaries and evangelizers today. It is a fact that many Catholics are instinctively drawn to the Church through Mary; thus, viewing Mary as the Star of Evangelization in the missionary faith-community of the Church can serve as an impetus for Catholics to become more engaged as evangelizers.

Permit me some final remarks on the pivotal importance of Mary and evangelization for the Church today. It is obvious that the five dimensions of integral evangelization presented here complement and reinforce each other. In speaking of the complexity of the Church’s evangelizing action, Paul VI gave a timely admonition: “Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it”. He continued: “It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 17).

In adopting this integral vision, the Church has set aside an older concept of her mission. No longer are the elements of social justice, interfaith dialogue, peace-building, education and health care, life-witness, ecology, etc. simply “preparatory” to evangelization [*praeparatio evangelica*]; all five “principal elements” presented here with a Marian perspective are constitutive of a holistic and integral understanding. Paul VI and John Paul II have expanded the horizons of evangelization; an older, more restrictive view, which held that only explicit Gospel proclamation as well as prayer and sacramental life constituted evangelization, has been superseded.

Concomitant with this expanded vision of evangelization, one finds a renewed emphasis on the missionary nature of the *entire* Church (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 2). Every baptized member of the Church is an evangelizer, whether layperson, ordained, or religious. Previously, when evangelization was linked more exclusively with explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life, the laity often found it difficult to appreciate how they were to be evangelizers. Today, Catholic evangelization engages the entire Church (from top to bottom; especially, all the local Churches and communities), all states of life (lay, religious, ordained, married, single), all apostolic activities and forms of witness (the five principal elements). Yes, the totality of Christian evangelization, with Mary as the Star of Evangelization, embraces all these aspects.

The panoramic overview of a Catholic vision of evangelization presented here could easily be expanded with additional material. However, when many words have been uttered, when much ink has been spilt, when definitions and categories have been clarified, and when one more presentation has been completed, Catholics must step back and radically affirm that: *All mission and evangelization is God’s project. The Holy Spirit is always the principal agent of evangelization.* For evangelizers, missionaries, catechists, clergy, religious and laity alike, the mission of evangelization necessarily means trying to find out what God wills and what he is doing. Then, in imitation of Mary, the authentic evangelizer bends his/her will to God’s will, joyfully surrenders to God’s loving plan, and expends all efforts and energy to become a worthy instrument that enables God’s design to unfold. Evangelization, at heart and centre, is an issue of faith (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 11). For a Christian, to live is to evangelize!

When Pope Paul VI on 21 November 1964, during the Eucharistic celebration concluding the Third Session of the Second Vatican Council, declared Our Lady “Mother of the Church”, his intention was that Catholics worldwide should give greater honour to the Mother of God under this most loving title. As some selected studies illustrate, the Council debate on this Marian title has been extensive.²⁰ Paul VI played an important role and continued to encourage the use of the title; during the closing ceremonies of the Council (8 December, 1965) he blessed the cornerstone for a church to be erected in Rome as a memorial to the Council, to be called “Mary, Mother of the Church”.²¹ In the Post-Council period, many local Churches and religious families began to venerate

the Blessed Virgin, using her newly proclaimed title: “Mother of the Church”. This title appears in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*; the Mariology section of the CCC is entitled: “Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church” (nn. 963-975).²²

In 1974, to encourage Marian celebrations during the Holy Year of Reconciliation (1975), a new Mass formula was composed, complete with prayers, readings, and a special preface; it bears the title: “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Image and Mother of the Church”. It has now been officially inserted in the second *editio typica* edition of the Roman Missal among the Votive Masses in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁵

Both the opening and closing prayers of this special votive mass emphasize the Church’s missionary nature and Mary’s role in the Church. These two prayers serve as an appropriate closing invocation to this presentation on “Mary, Mother of the Missionary Church”.

God of Mercies,
your only Son, while hanging on the Cross
appointed the Blessed Virgin Mary, his mother,
to be our mother also.

Like her, and under her loving care,
may your Church grow day by day,
rejoice in the holiness of its children,
and so attract to itself all the peoples of the earth.

[Opening Prayer]

Lord, we have received the foretaste and promise
of the fullness of redemption.

We pray that your Church,
through the intercession of the Virgin Mother,
may proclaim the Gospel to all nations
and by the power of the Spirit
reach to the ends of the earth.

[Prayer after Communion]

Notes

¹ Paul VI, “Exploring the Mystery of the Church”, *The Pope Speaks* 10:2 (1964): 133.

² *Ibid.*, 137-138. [*Lumen Gentium*, IV. The Cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church].

³ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁵ Kroeger, James, “To Live is to Evangelize: Recent Popes and Integral Evangelization”, *Landas* 16:1 (2002): 100-104.

⁶ Jelly, Frederick, “Characteristics of Contemporary Mariology”, *Chicago Studies* 27:1 (1988): 71.

⁷ *Catholic News* (Singapore) 53:22 (October 26, 2003): 12-13.

⁸ Additional insights on Mary’s *Magnificat* can be gleaned from: Thompson, Thomas (ed.), *Magnificat: Remembrance and Praise*, published as *Marian Studies* 50 (1999): 1-138.

⁹ The role of Mary in interfaith dialogue was explored in the 1996 annual gathering of the Mariological Society of America; fine articles are found in: Thompson, Thomas (ed.), *Marian Spirituality and the Interreligious Dialogue*, published as *Marian Studies* 47 (1996): 1-101.

¹⁰ Michel, Thomas, “Do Muslims and Christians really Worship the Same God?”, *Sunday Examiner* 57:37 (September 14, 2003): 16; Esposito, John. “Islam: FAQs”, *Saudi Aramco World* 54:5 (2003): 20-28.

¹¹ Renard, John, *Responses to 101 Questions on Islam*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998: 109-110.

¹² McCarthy, R.J. “Mary in Islam” in: Stacpoole, Alberic (ed.). *Mary’s Place in Christian Dialogue*. Slough, England: St. Paul Publications, 1982: 208-211.

¹³ Kroeger, James. “Mary for Catholics and Muslims”, *African Ecclesial Review* 30:3 (1988), 182-183.

¹⁴ Paul VI, “Exploring the Mystery of the Church”: 139.

¹⁵ Robichaud, J. Armand, “Mary and the Missions Today”, *Marian Studies* 38 (1987): 78-136.

¹⁶ See the 1988 Message of John Paul II for World Mission Day on the theme: “The Presence of Mary in the Universal Mission of the Church”; *African Ecclesial Review* 30:4 (1988): 257-261; in addition, the 2003 Message of John Paul II for World Mission Day bore the title: “Mary and the Mission of the Church in the Year of the Rosary”, *Omnis Terra* [English] 37:337 (2003): 179-182.

¹⁷ Kroeger, James, “The Spirit and Mary Unfold God’s Loving Design”, *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 74:809 (1998): 837.

¹⁸ Dominguez, Olegario, “Mary, Model of Missionary Spirituality in the Church”, presented as Lesson Six of the 1979 Correspondence Course for Mission Animators sponsored by the Pontifical Missionary Union International Secretariat (June, 1979): 1-17.

¹⁹ Six important studies, listed alphabetically by author, are: ••• Campbell, Dwight. “The Doctrine of Mary, Mother of the Church, in the Magisteria of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II”, *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 53:2 (2003): 225-240; ••• Daly, Cahal. “Mary and the Church” in: Hyland, John (ed.). *Mary in the Church*, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1989: 131-141; ••• John Paul II, The “Blessed Virgin Is Mother of the Church” [General Audience of 17 September, 1997] in: *Theotókos: Woman, Mother, Disciple*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2000: 233-235; ••• Koehler, Theodore. “Mary’s Spiritual Maternity after the Second Vatican Council”, *Marian Studies* 23 (1972): 39-68; ••• Maloney, George. “Mary and the Church”, in: *Mary, The Womb of God*, Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1976: 140-155; ••• Shea, George, “Pope Paul VI and the ‘Mother of the Church’”, *Marian Studies* 16 (1965): 21-28.

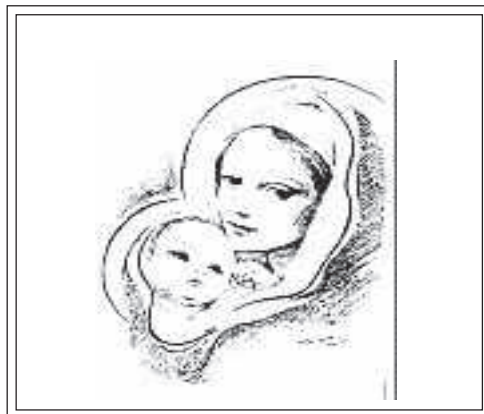
²⁰ The following works, listed alphabetically by author, present an overview regarding the use of the title of Mary as “Mother of the Church”: ••• Anderson, Floyd, ed. *Council Daybook: Vatican II, Session 3*. Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1965: 50-53, 299-300; ••• Crisostomo, Arnaldo, “The Title: ‘Mary, Mother of the Church’”, in: *Mary and the Church in the Documents of Pope Paul VI: A Study of Post-Conciliar Mariology*, Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 2004: 204-282; ••• Komonchak, Joseph, “Chapter VIII [of *Lumen Gentium*]” special section (52-62) within “Toward an Ecclesiology of Communion” (1-93) in: Alberigo, G. and Komonchak, J. eds. *History of Vatican II, Volume IV*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003; ••• Semmelroth, Otto, “The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church”, in: Vorgrimler, Herbert, ed. *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume I*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1967: 285-296; ••• Tagle, Luis A., “Mary as Mother of the Church” special section (445-448) within “The ‘Black Week’ of Vatican II” (387-452) in: Alberigo, G. and Komonchak, J. eds., *History of Vatican II, Volume IV*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003; ••• Wiltgen, Ralph, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: A History of Vatican II*, New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967: 90-95, 153-159, 239-243, 284.

²¹ Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber*, 284.

²² United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1994: 251-254.

²³ International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1988: Volume One: 39-42; Volume Two: 83.

Ref.: Text given from the author for the SEDOS Publication. May 2005.



Proclamation of Christ in Asia Today

- Oscar Ante, OFM -

Introduction

The other day, I was invited to join a Poor Clare community for the ceremony of the mission sending of one of their members. The volunteer nun is one of two being sent to revitalize a monastery in the USA; the other is from a Cebu community. The two nuns are not isolated cases. In fact, there are many Asian missionaries, belonging to Asian–Born Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life (AMSAL), who are sharing the mission of the Local Churches in the proclamation of the message of Christ among other peoples, establishing and nurturing to maturity Christian communities in different parts of Asia and beyond.¹

Proclamation in the broad and general sense is the evangelizing mission of every Christian individual and community. In the context of Asia, it is the mission response of the Church to the challenges of Asian realities in the light of the Gospel.

Challenge of Asian Realities: Dialogue

What are the realities of Asia today? And, how are we as Christians to confront the challenges of these realities? The continent, constituting one-third of the land area of the whole world, is the cradle of ancient cultures, religions and traditions and home to almost two-thirds of humanity. Christianity is a “little flock” in this continent where Jesus was born and lived.

I would like to take note of the “stirrings of the Spirit”, peoples’ movements journeying towards a fuller life here in Asia.²

(1) In the face of the unjust structures of oppression and exploitation, which are strangling the vast majority of those who are poor [unjust economic order (globalization *cum* marginalization), gender discrimination, ethnic prejudices], more and more peoples are participating in the movement of liberation towards a fuller life.

(2) More than ever before we know that we live in a shrinking globe with only finite resources and we are seeing the destruction of the ecological order. We now know that people and their environment are mutually interdependent and are working for the integrity of creation.

(3) We do destroy one another and are capable of wiping out humanity. The threat of a nuclear holocaust for example challenges us to react by working for peace with justice.

(4) Peoples strive for liberation from the stranglehold of the West. There is a feeling of ambiguity about Western technology and development, about the very idea of progress itself (globalization). More and more Asian peoples are searching for what is authentically local and Asian.

(5) For many centuries Christianity was regarded as the only true and only saving religion *vis-à-vis* other religions. Today most people agree that freedom of religion is a basic right. This factor forces us Asian Christians, a small flock, to reevaluate our attitude toward, and our understanding of, other faiths adhered to by the vast majority of Asians.

(6) Cultural paradigms and expressions, including theology, designed and developed in Europe, can claim no superiority over those emerging in other parts of the world. More and more peoples are claiming the validity and uniqueness of their own cultures.

Discerning in the Light of the Gospel

How the Church responds to the challenges posed by the realities of Asia depends fundamentally on how it understands discipleship. But to answer that question the Church has first to understand who Jesus is in the Asian context.

A. *Jesus Christ*

The Church in Asia sings the praises of the ‘God of salvation’ for choosing to initiate his saving plan on Asian soil, through the men and women of that continent. It was in fact in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning. He guided the patriarchs and called Moses to lead his people to freedom. He spoke to his Chosen People through many prophets, judges, kings and valiant women of faith. In ‘the fullness of time’, he sent his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ the Saviour, who took flesh as an Asian.³

Our Christian faith is rooted in the Word of God, initially revealed in the Jewish tradition (Old Testament). We believe in the God who revealed himself to our ancestors in a gratuitous and loving manner: “The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity” (Ex 34:6). At a low point of its existence, a poor and dispossessed people, Yahweh showed himself to be a God of salvation, and chose Israel, made it a nation, and made a covenant with it (Dt 7:6-8). “For you are a people sacred to the Lord, your God; he has chosen you from all the nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly his own. It was not because you are the largest of all nations that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you, for you are really the smallest of all nations. It was because the Lord loved you and because of his fidelity to the oath he had sworn to your fathers, that he brought you out with his strong hand from the place of slavery and ransomed you from the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt”. God’s choice (*babar*) of Israel was both a gift and a task. There are risks in being chosen. Gifts and goods are to be shared, not hoarded and defended. Gifts are signs of love and should not be seen as indicators of power. Unfortunately, Israel did not often become a humble instrument of God’s universal salvation before other nations.

We believe in Jesus, the humble servant of God, whose life and ministry triggered the Christian impulse for mission. Jesus came to announce the coming reign/kingdom of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). He spoke of God’s coming rule and the need for conversion in order to respond to God’s gracious love and he made signs pointing to God’s compassion. Jesus came to announce the Good News of God’s salvation: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favour from the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19). For this kingdom, for this salvation, Jesus suffered death. But, God vindicated his fidelity. Jesus rose to life as Saviour.

B. *The Church*

The Resurrection of Jesus gave birth to the Church. And she was commissioned to follow the way of Jesus and to bring his kingdom ministry to the world. The disciples are to attract people to Jesus and his kingdom. This can be done by being faithful followers of Jesus. The face of Jesus will attract the people of Asia in and through the face of the Church.

Pope John Paul II aptly describes “the Church” as the sacrament of salvation, and “as the pilgrim People of God to whom all peoples are in some way related” (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 24). Our Asian church leaders have identified what the Church must be: “The Christian community must live in companionship, as true partners with all Asians as they pray, work, struggle and suffer for a better human life and as they search for the meaning of human life and progress”. The Christians must be servants of the Lord and of humanity. This service must be done in compassion”.⁴ Thus in Asia, “the focus of the Church’s mission of evangelization is building up the Kingdom of God and building up the Church to be at the service of the Kingdom”.⁵

Mission Response: Triple Dialogue

Let me start by looking at the experiences of Franciscan mission in the Philippines and other countries in Asia in the 16th and succeeding centuries. Our forebears, the Spanish Franciscan friars, arrived in the Philippines as early as 1577. They contributed a major share to the evangelization of the people of this place. When they arrived here, they immediately demonstrated their eagerness to preach the Gospel to the natives. Some, who landed in the southern part of Manila, went by foot

and did their initial preaching to the natives on their way to Manila. Although the early years were difficult and trying, they organized themselves in pairs and undertook to preach the Gospel in different places. They were fully conscious and convinced that they were successors of Paul and Barnabas's apostolic journeys in Asia Minor.⁶ The brothers pioneered in the policy of "reduccion", what we now call building faith-based communities. What the brothers intended as aid to better Christianization turned out to be the nuclei of the future of Philippine towns.⁷ While there were debates on the friars' actuations regarding the issue of cultural adaptation in China and Japan,⁸ the situation in the Philippines was very different, pre-empting any kind of controversy in the inculturation issue. As far as the Franciscans were concerned, their activities showed that they possessed knowledge and appreciation of the culture of the people here. For example, they learned the languages and left many writings in the Tagalog and Bicol languages. Juan de Plasencia is perhaps the best known in Philippine history who noted down many cultural aspects of the early Filipinos.⁹ In the area of option for the poor, the friars' response was radical in favour of a particular category of poor — the sick. They founded hospitals and infirmaries and made studies of the medicinal properties of Philippine plants.¹⁰

In the evangelizing mission of the Franciscans in Asia in the past, we see that evangelization consists of many elements, such as the proclamation of Jesus the Saviour to those who have not yet heard the message; proclamation of the Gospel in the culture of the people; promoting a local church of those baptized; and, service to the poor. Nowadays, we say that the evangelizing mission of the Church can be explained as "a single but complex and articulated reality", consisting of the following "principle elements": "simple presence and living witness", "concrete commitment to the service of humankind and all forms of activity for social development and for the struggle against poverty and the structures which produce it", "liturgical life and that of prayer and contemplation", "dialogue in which Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together towards the truth and to work together in projects of common concern", and "proclamation and catechesis in which Jesus Christ is announced as Saviour and people are invited to become his disciples in the Church" (*Dialogue and Mission*, n. 13).¹¹

Perhaps, not adequately responded to by our Franciscan confrères (from today's point of view, I say!) is the challenge of dialogue with other religions, with Islam in particular. While the brothers were venturing to preach the Gospel in the "greater kingdoms" of Japan and China, deliberately in defiance of the Decree of the Governor General, they were blind to the challenge of the Muslims in the backyard. While they raised objections against the abuses committed by the Spanish officials against the *Indios*, there was no voice to protest against the Spanish assault on the Muslims. Why? Like most of the Spanish Religious Orders at that time, their attitude was like that of a typical Spanish Christian in the *reconquista* period who drove away or conquered of the Muslims. They saw only the negative side of the Muslims and could only pray to God that the "pride of the Turks be laid low". More important, from the theological and missiological points of view, Christianity understood itself to be unique, definitive, normative and absolute, and superior to other religions, such as Islam.

More than four centuries later, times and attitudes have somewhat changed. The Catholic Church through the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) opened its doors and welcomed the fresh wind of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. There was a call for dialogue among Catholic members, with Christians other than the Catholics, with other religions and with the world in general. This was also true of the OFM friars. Nowadays, Franciscan evangelizers can distinguish between two approaches in relations with the Muslims. One is the Damietta model, "road to encounter", while the other is the Marrakesh model, "road to martyrdom". In the early history of the Order, sometime in 1219, Francis of Assisi, the Founder, went to Damietta in Egypt to be among (not against!) the Muslims and acted in a non-crusading manner. However, in early 1220, four followers of Francis ventured into Muslim-dominated areas so that they could earn the laurels of martyrdom. In Morocco, they were beheaded for insulting Muhammad and his religion. For centuries, we tended to forget the "road to encounter" model. Nowadays, we try to emphasize this approach. In the 1980s, our entry in the Philippines started to promote dialogue of life and faith with the Muslims in two Mindanao areas, where Muslims are predominant. One very clear objective among the friars living in those areas was to promote a dialogue of life and faith with the people living their Islamic tradition.

For some decades already, our Church leaders in this continent through the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) have already identified the main challenge that the Asian realities pose to us: to be a truly local Church in **dialogue** with the rich variety of cultures in Asia,

with its living religious traditions, with its multitudes of poor people.¹² In the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (6 November 1999), the Holy Father John Paul II uses this triple dialogue as a framework for the evangelizing mission of the Church in Asia. The mission of the Church in Asia is to build the local Church in dialogue with the multiplicity of cultures (inculturation), variety of religions (inter-religious dialogue), and the vast majority of poor peoples (service of human promotion).¹³ For the Church in Asia, the fundamental challenge then is to be in dialogue, to be in solidarity and to journey with our Asian peoples in their struggle towards the fullness of life.

Notes

* Fr Oscar Ante, OFM, was born in Legazpi City on 12 November, 1951. He finished his Bachelor of Arts, major in Comparative Religion and Philosophy in 1973 at the Our Lady of the Angels Franciscan Seminary, Quezon City. He obtained his Masteral Degree, major in Sociology at the Ateneo de Manila in 1981 and in 1991 finished his doctorate in Missiology at the Catholic University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

He made his religious profession as a member of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) in 1974 and was ordained priest in 1977. He served as administrator and professor at the Franciscan College and Theology programs, and afterwards worked in a parish and in a shrine in Metro Manila (Manila 1992-1995). After taking Missiology, he then served as mission director and coordinator of the Office for Evangelization, whose work among others, entailed animating the Franciscans in their pastoral as well as missionary activities.

He was provincial minister of the OFM in the Philippines (1995-2001) and served as co-chair of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (1998-2001).

At present, he is program director of the Inter-Congregational Theological Center (ICTC) in Quezon City. He is the current chairman of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA). He resides at the chaplain's house at the Monasterio de Sta. Clara, Katipunan Road, Quezon City.

¹ "The Colloquium on Societies of Apostolic Life", Final Statement, Pattaya, 1997, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 3 edited by Franz-Jozef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian, 1992), p. 203.

² The writer follows the insights listed by David Bosch in *Transforming Mission — Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991, pp. 188-189.

³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (Pasay: Paulines, 1999), no. 1.

⁴ "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium", Statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly, Bandung Indonesia, 1990, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 283 f.

⁵ FABC Theological Advisory Commission, "Theses on Inter-religious Dialogue" (1987).

⁶ Cayetano Sanchez Fuertes, "Promocion Humana y Aculturacion en Filipinas", *Separata de Archivo Ibero-Americano* t. XLVII, Num 185-188, pp. 264-269.

⁷ Jose Arcilla, *An Introduction to Philippine History*, 3rd Edition (Quezon City: Ateneo, 1984), p. 36.

⁸ Cf. for example J. S. Cummins, "Two Missionary Methods in China: Mendicants and Jesuits", *Espana en Extremo Oriente*, ed. By Victor Sanchez and Cayetano S. Fuertes (Madrid, 1979), pp. 33-108 and C.R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650* (Berkeley: UCP, 1967), pp. 230-247.

⁹ Cf. for example William Henry Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (QC: New Day, 1985).

¹⁰ Cayetano Sanchez Fuertes, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

¹¹ Quoted from "Church Issues in Asia in the Context of Evangelization, Dialogue and Proclamation", Conclusions of the Theological Consultation, Thailand, 1991, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 2, edited by Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretians, 1997), pp. 193-205.

¹² "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia", Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Council, Taipei, 1974, in *For All The Peoples of Asia*, Vol., ed. by Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arevalo (Manila, Claretians, 1997), pp. 11-25.

¹³ Cf. FABC Theological Advisory Commission, "Theses on Interreligious Dialogue" (1987), "Theses on the Local Church — A Theological Reflection in the Asian Context" (1990); and, FABC Theological Consultation, "Church Issues in Asia in the Context of Evangelization, Dialogue and Proclamation" (1991); and, FABC International Theological Colloquium, "Being Church in Asia; Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life" (1994).

Witness, Our Service and Mission

(Asian Perspectives)

- Bienvenido Baisas, OFM* -

Introduction

Religiosity is not a Christian monopoly. This is a verifiable fact, especially in the context of Asia, the seat of age-old living religious *traditions*. If Asia has remained religious through thousands of years, it is because there have been men and women of these Asian religious traditions, who through the ages have been pointers and witnesses of a Reality that is beyond all phenomena that are doomed to change and decay.

Christianity, including its institutions of religious life, has been introduced into Asian societies mainly with the colonial expansion of Western hegemony. Thus, unwittingly it had sometimes, if not frequently, been co-opted into the political and economic agenda of the colonizers, who imposed their own development schemes on peoples. In the history of mission in Asia, including The Philippines, religious missionaries zealously spearheaded cultural and social developments in the indigenous societies. As time went on, Christian missions have been generally identified with grand projects and institutions, which are known for their efficiency in delivering educational, health, and other social services — in the beginning mostly to the poor and marginalized but eventually more to the rich and affluent. Could such a picture be behind Pope John Paul II's challenge to Asia's clergy in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* — and concomitantly and implicitly (?) to religious as well?

“People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit” (*EA*, n. 43).

Christian Testimony to Asia Today

The document cited above recognizes the following three chief characteristics of consecrated life to offer an appealing Christian testimony to the peoples of Asia today; namely, “the search for God, a life of fraternal communion, and service to others” (*EA*, n. 44). These three traits are not to be separated from one another. In fact, any service to others can witness to peoples of Asia only if they reflect that search for God, of which consecrated persons are expected to become their leaders, and if they flow from a life of fraternal communion and lead to it. It has often been remarked that people tend to go to convents and rectories for technical and medical help but would readily frequent temples and meditation centres for spiritual concerns.

The Asian Ecclesial Journey

The Churches in Asia have realized that they have largely lived dichotomously from people's lives. Thus, they have recognized the need to journey together with the people in their lives and aspirations. Let us see how they have come to a heightened awareness of the need to be **witnesses** in the context of Asia.

The 1970 Asian Bishops' Meeting

Coming together in 1970 for the first time at an Asian Bishops' Meeting in Manila and reflecting on our Asian realities, the said Bishops strongly averred:

If we are to place ourselves at the side of the multitudes on our continent, we must share something of their poverty in our way of life. The Church cannot set up islands of affluence in a sea of want and misery; our own personal lives must give witness to evangelical simplicity, and no man (*sic!*), no matter how lowly or poor, should find it hard to come to us and find in us their brothers (*FAPA* 1,5).

The 1979 International Mission Congress (IMC)

After almost ten years, this time at a Congress, participants in an IMC workshop on 7 December 1979, insisted that “*people should not only bear the Gospel but witness it*” and that “*essential to this witness is unselfish service to the world*” (FAPA 1,136).¹ Another workshop came up with a more pointed consensus by saying that: “*An Asian Church which is more concerned with the operation and preservation of its structures, institutions, buildings, offices and bureaucracy than with self-sacrificing love and service especially of the poor can never be a credible sign of Christian liberation and development*” (FAPA 1,146).² In other words, the Church in Asia must be “*ready to suffer and to die like her Lord if only the poor of Asia would live*” (*ibid.*, 147).

FABC V, Bandung³

Granted that the proclamation of Jesus Christ is the centre and primary element of evangelization in Asia, FABC V, Bandung, states that the mode is above all that of witness.

The proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means, first of all, the witness of Christians and 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 (FAPA 1,282).

The peoples of Asia admire the Churches for all their humanitarian and development projects. But they cannot believe in them unless they are authentic. So, the same Federal Assembly states:

If people are convinced more by witnessing than by teaching, this is most true of the peoples of Asia whose cultures hold the contemplative dimension, renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence in the highest regard. We would have a message for Asia only when our Asian sisters and brothers see in us the marks of God-realized persons” (FAPA 1,288).

The 1991 Theological Consultation and FEISA I⁴

Jesus Christ does have a meaning for Asia and Asians! He had captivated Mahatma Gandhi. He also got the interest and devotion of Ajahn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu⁵ of Chaiya, Thailand. If he might be repulsive to others, perhaps his image that the Churches have cherished and followed and projected to others in Asia is a triumphalist one, associated with the past dominating colonizers but dissonant with the historical *kenosis* of the Son of God in Jesus of Nazareth. We can hence see why the participants of the Theological Consultation held at Hua Hin in 1991 could express their “*dream of a Church without calculations, a Church at the service of the followers of other faith traditions, a reconciling Church at the service of human communities in conflict, an open Church at the service of the poor... (a church with) the courage to ask the Lord (to) ... follow him until the end*” (FAPA 1,347).

Realizing the need for a holistic approach to development, FABC-OHD organized the First Programme of Faith Encounters in Social Action (FEISA) in 1994. The participants concluded among other things that social action in Asia is dynamically interlinked with a life of authentic contemplation and genuine compassion (FAPA 2,61).

FABC VII, Samphan⁶

It became much clearer at FABC VII that the Asianness, which *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 6, already talks of, must be embodied in the Churches for them to be Asian. Interiority, harmony, a holistic and inclusive approach to every area of life must be their essential values. Only by the “inner authority” of authentic lives founded on a deep spirituality, the Bishops asserted, will the Churches become credible instruments of transformation.

The Bishops even dared to add distinctively Asian perspectives to Paul’s words on the beginnings of faith (cf. Rom 10:4-18); namely, “*faith comes from the ‘hearing’ and the ‘seeing’*”. They state that the source of many conversions can be easily traced to the living witnesses of genuine

Christians, be they clerical or lay. Thus, they claimed that we Christians would be credible witnesses to our Asian brothers and sisters only if these sense us to have experienced the Ultimate.

Consequently, they declared that:

The most effective means of evangelization and **service in the name of Christ** (my emphasis) has always been and continues to be the witness of life.... This witnessing has to become the way of the Gospel for persons, institutions and the whole Church community. Asian people will recognize the Gospel that we announce when they see in our life the transparency of the message of Jesus and the inspiring and healing figure of men and women immersed in God (*EAPA*, 3,13).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*

Witnessing, therefore, is the prophetic path of the Asian Churches in the task of evangelization and mission in Asia in this new millennium. We should not wonder why this Apostolic Exhortation dedicates the very last chapter to the topic "Witnesses to the Gospel". Echoing his earlier Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*,⁷ Pope John Paul II thus declares:

"The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living.... Everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary. Genuine Christian witness is needed especially now, because 'people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories'. This is certainly true in the Asian context, where people are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument" (*EA*, n. 42).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*

If this is so for all the Churches in Asia, how much more must witnessing be the very life, service and mission of religious in Asia? After all, this is what the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* had already brought home to us. A number of times and in different ways, the said document hammers home that witnessing is "the first duty of the consecrated life". Consecrated persons bear witness to the marvels God does in their frail humanity. They do this not so much by words as by the eloquent language of a transfigured life (cf. *VC*, n. 20). Our world may be secularized, but it is still sensitive to the language of signs. And so, the Pope states that, "*the Church has a right* (my emphasis) *to expect a significant contribution from consecrated persons, called as they are in every situation to bear clear witness that they belong to Christ*" (*VC*, n. 25).

It is this consciousness which religious must bear in themselves and arouse in turn in the whole Church. Very pointedly the same Apostolic Exhortation states that this is our mission *more than anything that we do*.

"Indeed, more than in external works, the mission consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness.... Thus it can be said that consecrated persons are 'in mission' by virtue of their consecration, to which they bear witness in accordance with the ideal of their institute. When the founding charism provides for pastoral activities, it is obvious that the witness of life and the witness of works of the apostolate and human development are equally necessary: both mirror Christ who is at one and the same time consecrated to the glory of the Father and sent into the world for the salvation of his brothers and sisters" (*VC*, n. 72).

"The Church needs consecrated persons who, even before committing themselves to the service of this or that noble cause, allow themselves to be transformed by God's grace and conform themselves fully to the Gospel" (*VC*, n. 105).

There is no doubt, therefore, that service in all its forms, if it has a place in the life of a religious, must witness to Jesus Christ and his Gospel of the Kingdom. It is not what is done and how it is done that matter but for whom and for what purpose. **It is the sign element of a selfless service that makes the service important and meaningful.** This is of great moment, especially in our world today that measures human worth and success in the work mainly from the perspective of gain and efficiency. For, to witness is not to be successful but to follow the folly of the Cross of Jesus the Master, even unto the end.

Witness/Martyr

To be a Christian, witnessing to Jesus Christ, entails being open to the possibility of martyrdom. In fact, “**martyrdom**”, as *Ecclesia in Asia* states, is what “**reveals to the world the very essence of the Christian message**. *The word itself, ‘martyr’, means witness, and those who have shed their blood for Christ have borne the ultimate witness to the true value of the Gospel*” (EA, n. 49).

The Gospel is seen then and pursued as an alternative vision to worldly domination and exploitation. To be a witness is to stand up in prophetic resistance to the dominant ethos of the day, which dehumanizes and commodifies all in God’s creation. The memory that Jesus the faithful witness/martyr (Rv 1:5) stood firm and pat against the political and religious domination and exploitation of imperial Rome and its Jewish lackeys is a constant invitation to us Christians in Asia to resist the imperial structures of materialistic globalization.⁸ And we religious say that we profess a radical following and fellowship of Jesus, the Faithful Witness of the Kingdom. Moreover, we Christian religious are not alone in this witnessing to God’s Reign! Others have done this ahead of us in the vast and ancient continent of Asia.⁹

Mahatma Gandhi, Ajahn Buddhadasa, Rhoel Gallardo, pray for us!

Notes

* Fr Bienvenido Q. Baisas, a former Provincial Superior of the Order of Friars Minor in The Philippines received his Licentiate in Theology from the University of Santo Tomas and a Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, Italy. He also did some Jewish and Biblical Studies at the University of Münster, Germany, and at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem, Israel.

Fr Benny is a guest editor of ICLA’s journal, *RELIGIOUS LIFE ASIA*. He edited the September 2000 and the December 2001 issues on Ecology and Consecrated Life and Interreligious Dialogue respectively.

Fr Benny has been living and working these last years in a quasi-hermitage in the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains in General Nakar, Quezon, conducting meditation retreats for individuals and small groups, while giving limited assistance to the indigenous Agta in the area.

Fr Benny is a model to all Franciscans in his simplicity of life, humility and service.

¹The statement comes from the Consensus Paper of Workshop I with the topic “Towards a Theology of Mission for Asia Today”.

² From the Consensus Paper of Workshop IV with the topic “The Gospel, the Kingdom of God, Liberation and Development”.

³FABC V took place at Bandung, Indonesia, in July 1990, with the theme “Journeying together Towards the Third Millennium”.

⁴The Theological Consultation, sponsored by the Office for Evangelization of the FABC, took place at Hua Hin, Thailand, in November 1991. FEISA I was held at Pattaya, Thailand, from 6-17 July 1994. I had the grace of attending this meeting.

⁵Ajahn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (Slave of the Buddha) was the Founder of Suan Mokkhabalārâma (The Garden of the Power of Liberation) in 1932, at Chaiya, Thailand. He worked painstakingly to establish and explain the correct and essential principles of pristine Buddhism. His work has helped inspire a new generation of socially concerned monks. Since the founding of Suan Mokkh, he studied all schools of Buddhism and all the major religious traditions. He sought to unite all genuinely religious people, meaning those working to overcome selfishness in order to work together for world peace. This broadmindedness won him friends and students from around the world, including Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. He died at Suan Mokkh on 8th July 1993.

⁶ FABC VII was held at Samphran, Thailand, from 3-12 January 2000, with the theme, “A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service”. Subsequent to this Assembly, two meetings pursued the theme. The Consultation on Advocacy for Justice and Peace in the 21st Century, which took place in Pattaya, Thailand, from 28 August – 1 September 2000, on the one hand, reflected on the following among other things: “*Most importantly, it is in and through our lives that we are called to advocate a new message for a fuller life in Jesus for the life of the world.... Integrated into everyday life, authentic prayer has to engender in Christians a clear*

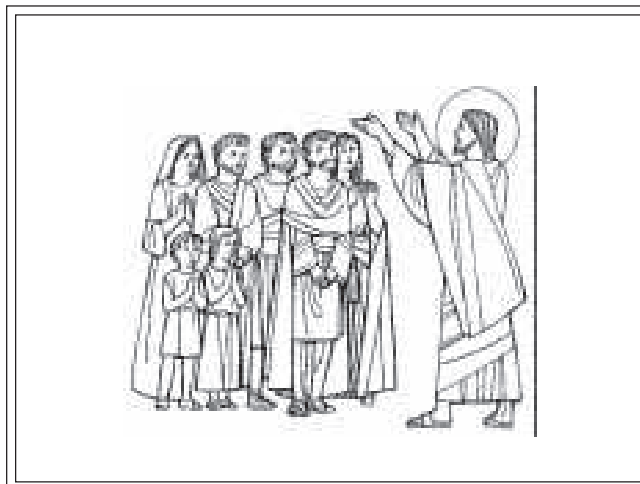
witness of service and love (FAPA 3,49). The FABC-OSC Bishops' Meeting at Johor Bahru, Malaysia, from 27 November – 2 December 2000, on the other hand, tackled special communication concerns in renewing Asia. Among these were the need for a communicator's spirituality, one of the elements of which is the ways of "witnessing" and sharing the message of God's love (FAPA 3,173).

⁷ RM, n. 42.

⁸ See Seán Freyne's "Jesus the Martyr" in *Concilium* 2003/1, pp. 49-58, where he studies the evolution of the word *martyrs* (witness) in the New Testament. He shows how a general legal term evolved into a technical term for the Christian mission in the world. But as this mission took place in a hostile world, the term paradoxically reverted to its original, legal field of reference. It described the Christian stance before Roman administrators, leading to the death sentence for refusal to worship the Emperor and denounce Christ. He now applies it to countless nameless people who resist imperial structures in our globalized world today, no matter how innocent these may appear to be. In doing so, the *martyrs*/martyr acts without ever receiving the recognition of a formal trial. Thus, we now acknowledge a new type of "political" saint *vis-à-vis* "the persecution of totalitarian regimes or of violent groups" today (cf. VC, n. 86. See also my article "Spirituality of Consecrated Life", in D. Moraleda *et al.* [ed.s], *From Seduction to Mission, An Asian Commentary to Consecrated Life*, [Quezon City: Claretian/ICLA Publications, 1997] p. 46).

⁹ What *Vita Consecrata*, n. 33, says of consecrated persons being helped by the witness of the other vocations in the Church, I believe, holds true for the radical witness of religious persons from other Asian religious traditions. I can personally attest this from my experience in the Buddhist monastery of the late Ajahn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. There had been mutual enrichment, for example, between me and my friend, Than Santikaro Bhikkhu (cf. my article "An Immersion in the Waters of Thai Buddhism", *Franciscan Digest* 7/1 [1997] 1-10; Santikaro Bhikkhu, "To Be Alive Today, Religions Must Cooperate Inter-religiously", *Religious Life in Asia*, 3/4 [2001] pp. 139-149).

Ref.: *Religious Life in Asia*, Vol. 6, n. 1, 2004.



La mission actuelle de l'Église dans le contexte de la «mondialisation»

- Mgr Olivier de Berranger -

Du 11 au 17 juillet dernier, après la Rencontre des trois Conférences épiscopales des Grands Lacs (République démocratique du Congo, Rwanda, Burundi) au Centre catholique Nganda de Kinshasa (RDC), s'est tenu au même endroit un colloque missionnaire sous le haut patronage de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples. Intitulé Tertio millennio, il avait pour thème: «L'avenir de l'activité missionnaire de l'Église ad gentes. Perspectives pour le XXI^e siècle». Présidé par le Cardinal Frédéric Etsou-Nzabi-Bamungwabi, CICM, Archevêque de Kinshasa, il a reçu la contribution personnelle de nombreux Évêques et théologiens africains, Mgr Olivier de Berranger, Évêque de Saint-Denis, France, a présidé la messe d'ouverture et participé aux débats. Nous publions le texte de son intervention à Kinshasa, le 13 juillet 2004 ().*

«Oui, Dieu a tant aimé le monde qu'il a donné son Fils unique, pour que tout homme qui croit en lui ne périsse pas mais ait la vie éternelle. Car Dieu n'a pas envoyé son Fils dans le monde pour condamner le monde, mais pour que le monde soit sauvé par lui» (Jn 3,16-17). En méditant le thème qui m'a été proposé pour ce congrès, et en rapprochant ces deux termes de densité inégale : «mission» et «mondialisation», ce sont ces paroles de Jésus, en Saint Jean, qui me sont revenues en mémoire. Dans le langage caractéristique du quatrième Évangile, elles nous introduisent au mystère de la mission du Fils unique dans le monde, fondement à la fois stable et si profondément dynamique de la mission de l'Église, y compris donc dans son contexte actuel. Contexte marqué, entre autres, par la mondialisation des échanges, avec tout ce que ce phénomène charrie de promesses et de menaces, de destruction et construction possibles. Après avoir esquissé dans quelle perspective théologique la parole johannique nous invite à étudier la question, j'en traiterai successivement trois dimensions concrètes pour la mission de l'Église : celle de **l'universalisation du droit**, celle de **la formation au juste esprit d'entreprise**, celle du **dialogue des cultures**.

Une perspective théologique

Que peut faire l'Église ? Que doit-elle faire aujourd'hui ? Comme Paul VI le disait de l'Église du Concile, comment ne pas espérer que l'on puisse dire de celle du troisième millénaire : «Elle aimait» ? C'est sa mission première, dans le mouvement même de la mission du Fils unique envoyé au monde non pour le condamner mais pour le sauver. Ainsi le Christ a-t-il révélé à ce monde combien Dieu l'a aimé et ne cesse de l'aimer. Et c'est de cet amour que l'Église ne cesse témoigner, non point d'abord de manière formelle ou déclarative, mais «en actes, véritablement» (1 Jn 3,18). Le monde dont parle le quatrième Évangile est bien ce monde tel qu'il est sorti des mains du Créateur, et c'est pourquoi elle consent avec joie au jugement porté par Dieu lui-même sur son œuvre : «Dieu vit tout ce qu'il avait fait cela était très bon» (Gn 1,31). Mais c'est aussi monde qui «gît tout entier au pouvoir Mauvais» (1 Jn 5,19). Autrement dit, c'est un monde blessé, déchiré, en mal de salut, un monde qui, dans l'ensemble de ses manifestations et de ses transformations, est travaillé de l'intérieur par une lutte spirituelle gigantesque et permanente entre sa bonté foncière et les mille détournements de celle-ci au profit de «toute injustice des hommes tenant la vérité captive» (Rm 1,18).

Cette perspective théologique ne doit rien au manichéisme. Elle peut au contraire, me semble-t-il, nous préserver de considérer le processus de mondialisation qui se déploie sous nos yeux de manière manichéenne. Sur ce versant, j'oserais dire qu'un Teilhard de Chardin, qui ignorait ce terme, mais employait volontiers celui de «planétisation» dans un sens éminemment positif, a anticipé sur notre réflexion. Pour lui, les extraordinaires évolutions matérielles et sociales de notre ère, même sous leurs aspects conflictuels, ne devaient pas être lues comme des forces incoercibles ou le fruit d'une fatalité. Il revenait aux chrétiens d'en dévoiler la valeur en s'appuyant tant sur la recherche scientifique qui les rendait possibles que sur le progrès de la conscience qu'elles pouvaient susciter. «L'individu seul en face de lui-même», écrivait-il, «ne s'épuise pas. Ce n'est que par opposition à d'autres hommes qu'il arrive à se voir jusqu'au fond et tout entier. Si

personnelle et incommunicable soit-elle dans son centre et dans son germe, la réflexion ne se développe qu'en commun. Essentiellement, elle représente un phénomène social. Qu'est-ce à dire sinon que son achèvement et sa plénitude à venir coïncident précisément avec l'avènement de ce que nous appelons la planétisation humaine?... Plutôt que de nous opposer inutilement ou de nous abandonner servilement à l'astre qui nous porte, qu'attendons-nous pour laisser notre vie s'éclaircir et se dilater à la lumière montante de cette deuxième humanisation?». ¹

Reprenons le propos johannique. Ce qui sauve le monde, c'est le don, par Dieu, de son Fils unique, manifestation suprême de son amour. En sauvegardant le sens de l'analogie, qu'est-ce qui, pour nous chrétiens, peut devenir «sauveur» dans la mondialisation ? Ce sera la capacité des protagonistes humains de cette immense machinerie de surmonter leur avidité et leurs antagonismes, leur passivité ou leur repli sur soi, grâce à un amour plus fort du monde, des hommes dans le monde, non pas à la marge de ce phénomène, mais au-dedans de lui. Dès lors, l'Église elle-même ne remplirait pas toute sa mission salvifique en se contentant de venir au secours des laissés pour compte du développement économique mondial. Certes, c'est là un devoir indispensable, mais qui, considéré comme seule fin de son action, serait une sorte de résignation. Elle la remplirait moins encore en se contentant de chanter l'antienne du «néo-libéralisme» ou celle de «l'anti» ou même de «l'alter-mondialisme». Il est vrai qu'il existe des chrétiens sincères qui se réclament de ces deux courants. Mais s'enfermer dans une telle alternative, ce serait retomber dans les rets d'idéologies réductrices et donc dangereuses pour l'avenir de l'homme. Les membres de l'Église, et plus particulièrement les fidèles laïcs du Christ, mêlés au bouillonnement d'un monde en gestation, à la manière du sel pour la terre, sont appelés à pénétrer de l'intérieur ce mouvement d'échanges commerciaux, des migrations et de circulation intense d'informations tous azimuts, pour humaniser (ou «hominiser», selon la vision teilhardienne) un tel processus et «répondre ainsi au dessein de Dieu sur l'homme», comme le Concile leur en a fait le devoir (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 64).

Un droit universel

«... Pour que tout homme qui croit en lui ne périsse pas mais ait la vie éternelle» (Jn 3,16b). Chaque mot de ce verset mérite une considération particulière. Puisqu'il est question ici de la mission de l'Église, il nous est évident que l'accent majeur est à mettre sur le «croire en lui», c'est-à-dire dans le Christ ! Et il est tout aussi évident que nous n'allons pas attendre pour annoncer à tous la bonne nouvelle du salut, que le processus de mondialisation, arraché à l'injustice, puisse être vu, un jour peut-être, comme une réussite de tous ! Mais il est permis de penser aussi que le salut, dans sa détermination définitive, qui n'est autre que la «vie éternelle», puisse se comprendre également, relativement, comme une réalité temporelle, terrestre. «Que tout homme ... ne périsse pas» : comme un Charles Péguy n'eut de cesse de le rappeler dans son œuvre, le salut éternel implique en lui-même le refus de toute exclusion, et il ne peut être dissocié du salut temporel de *tout* homme. Autrement dit, une compréhension chrétienne du salut, fondée sur l'incarnation rédemptrice du Verbe de Dieu, si elle s'accomplit dans l'inclusion eschatologique de l'humanité rachetée, n'en a pas moins des conséquences historiques immédiates, de sorte que le «ne périsse pas» évangélique soit vécu au jour le jour comme un impératif pour le salut temporel de «tout homme». Ceci est en substance l'enseignement du Concile : «L'espérance eschatologique ne diminue pas l'importance des tâches terrestres, mais en soutient bien plutôt l'accomplissement pour de nouveaux motifs ... (Le Christ) ne suscite pas seulement le désir du siècle à venir, mais par là même anime aussi, purifie et fortifie ces aspirations généreuses qui poussent la famille humaine à améliorer ses conditions de vie et à soumettre à cette fin la terre entière» (*Gaudium et spes*, nn. 21, § 3; 38 §1).

La dignité de toute personne humaine est, en conséquence, le fondement dernier du droit universel, comme les évêques d'Afrique ne cessent de le rappeler. Lorsqu'un droit est bafoué ou violé, il ne faut pas s'étonner que des conflits plus ou moins latents éclatent, entraînant leur cortège de mort pour l'homme et de mépris pour la création.² J'ai plaisir à me référer, sur ce point, à l'analyse faite par Mgr Monsengwo Pasinya, l'an dernier, ici même, dans un exposé sur le thème de l'éducation à la paix, en vue de comprendre les origines du conflit international des Grands Lacs. Après en avoir rappelé ses causes historiques complexes, depuis la fin de la Guerre froide, il n'hésitait pas, citant la Lettre pastorale du Symposium des Conférences Épiscopales d'Afrique et de Madagascar (SCEAM) d'octobre 2001, *Christ est notre paix*, à entrer dans le vif en situant la crise politique dont elle est le fruit amer dans son rapport à une crise économique. Mais, ajoutait-il, «de bout en bout, la crise des Grands Lacs est une crise du droit». «Or», disait-il, «combattre la conflictualité, c'est créer les conditions de tolérance dans une société... Il n'y a pas de tolérance sans une juste vision de la citoyenneté, qui définit pour chaque personne son statut, ses droits et ses obligations en rapport avec les options et les valeurs fondamentales de société d'une communauté nationale donnée».³

Qu'il me soit permis de me référer à deux expériences personnelles, certes moins dramatiques, mais qui viennent corroborer cette analyse. Ayant vécu 17 années au sud de la péninsule coréenne, j'y ai vu un pays émerger peu à peu sur le plan de la compétitivité mondiale. J'y ai partagé en pasteur les souffrances endurées par les populations arrachées à l'espace rural pour grossir la périphérie de Séoul. Je ne suis donc pas fasciné par le « modèle asiatique ». Mais je dois avouer mon admiration devant l'amour des Coréens pour leur pays. Et je sais que le jour approche où il leur faudra le démontrer à nouveau dans le nécessaire travail de réconciliation entre les deux moitiés du même peuple qu'ils forment à l'origine, artificiellement séparé de part et d'autre du 38^e parallèle par les idéologies du siècle passé. Cela ne se fera pas sans une profonde éducation à la tolérance et au sens du droit des personnes, du droit économique, du droit national et international. L'Église locale a un rôle à jouer dans cette nouvelle étape, et ses évêques en sont particulièrement conscients. Plus récemment, en France, nous avons été interrogés par la crise dite du « voile islamique ». Au nom de la laïcité républicaine, le Gouvernement a fait voter une loi qui interdit le port de ce voile dans l'enceinte scolaire. Si nous, évêques, nous y sommes opposés, ce n'est pas seulement au nom de la liberté religieuse ; c'est parce que les tentations de l'islamisme radical chez nous comme ailleurs, ont notamment leur cause dans les frustrations économiques et la marginalisation sociale. Le vrai travail d'éducation à la citoyenneté et au sens du droit ne peut donc s'opérer sans un projet ambitieux des politiques pour le logement et l'emploi, entre autres. Là aussi, les chrétiens ont leur part à prendre !

Dans le contexte actuel de la mondialisation, l'Église a mission de faire découvrir la dimension prophétique du droit. Au niveau de la diplomatie internationale, Jean-Paul II l'a manifesté avec vigueur à de nombreuses occasions, et encore récemment à propos de la guerre en Irak. Cela est tout aussi vrai pour ce qui regarde l'économie mondiale. Souvenons-nous des prophètes, au sens proprement biblique du terme. Les mêmes qui fustigeaient les propriétaires sans scrupules qui « vendent le juste à prix d'argent et le pauvre pour une paire de sandales » (Am 2,6) n'en appelaient que plus fort au « règne du droit » à l'encontre d'un culte hypocrite, disant : « Que le droit coule comme l'eau, et la justice comme un torrent qui ne tarit pas » (Am 5,15.21 ; cf. Is 62,1). Cet aspect des choses n'apparaît pas immédiatement aujourd'hui dans l'ordinaire de la vie économique. Il arrive trop souvent que l'initiative privée, indispensable à la production des richesses, souffre de règlements qui paraissent la juguler, tant au plan des États qu'à celui des ensembles régionaux. Par nature, dirait-on, le droit est « froid » ; mais c'est qu'il n'entre pas dans les considérations de personnes ou d'oligarchies locales. Il peut aussi peser d'un poids excessif sur les investisseurs et entraîner la fuite des capitaux ou des cerveaux. Il est pourtant le seul rempart contre la corruption et la condition *sine qua non* pour favoriser une économie de marché qui soit au service de tous. Comme le Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, président du Conseil Pontifical Justice et Paix, le disait le 5 décembre 2003, la mondialisation, telle que l'Église la conçoit, exige « un code éthique commun ». « On ne désigne pas ainsi », précisait-il, « un unique système socio-économique ou une unique culture qui imposerait ses propres valeurs et critères à l'éthique. Mais c'est dans l'humanité universelle sortie des mains de Dieu, qu'il faut rechercher les normes de la vie sociale. Cette recherche est indispensable afin que la mondialisation ne soit pas seulement un autre nom de la relativisation absolue des valeurs et de l'homogénéisation des styles de vie et des cultures ».⁴

Une formation au juste esprit d'entreprise

Dans son acception originale, le terme « entreprise » peut, de soi, convenir à l'aventure missionnaire de tous les temps. Si le mot évoque spontanément l'initiative, privée ou publique, prenant corps dans une institution créatrice d'emplois et de richesses, il évoque aussi, de manière figurée, l'action humaine conjuguée à celle de Dieu, comme déjà dans le Psaume : « Si le Seigneur ne bâtit la maison, en vain peinent les maçons » (Ps 127,1). Il en va de même quand le Christ johannique parle de « l'œuvre de Dieu » et dit, par exemple : « Mon Père travaille toujours et moi aussi je travaille » (Jn 5,17). Il suffit de penser aux voyages missionnaires de Saint Paul, de Saint François-Xavier, et de tant d'autres, pour reconnaître qu'ils ont eu l'audace des grandes entreprises, celles-ci comprenant à la fois un projet, dont ils étaient acteurs avec le Saint Esprit, et des risques. Il nous est bon de retrouver ces sources splendides de l'entreprise divine et humaine du salut pour sonder le sens de la mission de l'Église à l'heure de la « mondialisation ». « Dieu a tant aimé le monde... » et son amour n'est pas épuisé ! De nouveaux projets, de nouveaux risques attendent les missionnaires des temps nouveaux !

Ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui l'animation missionnaire, dans nos pays respectifs, manifeste, à l'école de Pauline Jaricot et de ses émules, une créativité et une capacité communicative que j'ai bien envie de qualifier d'entrepreneuriales. Pensons à tant d'humbles fidèles attachés à la prière et à la collecte pour la solidarité universelle et organique gérée par les Œuvres Pontificales Missionnaires. Les enfants et les jeunes

sont sollicités de mille façons pour entrer dans cette aventure planétaire. Chaque année, à Lisieux, avec les préadolescents de nos diocèses d'Île-de-France en pèlerinage, je suis frappé par la fascination qu'exerce sur eux la «petite» Thérèse. Eux aussi se montrent inventifs pour exprimer leur désir de communion concrète avec les enfants de tous les continents, d'ailleurs présents en leur sein du fait des migrations. Il me semble que toutes ces actions forment un terreau propice à la formation d'un juste esprit d'entreprise, tel que l'exige notre époque pour redresser ce qui doit l'être dans la mondialisation. Mais je voudrais aller plus loin.

Pour reprendre l'intervention du Cardinal Martino que je citais tout à l'heure : «L'Église accompagne l'humanité dans la découverte du visage humain de la mondialisation. Elle l'accompagne de manière à ce que, derrière les problèmes de brevets sur les organismes génétiquement modifiés, on voie toujours plus le visage des paysans africains, derrière des listes de chiffres sur écran, on voie les petits épargnants des économies en voie de développement, derrière les satellites et les câbles à fibres optiques on voie les jeunes qui, dans les pays pauvres, pourraient apprendre à se former avec les technologies nouvelles, derrière les diagrammes perfectionnés de la «nouvelle économie» on voie les entreprises comme communautés de personnes, et derrière la flexibilité du travail, les familles des travailleurs». «C'est là», ajoutait-il, «la perspective chrétienne pour la 'gouvernance' de la mondialisation». ⁵ Autrement dit, la mission de l'Église, même si elle comporte de manière évidente un volet spécifique qui s'exerce dans l'entreprise d'évangélisation et de *plantatio Ecclesiae* en ces parties du monde «où l'on n'avait pas invoqué le Nom du Christ» (Rm 15,20), il faut bien se rendre compte que la «mondialisation», comme phénomène socio-économique planétaire, est précisément l'une de ces contrées encore étrangères ! En ce sens, oui, la doctrine sociale de l'Église et la lutte pour la justice font partie intégrante de l'évangélisation, et même souvent de la «première évangélisation».

Cependant il faut sans doute reconnaître que former au juste esprit d'entreprise suppose chez nombre de chrétiens une certaine conversion de mentalité. Là surtout où l'idéologie marxiste a laissé des traces, il n'est pas évident de concevoir l'entreprise, même reconnue en tant que «communauté de personnes», avant tout comme un projet créateur de richesses, avec son capital, ses investissements, ses salaires, sa marge bénéficiaire, sa publicité et tout le reste ! On a tellement peur de la tentation du libéralisme ! Et il faut également admettre que cet épouvantail n'est pas sans fondement. On ne «vend» pas la mission comme on «vend» un produit. La fécondité missionnaire, parce qu'elle est de l'ordre de la charité, ne saurait être confondue avec l'efficacité commerciale. Aussi n'est-ce pas cette analogie que j'entends pousser inconsidérément. Ce que je veux dire, c'est qu'il est du ressort de l'homme social de tendre vers la réussite. Que la réussite, pourvu qu'elle se conjugue avec la solidarité, n'est pas un péché. Et qu'une saine compétition, d'ailleurs inévitable dès l'âge de la maternelle ou sur un terrain de sport, est un élément clé de toute éducation. Finalement, ce qui se cache derrière cette exigence, n'est-ce pas la réhabilitation du sens chrétien de l'effort, comme matière première de sanctification ? Lorsque Jésus nous avertit que «des enfants de ce monde-ci sont plus avisés avec leurs semblables que les enfants de lumière» (Lc 16,8), ce n'est pas pour nous dire qu'il faut s'y résigner ! Dans le contexte de «mondialisation», la mission de l'Église sera d'extraire l'or du creuset, en le débarrassant des scories qui le masquent. Entreprise à haut risque, certes, mais nul ne saurait entrer dans les vues de Dieu «en restant tout le long du jour sans rien faire» (Mt 20, 6) !

Le dialogue des cultures

J'en viens brièvement à ce dernier point de mon exposé qui me semble être au cœur de tout notre Congrès, et qui, en rapport au phénomène de la «mondialisation», tel qu'il se déroule de fait, offre le contrepoint essentiel de la mission de l'Église. Parmi les documents récents du Magistère, je choisis le Message de Jean-Paul II pour la Journée Mondiale de la Paix du 1^{er} janvier 2001. Ce discours constitue à mes yeux une véritable charte du dialogue des cultures, non seulement comme antidote à une mondialisation conçue — comme elle l'est — comme uniformisation d'un modèle prétendument occidental, mais comme condition indispensable d'une mondialisation qui serait authentique, et qu'il faudrait sans doute alors appeler d'un nouveau nom.... Le Pape y parle en effet d'un «phénomène de vastes proportions, soutenu par de puissantes campagnes médiatiques qui tendent à véhiculer des styles de vie, des projets sociaux et économiques, et en définitive une vision d'ensemble de la réalité, qui rongent de l'intérieur divers fondements culturels et de très nobles civilisations. En raison de leur forte connotation scientifique et technique, les modèles culturels de l'Occident apparaissent fascinants et séduisants, mais malheureusement ils révèlent, avec une évidence toujours plus grande, un appauvrissement progressif dans les domaines humaniste, spirituel et moral». ⁶

Si je dis «modèle prétendument occidental», c'est parce que l'Occident qui s'imposerait ainsi à l'échelle planétaire aurait déjà évacué de son propre patrimoine des Hilaires de Poitiers, Dante, Pascal, Bach ou ... Suger, ⁷ entre autres, et que ce qu'il offre dès lors en appât ressemble plutôt à une bibeloterie en toc,

malheureusement assez brillante pour exercer sur le monde l'attrait que nous savons. Il y a, de ce point de vue, une contradiction flagrante entre l'envahissement du tourisme sur les plus beaux sites de cet Occident, et les ravages qu'entraînent ses productions de bas étage. Ce contraste mériterait à lui seul une étude appropriée, autour de l'hypertrophie du «produit» et la notion même de «marché» sans doute. Mais venons-en plutôt à la mission de l'Église, au plan de l'antidote et de la condition d'un universalisme digne de l'humanité. Pour résister à cet attrait du vide, elle doit apporter sa pierre, dans chaque peuple, à l'estime de sa propre culture : «L'accueil de sa propre culture comme élément structurant de la personnalité, en particulier dans la phase initiale de la croissance, est un donné de l'expérience universelle, dont il ne faut pas sous-évaluer l'importance. Sans cet enracinement dans un *humus* défini, la personne elle-même risquerait d'être soumise, à un âge encore tendre, à un excès de *stimuli* opposés, qui ne faciliteraient pas son développement serein et équilibré. C'est en fonction de ce rapport fondamental avec ses propres "origines" — au niveau familial, mais aussi territorial, social et culturel — que se développe chez les personnes *le sens de la patrie*, et la culture tend à assumer, plus ou moins selon le lieu, une configuration "nationale"» (n. 6).

Le dialogue rendu possible entre des cultures différentes à partir de cette commune «culture de l'estime» aura des répercussions à l'intérieur même de l'Église. C'est ici que le thème de l'inculturation, dans ses connotations dogmatiques, éthiques, ecclésiologiques, liturgiques et pastorales, pourrait lui aussi retenir notre attention. Je le note seulement en terminant, tant il me paraît devoir faire contrepoids à une mondialisation trompeuse. La catholicité vécue effectivement en Église ne sera pas alors une sorte de refuge contre la vanité d'un monde en perte de sens. Elle sera, comme les fidèles y sont pressés à la fin de la messe, un appel à «aller» témoigner, au milieu de ce monde, que Dieu lui a donné son Fils unique par amour. C'est un amour trinitaire, source infinie de communion : «En tant qu'expressions historiques diverses et appropriées de l'unité originelle de la famille humaine, les cultures trouvent dans le dialogue la sauvegarde de leurs particularités, ainsi que de la compréhension et de la communion réciproques. Le concept de communion, qui, dans la révélation chrétienne, a sa source et son modèle sublime en Dieu un et trine (cf. Jn 17, 11.21), n'est jamais une réduction à l'uniformité, ni une reconnaissance forcée, ni une assimilation ; la communion est en réalité l'expression de la convergence d'une variété multiforme et elle devient donc signe de richesse et promesse de développement» (n. 10).

Notes

(*) Texte du secrétariat de Mgr de Berranger.

¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *La planétisation humaine* (1945), in: *L'Avenir de l'homme*, Éd. du Seuil, 1959, cité dans *La Croix*, 25 janv. 2004, sup. III.

² Cf. SCEAM, Symposium des Conférences Épiscopales d'Afrique et de Madagascar, Lettre pastorale *Christ est notre paix* (Ep 2, 14), Accra, octobre 2001, 109, citée par Mgr Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, Archevêque de Kisangani, in *DC* 2004, n. 2307, p. 132

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 131 et 133.

⁴ D'après l'agence ZENIT, 6 déc. 2003 : «Humaniser la mondialisation, tâche de l'Église», ZF031200507.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Jean Paul II, *Dialogue entre les cultures pour une civilisation de l'amour et de la paix*, Message pour la Journée Mondiale de la Paix, 9 (*DC* 2001, n. 2239, pp. 1-7). Les citations suivantes sont tirées de ce texte.

⁷ Suger, abbé de Saint-Denis au XII^e siècle, conçut la première grande basilique gothique, aujourd'hui cathédrale du diocèse de Saint-Denis-en-France.

Réf. : *La documentation catholique*, 3 octobre 2004, n. 17, pp. 832-837. [Discours de au colloque missionnaire (Kinshasa)].

Le missionnaire et les situations de violence

- Guy Theunis, M. Afr -

Introduction

À 22 ans, Teresa a eu la douleur énorme de perdre son fils unique de 3 ans. Une nuit, dans une rue obscure de son village, un inconnu a tiré deux coups de revolver sur son fils et l'a tué. Après un an de désespoir, elle a voulu, avec des amies, rencontrer en prison celui qui avait tué son fils, mais incognito. Elle voulait savoir quel était cet être sans cœur qui avait tué son enfant et lui avait causé tant de peine. Ce jour, Antonio a raconté à ses amies la terrible histoire de sa vie : son enfance malheureuse où il fut abusé par son père, puis abandonné par sa mère et confié à ses grands-parents, finalement comme enfant de la rue. Son histoire a tellement bouleversé Teresa, que, pleine de compassion, elle est allée le visiter régulièrement en prison. Aujourd'hui, ils sont mariés et ont trois enfants.

Telle est l'histoire racontée par Leonel Narvaez Gomez, responsable des Écoles du Pardon et de la Réconciliation en Amérique latine, pendant le séminaire organisé par le SEDOS pour les missionnaires à Rome, en mai 2004 sur le thème «*Stratégies pour construire la réconciliation dans un environnement de violence*». C'est un miracle de pardon et de réconciliation qui illustre combien les situations de violence ne sont pas toujours désespérées et combien il est nécessaire pour nous, missionnaires, qui vivons au milieu de situations de violence, d'y réfléchir, d'en découvrir les sources, d'en démonter les mécanismes pour pouvoir ensuite agir adéquatement.

Nous pouvons en effet avoir une action très positive, comme nous pouvons contribuer à la violence sans le vouloir. Il nous est donc nécessaire d'abord de comprendre la violence, ses formes, ses causes.

Clarification des termes

1. **La force.** Elle peut être positive ou négative. Nous parlons d'une force de destruction militaire, d'une force destructrice physique ou de la force de propagande qui manipule la pensée des individus. Dans ce cas, la force est négative : elle est orientée contre le bien de la personne humaine. Mais il y a également la force de l'amour, de la vérité ou de la justice, des forces qui sont constructives, celles que nous sommes invités à vivre et répandre autour de nous.

2. **L'agressivité.** Elle est une force instinctive en nous. L'instinct est une force qui protège la vie. Il est sain et nécessaire. Par l'intervention de notre intelligence, nous pouvons pervertir les instincts. Nous ne les utilisons alors plus dans le respect de la vie mais de façon destructrice. C'est pourquoi nous disons qu'il ne faut pas supprimer l'agressivité, mais la canaliser, l'orienter de façon à ce qu'elle devienne une force constructive et libératrice.

3. **La violence** est, sans exception, une force destructrice, c'est-à-dire une force qui diminue, qui blesse, qui détruit soi-même et/ou l'autre.

Différentes formes de violence

On distingue la violence personnelle et interpersonnelle de la violence structurelle. Cette dernière englobe toutes les violences qui existent dans les concepts et structures de nos institutions, dans nos communautés, nos institutions économiques, politiques, sociales et militaires, nos Églises, nos écoles, etc.

On distingue aussi la violence physique de la violence psychologique. Celle-ci se révèle, dans la situation actuelle, comme l'une des forces les plus destructrices et dangereuses de la violence. Elle tente de manipuler l'être humain à travers des moyens divers comme les mass médias, les écoles, les mouvements politiques, etc.

On distingue aussi les violences visibles et les violences potentielles, latentes. Il faut être attentifs aux violences cachées. Souvent, lorsque éclate une violence au sujet d'un problème social, racial ou politique, la polarisation est déjà très forte parce qu'en raison de l'injustice existante, la violence s'est préparée depuis longtemps.

Les causes de la violence

1. **Les facteurs psychologiques.** La peur est souvent à l'origine de la violence. Il existe diverses formes de peur: peur de perdre des biens (matériels ou autres), son confort ou son pouvoir; insécurité face à celui qui est différent (par la race, la culture, la religion) ; peur de soi-même (sentiment d'infériorité, d'incompétence). Derrière toutes ces peurs, il y a une peur fondamentale, la peur de mourir. Même si elle n'est que rarement consciente, cette peur constitue l'ultime ressort de bien des violences.

Le désir de posséder ce qu'a l'autre est une autre source de violence. Surtout, comme l'explique René Girard, s'il est «désir mimétique» (désir de ce que désire l'autre) et en vient à vouloir éliminer toute personne qui fait obstacle à notre désir.

L'enfermement en soi-même, le désir infantile d'être tout et tout-puissant conduisent à la négation de l'autre, au refus des différences, à l'incapacité relationnelle.

Le manque de relations affectives peut également amener des comportements de régression (alcoolisme, drogue) qui sont sources de violences individuelles ou sociales.

2. **Les causes sociales et culturelles.** La première est l'éducation de l'enfant. Depuis quelques années, on sait que la réactivité émotionnelle de l'adulte dépend, pour beaucoup, de l'éducation «affective» reçue au cours des premières années de la vie. Le comportement d'agression se développe en réponse à l'attitude des éducateurs et, principalement, des parents (gestes, paroles brusques, temps insuffisant consacré à l'enfant, etc.). Si les parents modifient leur attitude, le comportement d'agression régresse.

Des réalités objectives favorisent la violence : conditions de travail ou d'habitat, injustices, chômage, échec scolaire ou professionnel, exploitation de toutes sortes, etc.

Plus grave et plus dévastatrice est l'idéologie. Ce qui caractérise une idéologie, c'est qu'elle est un système de pensée clos, fermé sur lui-même, par conséquent intolérant. Une idéologie exclut le dialogue. Elle cherche des boucs émissaires (les Tziganes, les Juifs, les étrangers, etc.). Elle rejette la responsabilité sur l'autre qu'elle charge de tous les maux de la société. Elle utilise le mensonge, la manipulation des masses par la propagande comme moyens pour arriver à sa fin. Les idéologies pures et dures génèrent toujours une « culture de la mort » (Jean-Paul II). La signature d'une idéologie, c'est le manque de respect à la personne humaine jusqu'à tuer si besoin est.

3. **La violence est un «mythe».** Un mythe, c'est une force jetée sur l'homme sans qu'il en soit responsable. Elle est comme un destin aveugle, cyclique, imposé à l'homme. La violence « mythique » est une fatalité dont l'homme ne serait pas responsable (cf. les tragédies grecques et latines). L'une des racines les plus difficiles à extirper du cœur de l'homme, c'est de croire que la violence est inévitable. Jean Goss parlait même de la « religion de la violence », la religion la plus ancrée dans le cœur des hommes : « C'est parce que nous y croyons que nous la faisons (cette violence) ». Nos sociétés ont été bâties sur la violence. Nous sommes nés dans des cultures de violence. Il n'est pas facile d'en sortir, mais c'est possible.

Le «Manifeste de Séville»

L'UNESCO a publié le 16 mai 1986, le *Manifeste de Séville* rédigé par les plus grands scientifiques du monde. En voici des extraits :

1. «Il est scientifiquement incorrect de dire que nous avons hérité de nos ancêtres les animaux une propension à faire la guerre ...». Premièrement, ce n'est pas vrai, car les animaux ne font pas la guerre. Deuxièmement, ce n'est pas vrai, car, contrairement aux animaux, l'homme possède une culture et la capacité de la changer. Une culture qui a fait la guerre à telle époque

peut changer et vivre en paix avec les autres cultures à une autre époque.

2. «Il est scientifiquement incorrect de dire que nous ne pourrions jamais mettre fin à la guerre, parce qu'elle fait partie intégrante de la nature humaine. Les controverses sur la nature humaine ne prouvent jamais rien, parce que la culture humaine confère aux hommes la capacité de modeler et de transformer leur nature d'une génération à l'autre».

3. «Il est scientifiquement incorrect de dire que l'on ne peut mettre fin à la violence, parce que les animaux et les hommes violents vivent mieux et se reproduisent plus que les autres. Tout indique au contraire que le bien vivre est directement lié, pour les êtres humains comme pour les animaux, à la capacité de coopérer».

4. «Il est scientifiquement incorrect de dire que les hommes sont portés à la violence en raison de leur cerveau. Le cerveau est une partie du corps comme une autre. Il peut servir aux fins de coopération comme pour exercer la violence. Tout dépend de l'intention».

5. «Il est scientifiquement incorrect de dire que la guerre est fondée sur l'instinct. Les scientifiques n'emploient guère le terme d'instinct, parce qu'il n'est pas un seul aspect de comportement humain qui soit si déterminé qu'il ne puisse être modifié par l'apprentissage. Certes, chacun a des émotions ; mais dans la guerre moderne, les décisions et les actions n'ont pas nécessairement un caractère émotionnel».

Conclusion du manifeste : «La guerre et la violence ne sont pas une fatalité biologique. Il est possible de mettre fin à la guerre et aux souffrances qu'elle entraîne. Cela suppose que tous se mettent à l'oeuvre et ce travail doit commencer dans l'esprit des hommes, d'hommes confiants dans la possibilité de la paix. Si l'homme a fait la guerre, alors il est capable de construire la paix. Chacun a son rôle à jouer».

«La même espèce qui a inventé la guerre est également capable d'inventer la paix. La responsabilité en incombe à chacun de nous».

Le conflit

Souvent, nous avons peur du conflit. Or le conflit est à considérer positivement, dans la mesure où il est régulé. C'est un des grands principes de fonctionnement d'une démocratie : «*En démocratie, on est en désaccord sur tout, sauf sur la manière de résoudre nos désaccords*». Et donc, l'art de vivre ensemble, ce n'est pas l'art d'éviter les conflits, c'est l'art de se donner les règles qui permettent à ceux-ci de s'exprimer positivement.

Selon la règle de base dite des «3 N», **le conflit est naturel**. Dieu nous a créés dans la diversité des sexes, âges, caractères, goûts, choix, valeurs, etc. La rencontre de ces différences n'est pas naturellement harmonieuse. La différence est divergence, bien avant qu'elle ne devienne, éventuellement, complémentarité.

Le conflit est normal. Il fait partie de toute vie sociale et n'est pas un malheur à éviter à tout prix. Il est une composante de nos relations sociales, un de nos moyens d'expression, au même titre que la connivence, la séduction, l'évitement, la séparation, la fuite.... Sous l'action de la chaleur, les atomes qui composent un corps s'agitent et plus ils sont en mouvement, plus ils risquent de s'entrechoquer. C'est normal. C'est même un signe de vie ! De même, dans un corps social, la confrontation est normale. C'est l'incapacité de la gérer qui rend le corps malade.

Le conflit est neutre. En soi, il n'est ni bon, ni mauvais. C'est la manière dont nous le disons, le gérons et le digérons qui est bonne ou mauvaise. Tout dépend de ce que nous en faisons. À l'état naissant, le conflit est un signal d'alerte, le symptôme d'une divergence.

En fait, **gérer un conflit, cela s'apprend**, comme on apprend une langue. Le conflit est véritablement une langue étrangère qu'il faut apprendre. Il a ses mécanismes qui nous piègent faute de les connaître et de les maîtriser. Il a sa grammaire, ses règles. Pour tout groupe — du couple à la Nation — il est primordial de travailler celles-ci ensemble, de les expliciter et d'en disposer comme d'une culture de communication commune. Éviter un conflit est le plus souvent la solution de facilité, à court terme. Regarder en face nos divergences et chercher ensemble à les assumer, les faire évoluer, est beaucoup plus exigeant. Mais c'est aussi beaucoup plus riche et moins dangereux que la politique de l'autruche.

La spirale de la violence : il y a trois types de violence (Mgr Helder Camara)

1. **La violence-mère.** C'est l'injustice sous toutes ses formes. Elle est source de toutes les autres violences. Par exemple une loi de discrimination raciale, des salaires trop bas, l'exploitation du travail de la femme et des enfants, le commerce des armes... sont des violences fondamentales, des violences-sources qui nourrissent d'autres formes de violence. Cette violence est dans les faits, les lois, les coutumes à tel point qu'on risque de ne pas la voir. Elle fait plus de victimes que toute autre forme de violence plus criante. Il s'agit de la violence institutionnalisée et parfois légalisée. C'est le domaine où s'exercent d'abord notre action et toutes les actions des groupes et commissions « Justice et Paix ».

2. **La contre-violence ou violence des victimes.** La violence attire la violence. Les victimes cherchent à se libérer par les moyens qu'ils connaissent, c'est-à-dire la contre-violence. Celle-ci peut se manifester de deux manières, soit spontanément (actions de vandalisme, agressions, etc.), soit de façon organisée (ex : la guérilla). Cette dernière violence repose sur une idéologie et non sur une foi en l'homme. Cette violence est réfléchie ; elle est une stratégie de conquête du pouvoir. Elle est souvent une réaction face à une injustice chronique.

3. **La violence de la répression.** C'est un engrenage, une spirale sans fin qui devient de plus en plus mortifère ! La violence de la répression, pour se justifier et pour être légitimée, a besoin de la contre-violence, de la violence des victimes. On légitime alors la violence de la répression.

Un exemple où la spirale a été interrompue : Lech Walesa s'est bien gardé d'utiliser la contre-violence pour défendre la cause de Solidarnosc. Les tanks soviétiques n'attendaient que cela : le dérapage du Syndicat en prenant la contre-violence. Et les provocations ne manquaient pas. Mais aussitôt les chars soviétiques seraient entrés en Pologne. Celui qui (individu ou gouvernement) utilise la violence envers des gens pacifiques se discrédite aussitôt devant l'opinion publique nationale ou internationale !

Toute situation de violence est unique. Elle est souvent faite d'une multitude d'éléments. À nous d'en faire l'analyse, d'en dégager toutes les composantes. C'est un travail long et ardu d'analyse sociale. Il faut en faire l'historique (et l'on sait combien, en histoire, les facteurs qui interviennent sont nombreux), en dégager les composantes économiques, sociales, culturelles, religieuses, idéologiques et surtout politiques. Ce travail est à faire en groupe. Il faut prendre le temps pour toujours compléter, nuancer, modifier. Mais c'est une étape essentielle pour que l'étape suivante, l'action, porte ses fruits.

Quelles actions mener ?

Pour nous, l'action essentielle à mener est celle de la conscientisation et de la formation, formation théorique et pratique, à la non-violence.

La première formation est celle à la communication non violente. On connaît dans ce domaine le travail de Marshall B. Rosenberg, psychologue américain, qui a beaucoup travaillé la question du langage. Le langage qu'on nous a appris — on ne vise ici aucune langue particulière, mais le langage humain universel — c'est un langage qui juge, qui interprète, qui établit un diagnostic, qui classe les gens, qui leur colle des étiquettes, qui leur explique ce qui ne tourne pas rond chez eux, en un mot qui les condamne, qui les blesse... Ce langage ordinaire qui passe dans la tête et qui véhicule le plus souvent un avis défavorable, il l'appelle le langage chacal. Mais nous pouvons parler un langage qui ne juge pas, qui appelle plutôt compréhension, qui exprime ce qui se passe dans notre cœur, ce que nous ressentons, notre réaction qui est d'ailleurs toujours l'expression d'un besoin profond. Ce langage-là Rosenberg l'appelle le langage girafe (de tous les animaux terrestres, la girafe est l'animal qui a le plus grand cœur).

Le premier travail est de prendre conscience du langage (et de la société) dans lequel nous sommes nés, avons grandi et vivons, de voir effectivement quel est notre langage et, en fait, notre attitude fondamentale vis-à-vis des autres que ce langage exprime. Comment parlons-nous ? Comment nous adressons-nous aux autres ? Comment répondons-nous à l'agression verbale ?

Au langage girafe correspond aussi une écoute girafe : comprendre l'autre, savoir se mettre à sa

place, est aussi important que de dire ce que nous vivons profondément. À titre d'exemple, une anecdote. Marshall Rosenberg raconte qu'un jour il se trouvait à Jérusalem dans une mosquée avec 170 musulmans. Quand l'un d'eux découvrit qu'il était américain, il se leva et cria: «Assassin !» et pendant 40 minutes, il hurla un discours anti-américain. Rosenberg, lui, écoutait avec des oreilles girafe, de façon à n'entendre que «s'il vous plaît !», à entrer par empathie dans la souffrance de ce Palestinien musulman qui clamait la misère de son peuple face à un représentant des États-Unis qui ont toujours, envers et contre tout, défendu l'État d'Israël. Rosenberg l'a écouté, sans rien dire ; il a capté la souffrance qui se cachait sous ce langage de haine. Le soir, ce musulman l'a invité à partager son repas. Rosenberg conclut : «Tout jugement n'est que l'expression tragique d'un besoin inassouvi !».

Prendre conscience de la violence qui est en nous et la dominer est la seconde action à laquelle nous sommes invités et devons inviter toute personne. Cette violence vient de notre propre histoire, de notre éducation, de nos blessures, peut-être de traumatismes profonds. Il s'agit, comme pour la communication non violente, de briser la spirale de la violence en ne répondant pas à la violence par la violence. Il faut donc d'abord être conscient de ce qui se passe en nous, des sentiments que nous éprouvons, des émotions qui nous poussent à agir et les dominer pour que jamais la violence ne s'exprime. Au contraire, par le dialogue, nous pourrions à la fois exprimer ce que nous ressentons, notre peine, les blessures causées par l'autre ou les autres, et remettre en question l'action des autres en faisant la vérité après l'avoir écouté avec empathie.

La suite n'est pas à développer, je pense. Cela se trouve dans tous les manuels de formation à la non-violence active (et évangélique). En effet, face à l'injustice, il y a 3 réactions :

1. **la passivité.** C'est l'attitude la plus répandue, mais c'est aussi «l'attitude la plus basse, parce qu'elle fait de nous des sous-hommes» (Jean Goss). Gandhi disait qu'entre un lâche et un violent, il choisirait ce dernier, parce que celui-ci réagit contre l'injustice.

2. **la contre-violence.** C'est l'attitude spontanée, car apprise dès la plus jeune enfance. Mais, on l'a dit, elle est à éviter. Tant qu'on se situe à ce niveau, on se laisse dicter son comportement par l'adversaire. C'est lui qui nous domine et nous restons enfermés dans la spirale de la violence/contre violence. Cependant cette attitude est supérieure à la passivité. Dans la contre-violence, il y a quelque chose de positif: c'est de ne pas accepter l'injustice ou la violence, de réagir pour transformer la société, le monde.

3. **la non-violence active.** Basée sur l'Évangile, elle a été découverte peu à peu au fil des siècles (Léon Tolstoï, Mohandas Gandhi, Lanza del Vasto, Martin-Luther King, etc.). C'est le respect absolu de la personne humaine et de la création. Le but d'une action non-violente, c'est de vaincre l'injustice ou la violence sans recourir à des moyens violents qui dégradent autant celui qui les subit que celui qui les utilise. C'est la façon vraiment humaine (et chrétienne) de mettre fin à des situations d'injustice et de violence en construisant l'homme et la société nouvelle. Mais c'est un long chemin qui ne réussit d'ailleurs pas toujours. Mais les exemples récents des Philippines, de la Pologne, de l'Afrique du Sud, de Madagascar et, tout récemment, de l'Ukraine nous montrent qu'elle est possible à condition que les gens y croient et s'y engagent.

Et c'est là la difficulté de la non-violence. Elle suppose un long apprentissage et une pratique rigoureuse. Or, en temps de paix, peu de gens sont convaincus de son importance pour eux-mêmes et pour les autres. Ils la découvrent en temps de violence et de guerre. Mais à ce moment, c'est souvent trop tard pour commencer une conscientisation et une formation, approfondir des convictions et mettre en route des actions réfléchies et concertées.

Note

* Le Père Guy Theunis est missionnaire d'Afrique depuis 1968. Licencié en Théologie et en Écriture Sainte, il a travaillé 24 ans au Rwanda et 5 ans en Afrique du Sud. Depuis 2003, il est responsable de la formation permanente pour la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique, à Rome.

[guy.theunis@mafroma.org]

Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission

- Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. -
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago - USA -

The Emergence of Reconciliation in the Discussion of Mission

There have been references to, and echoes of, the theme of reconciliation in the theological discussion of mission throughout the previous century, but it is only in the last decade and a half that it has emerged as an important way of talking about Christian mission. David Bosch's 1992 magisterial work, *Transforming Mission*, makes no mention of it. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder's recent book, *Constants in Context* published in 2004, on the other hand, has multiple references to reconciliation. What has happened?

The experience of trying to come to terms with a violent past, the need to end hostility, and the slow work of reconstructing broken societies have pushed reconciliation into the limelight, especially bringing it to the attention of those concerned with the work of the Church. The fact that many recent conferences on mission have been taking up this theme, and that it figures in the title and preparatory documents of the Conference, indicates how far we have come.

In this presentation, I would like to explore how reconciliation might be seen as a paradigm or model of mission. I begin by looking at how the idea of reconciliation might be seen as revealing to us the heart of the Gospel. Then I will look at the understanding of reconciliation today, both as a *process* for engaging in mission, and as the *goal* of mission.

Reconciliation: The Heart of the Gospel

Although the word "reconciliation" does not occur as such in the Hebrew Scriptures, and only fourteen times in the New Testament, the Bible is full of stories of reconciliation, from the stories of Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers, to Jesus' parables, especially that of the Prodigal Son. These stories show the struggle that goes on in trying to achieve reconciliation. Many of them end before reconciliation is actually reached — something that mirrors much of our own experience.

It is the Apostle Paul especially who sets out the Christian understanding of reconciliation. For Paul, God is the author of reconciliation: about this he has no doubt. We but participate in what God is bringing about in our world. One can discern three processes of reconciliation in which God is engaged. The first is God's reconciling a sinful humanity to God's own self. This is set forth especially in Paul's Letter to the Romans (5:1-11), where Paul describes the peace we now have with God, who has poured out love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. We have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we have now received reconciliation. This act of God's, reconciling us, rescuing us from our sins, is sometimes called *vertical reconciliation*. As such, it is the basis for all other forms of Christian reconciliation. It is also central to Paul's own experience of Christ, having been converted from his persecution of the Church to being made, "out of due time", an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The second kind of reconciliation of which Paul speaks is brought about between individual human beings and groups in society. The paramount example of this reconciliation is between Jews and Gentiles. Here the description of how this reconciliation is effected through the blood of Christ is presented in Ephesians 2:12-20: the Gentiles, without hope or promise, are made alive together in Christ, who has broken down the wall of hostility that divided them, and made them fellow citizens in the household of God. This second kind of reconciliation is sometimes called *horizontal reconciliation*.

The third kind of reconciliation situates God's work through Christ in the context of the whole of Creation. In the hymns beginning the Letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, God is seen as reconciling all things and all persons — whether in heaven or on earth — in Christ (Eph 1:10), making peace to reign throughout all Creation through the blood of Christ's Cross (Col 1:20). This kind of reconciliation is sometimes called *cosmic reconciliation*, and represents the fullness of God's plan for Creation, to be realized at the end of time.

Paul sees the Church participating in the reconciling work of God through a ministry of reconciliation, captured succinctly in Paul's presentation of this in II Corinthians 5:17-20:

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All of this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (cf. NRSV).

It is the vertical reconciliation that makes the horizontal and cosmic dimensions possible. It is within this framework of vertical, horizontal, and cosmic reconciliation that we are to see Christian mission. That mission is rooted in the *missio dei*, the going forth of the Holy Trinity in the acts of creation, incarnation, redemption, and consummation. Through the Son, God has brought reconciliation to the world, overcoming sin, disobedience and the alienation we have wrought. Christ reunites us with God through his saving death, which God confirms in the Resurrection and the revelation of transfigured life. The Holy Spirit empowers the Church to participate in this ministry of the Son and the Spirit in reconciling the world. The Church itself is in need of constant reconciliation, but becomes the vehicle for God's saving grace to a broken and disheartened world.

One might summarize this biblical understanding of reconciliation under five brief headings:

1. God is the author of all genuine reconciliation. We but participate in God's reconciling work. We are, in Paul's words, “ambassadors in the name of Christ” (II Cor 5:20).

2. God's first concern in the reconciliation process is the healing of the victims. This grows out of two experiences: the God of the great prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God of Jesus Christ cares especially about the poor and the oppressed. Second, so often the wrongdoers do not repent, and the healing of the victim cannot be held hostage by unrepentant wrongdoers.

3. In reconciliation, God makes of both victim and wrongdoer a “new Creation” (II Cor 5:17). This means two things. First of all, in profound wrongdoing it is impossible to go back to where we were before the wrongdoing took place; to do such would be to trivialize the gravity of what has been done. We can only go forward to a new place. Second, God wants both the healing of the victim and the repentance of the wrongdoer. Neither should be annihilated; both should be brought to a new place, a new Creation.

4. Christians find a way out of their suffering by placing it in the suffering, death and Resurrection of Christ. It is this patterning of our suffering in that of Christ that helps us escape its destructive power. It also engenders hope in us.

5. Reconciliation will only be complete when all things are brought together in Christ (Eph 1:10). Until that time we experience only partial reconciliation, but live in hope.

The Ministry of Reconciliation as Process

How does the Church participate in this reconciliation? What concrete forms does it take? Because of the wider interest in reconciliation in the world today — it is far from being only a Christian concern — the language of reconciliation is often unclear. At times it has been manipulated and distorted to serve other ends. As Christians we need to be as clear as we can about what we mean by reconciliation and how we go about the ministry of reconciliation.

Let me begin by saying that reconciliation is both a *process* and a *goal*. It is both an ongoing work in which we participate and a final point at which we hope to arrive. Let us first look at it as a process. I will focus here on the horizontal or social dimension of Reconciliation. The Church participates in the vertical dimension through its sacraments and in the cosmic dimension as well, both in its liturgy and its concern for all of Creation. These too constitute part of reconciliation as a model of mission. But because the thinking on the horizontal dimension is more recent and new to many, I will devote more time to it here.

Participation in the horizontal dimension of reconciliation is about participating in God's healing of societies that have been wounded deeply and broken by oppression, injustice, discrimination, war, and wanton destruction. This healing begins with *truth-telling*, the breaking of the codes of silence that hide wrongdoing against the poor and vulnerable members of society. Truth-telling also means overcoming and correcting the lies and distortions that bring unearned shame on the innocent and isolate people from one another so as to exercise hegemony over society. Truth-telling has to be a constant effort to tell the whole truth, both for victims and about wrongdoers. Truth-telling as a practice in this sense must encompass four things: It must be a truth that resonates with my experience of events, it must be in language I can understand, it must conform to my understanding of truthfulness, and it must come from someone I can trust.

For a Christian, truth-telling is more than relating facts in a credible manner. It involves also God, who is the author of all truth. Truth in its Hebrew sense (*emet*) is part of the nature of God: it is reliable, it is enduring, it is steadfast, and it is faithful. It is truth-telling at this deep, theological level that is the basis for healing a broken society. What that means on a practical level is that the Church must endeavour to create safe, hospitable spaces where truth can be spoken and heard, where the silence can be broken, where pernicious lies can be laid bare and overcome.

With truth comes the pursuit of *justice*. To seek justice with no effort to establish the truth runs the risk of engaging in vengeance instead of true justice. The struggle for justice (and it is a struggle, wrongdoing does not give up easily) is many faceted. It involves *punitive justice*, that punishes wrongdoers in a lawful way to show that a renewed society acknowledges the wrongdoing that has been done and will not tolerate it in the future. Second, it involves *restorative justice* which restores the dignity and the rights of the victim. Third, it requires *distributive justice*, since the unjust wresting of a person's goods makes healing and the creation of a just society nearly impossible. Finally, it requires *structural justice*, that is, the restructuring of the institutions and processes of society so that just action becomes part of the rebuilt society. Reallocating resources, equity in human rights, guaranteed access to health, shelter, food, education and employment are all part of creating a just society.

A third aspect of reconciliation as a process is the *rebuilding of relationships*. Without relations of equity and trust, a society quickly slides back into violence. Work on these relationships has to happen at many levels. For victims, it involves the *healing of memories* so that one does not remain beholden or hostage to the past. It is an overcoming of the toxin that memories of violence, oppression, and marginalization contain. It means *repentance* and *conversion* on the part of those who have done wrong, acknowledging the wrongdoing and taking steps to approach the victim in order to apologize and make reparation. It means making the difficult journey toward *forgiveness*. Here the process of rebuilding relationships is often short-circuited. Amnesty is given or impunity is bestowed on the wrongdoers even before the victims are allowed to speak. A shroud of forgetfulness and oblivion is drawn over the past. Forgiveness is not about forgetting the wrong done, but about coming to remember it in a different way — a way that removes the toxin from the experience of the victim and creates the space for repentance and apology by the wrongdoer. Forgiveness means remembering the past, but remembering it in a way that makes a different kind of future possible for both victim and the wrongdoer.

Reconciliation as Goal

Truth-telling, struggling for justice, working toward forgiveness: these are the three central dimensions of the social process of reconciliation. In all the situations I know, they are never undertaken on a level playing field; the consequences of oppression, violence, and war are not predisposed to honesty, justice, and even the good intentions of all parties. Nor are the processes, for the most part, orderly. And they never seem to be complete. In fact, we usually experience them as truncated, prematurely foreclosed, hijacked by the powerful. What are we to do?

This brings me to the other understanding of reconciliation; namely, reconciliation as goal. Talk of reconciliation skips too easily from the end of overt violence to an imagined peace. It circumvents the messy and protracted process of truth-telling, seeking justice, working toward forgiveness. We expect peace to blossom and flourish after long periods of war. We expect democracy to rise up, phoenix-like, from the ashes of dictatorship and authoritarian rule. But such is not the case. We can find ourselves acquiescing to half-measures, half-truths, compromised solutions.

It is important not to confuse reconciliation as *process* with reconciliation as *goal*. In order to follow the process, we must fix our eyes on the goal. For Christians, it is God who is working reconciliation; we are but

agents in the process, participating in what God is doing. God is our strength; God is our hope. It is God who is bringing this about. Here we experience the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is what grows out of the confidence in our own resources and capacities. It comes out of us. The enormity of wrong and sin that we face in protracted war and oppression far exceeds what we are able to accomplish. Hope, on the other hand, comes from God. It is God leading us forward, like he did Abraham and Sarah. We live in faith, the assurance of things hoped for (cf. Heb 11:1). With our eyes fixed on God and God's promises, we can maintain the strength of heart, of mind, and of will to continue our participation in what God is doing for the world.

The Church: A Community of Memory and of Hope

So where does this place the Church? Its participation in the *missio dei*, understood here as God's reconciling the world to Himself, is marked especially by three things. First, the ministry of reconciliation makes the Church a community of memory and, second, a community of hope. Its mission, in word and deed, of the message of reconciliation makes possible what is perhaps for many the most intense experience of God possible in our troubled, broken world.

The Church is first of all a community of memory. It does not engage in the forgetfulness urged by the powerful upon the vulnerable and poor — to forget their suffering, to erase from their memories what has been done to them, to act as though the wrongdoing never happened. The Church as a community of memory creates those safe havens where memories can be spoken of out loud, and begin the difficult and long process of overcoming the rightful anger that, if left unacknowledged, can poison any possibilities for the future. In safe spaces, the trust that has been sundered, the dignity that has been denied and wrested away, has the chance of being reborn. A community of memory is concerned too about truthful memory, not the distorting lies that serve the interests of the wrongdoer at the cost of the wronged. A community of memory keeps the focus of memory as it pursues justice in all its dimensions — punitive, restorative, distributive, structural. Not to pursue and struggle for justice makes the truth-telling sound false and the safe spaces created barren. A community of memory is concerned too with the future of memory, that is, the prospects of forgiveness and what lies beyond. The difficult ministry of memory, if it may be called that, is possible because it is grounded in the memory of the passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ: the One who was without sin and was made to bear our sin, so that we might become the justice of God (cf. II Cor 5:21).

Living in the memory of what Christ has gone through — suffering and death, yet not forgotten and indeed raised up by God — is the source of our hope. Hope allows us to keep the vision of a reconciled world alive, not in some facile utopian fashion, but grounded in the memory of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Paul captures this well in another passage in the Second Letter to the Corinthians:

“But we hold this treasure in clay vessels, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies” (cf. II Cor 4:7-10).

Reconciliation belongs to God; not to us. Despite all we go through, we do not lose heart, since we carry the death of Jesus in our bodies, so that through us his life might be made visible. This is the vocation of the Church, its calling to the ministry of reconciliation, its proclamation of the death and Resurrection of Christ in the Church's own body. So, God's reconciling work can be made known to a broken world as he “entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Cor 5:18) through our preaching. Mission, as our Orthodox brothers and sisters have so helpfully reminded us, is the liturgy after the liturgy. Our action is not just political action or action for justice (although it is also all of these). It is participation in something much larger than ourselves: the work of the Triune God in bringing about the healing of the world.

Ref.: Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, *Come Holy Spirit - Heal and Reconcile (Called in Christ to be Reconciling and Healing Communities)* Athens, Greece, 14 May 2005.

Issues in Mission Today: Challenges for Reflection at Edinburgh 2010

- **Stephen Bevans, SVD** -

Introduction

When I received Ken Ross's invitation to participate in the planning meeting this week for the centenary celebration(s) of the World Missionary Conference for Evangelism at Edinburgh in 1910, I was truly honoured and really excited. Here was an opportunity to spend time in one of my all time favourite cities, to explore the university where my theological hero and doctoral dissertation subject, John Oman, did his university studies, and to enjoy the company of many friends and colleagues in mission studies — all at the expense of the "Towards 2010" Council! Exciting indeed!

Just about a month ago, however, Ken sent me another invitation — the invitation to offer this opening reflection of the planning meeting. In other words, an invitation to earn my keep! I was a bit hesitant, but Ken was exercising a wee bit of Scots stubbornness and finally persuaded me to do it. So here I am, even more honoured to be here and share these reflections with you, reflections which, in the words of Ken's charge, "touch on the significance of Edinburgh 1910 as an event in the history of mission, but would major on identifying some of the great issues facing Christian mission in today's world". This is a tall order, especially since Ken said that this should be "the kind of lecture which has academic depth but which is accessible to those engaged in the practice of mission" — and that it should last only 40 minutes! A tall order, but I'll try!

Ken's charge as to the content of this presentation suggests that my reflections be divided into two parts, and that is what I am going to do this evening. In a first part I'd like to contrast the situation of the world and specifically of mission today from that of the context of the Edinburgh Conference a century ago. This first part, I believe, will set the stage for the second part, which will be to list and briefly reflect on some of the "great issues" we face as we engage in the practice and study of mission today. I can't imagine I will say anything startling new; Ken himself has given us two important preparatory documents already, and the outlines of the four clusters cover the field extremely well. But perhaps this overview will help us in our planning, and endow us with the "meticulous care"¹ which Joseph Oldham and John R. Mott took in planning Edinburgh 1910.

That Was Then; This is Now: 1910 into the 21st Century

I must confess that I have only read about Edinburgh 1910 sporadically; I have not read either the eyewitness account of the Conference by Temple Gairdner,² the work of Brian Stanley on the Conference, nor the important history of the International Missionary Conference by Richey Hogg.³ In our book *Constants in Context*, Roger and I treat Edinburgh briefly, but it was Roger and not I who was the principal researcher and author of that particular section.⁴

Nevertheless, as I read the accounts of the Edinburgh Conference provided by Stephen Neill, Kenneth Scott Latourette, David Bosch and David L. Edwards,⁵ it soon became clear that we live in and practise mission in a very different world from a century ago.

Modernity and Postmodernity

In the first place, Edinburgh 1910 was held at the height of the missionary movement that began, for Protestants, at the beginning of the nineteenth century and for Catholics several years

later. This was a heady time, one of optimism and belief in inevitable progress. John R. Mott saw a real confluence of the power of the Gospel and the power of modern science, convincing him that, indeed, the world could be evangelized in his generation.⁶ In stark contrast to this, we live in an age of, if not pessimism, certainly an age of chastened optimism. Scientific progress has brought amazing things like jet travel and computers, but it has also resulted in the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the poisoning of our planet, and the very ambiguous phenomenon of globalization. Edinburgh 1910 was held at the height of modernity; we live in an age of postmodernism. A century ago, the answers seemed clear and inevitable; now there are more questions than answers. A century ago there was no doubt about the superiority of Christianity over the other world religions, and at Edinburgh as in Chicago's World Parliament of World Religions in 1893, the demise of other religions was strenuously predicted. Throughout the last century, however, the conviction has become ever stronger that, in the famous words of Max Warren, alluding to Acts 14:17, "God has not left himself without a witness in any nation at any time... God was here before our arrival".⁷ The "great new fact of our time" is the validity of religious pluralism, while still acknowledging the uniqueness and absolute necessity of the revelation of God in Christ. Today we want to acknowledge the presence of God in the world's religions and cultures, while at the same time taking a prophetic stance against postmodern relativism.

Power and Weakness

At the time of Edinburgh 1910, mission was done with an attitude of power. As David Bosch points out, echoed by Ken Ross in his paper on the possibilities of the centenary celebration, the metaphors for mission were military. "Mission stood in the sign of world conquest. Missionaries were referred to as 'soldiers,' as Christian 'forces'. References were made to missionary strategies and tactical plans".⁸ The year 1910 was at the tail end of colonialism (foreshadowed, perhaps, by the Boer War a decade earlier⁹), but colonialism was still in full swing, and so Europe saw itself clearly at the "centre" of the Church, with "missions" at the world's periphery. Mission was done "over there", supported by the rich European and North American Churches. This is reflected in the fact that, of the 1200 delegates to Edinburgh 1910, some 1,170 were from Europe — 500 British, 500 American, 170 from the rest of Europe, as Ken Ross points out. That leaves only about thirty delegates from India, China and Japan, with no delegates from either Africa or Latin America.¹⁰

In stark contrast to this, mission today is no longer done from a centre — any centre — but is carried out on "six continents", "from everywhere to everywhere".¹¹ European Christianity is in grave decline, and the centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted from the First World to the Third. Although the First World still contributes considerable financial resources to missionary work, the huge funds that were available even twenty or thirty years ago have suffered considerable cutbacks. And as missionaries come increasingly from poorer countries such as those in Africa, Asia and Latin America, mission work will be done increasingly, as the Latin American bishops have put it, "out of poverty".¹² Rather than imaging mission with military metaphors — or as Kosuke Koyama has said, with a "crusading mind"¹³ — mission today, many scholars and practitioners acknowledge, needs to be done in vulnerability,¹⁴ or as Koyama puts it, with a "crucified mind". We speak today of mission done in "bold *humility*", or in "prophetic *dialogue*".¹⁵

Ecumenical Enthusiasm and Frustration

Edinburgh 1910 has rightly been claimed as "the symbolic starting point of the contemporary ecumenical movement",¹⁶ and scholars agree that one of the most important aspects of the Conference was its decision to establish the continuing committee which eventually bore fruit in 1948 with the establishment of the World Council of Churches.¹⁷ Ecumenical cooperation continued to gain momentum throughout the twentieth century, perhaps reaching its peak in the years just after the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Soon after, however, Evangelical Christians began their own movement with the 1974 Lausanne Conference, and ecumenical hopes began to wane as the Orthodox Churches became more and more critical of the World Council of Churches and Roman Catholicism, despite some bright spots like John Paul II's Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, became more and more conservative and (in the face of Pentecostal and Evangelical inroads among Catholics) defensive and hostile. Witness the embarrassing Declaration *'Dominus Iesus'*,

issued on 6 August 2000. Ecumenical hopes and cooperation remain high, as this gathering this evening evidences, and unlike Edinburgh 1910 there will be a significant Roman Catholic and Orthodox presence in the planning and celebration of its centenary. But there is caution at every turn. Nevertheless, many are convinced that cooperation among Christian Churches and the practise of Common Witness in mission are imperatives for today's practice of mission.¹⁸ Christian divisions continue to be a scandal to the world, especially in this time of renaissance of the world's religions, and an overt disobedience to the will of Christ. The hopes of Edinburgh 1910 stand as a challenge to us in mission today.

Constants in Context

These contrasts between Edinburgh 1910 and our own time reveal, I believe, the *context* in which we must do mission today. Our task is the same; the "great commission" is still valid; the *constants*, as Roger Schroeder and I have suggested, of the centrality of Christ, the necessity of the church, of an eschatological vision, an understanding of salvation, the human person, of human culture, all still obtain. But these *constants* are in *context*. And so while John R. Mott's phrase is still valid, it demands, perhaps, today a different interpretation: we are called to evangelize the world in *this* generation, with all its uncertainties, struggles, violence and vast opportunities. It is an exciting time, for once again, like the Church in the West before Constantine, or in the Persian Empire in the fourth century, or the East Syrian or Coptic Church in the wake of the Muslim Conquest of the seventh century or the Japanese Church in the sixteenth, the Church all over the world resembles its own humble, dynamic beginnings. It is in this context of uncertainty, vulnerability, poverty yet undeniable vitality that we can speak of the "great issues facing Christian mission in today's world".

This Is Now: Mission in the 21st Century

The Theological Background

While it is certainly true that the change of context from 1910 has changed the way the Church engages in mission today, what also is true is that mission today is grounded — for the most part — on a very different theology. Mission in the last century was grounded on what I might characterize as a "theology of obedience" — Christ has given the great commission and we have no choice, as followers of Christ and for the salvation of the world — to obey. Today, the motive of mission resides in the fact that mission is first and foremost the action of the triune God as such. In fact, we can say that God as such *is* mission: God is Holy Mystery, present in the world through the presence and power of the Spirit, visible and concrete in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who calls humankind to participate in this divine communion-in-mission and has endowed the Church with the Spirit with which he was endowed to help bring this about. As Lesslie Newbigin has put it so well, this means that mission is not so much an obligation as it is a joyful response to God's gracious presence in our lives.¹⁹ In what follows, therefore, we always have to keep in mind that the "great issues" of mission today arise not just from a changed context, but from a sense of wonder that we have been called to share in God's life by sharing in God's mission.

Witness and Proclamation: The Heart of Mission

If there would be one issue that I would select as the most important one for mission today, it would be the issue of the centrality of Jesus Christ and the necessity of witnessing to and proclaiming his name with faith and conviction. As I have mentioned above, this past century has been marked with a growing conviction of the presence of God's grace outside the confines of the Christian Church and explicit faith in Christ. Not all agree with such a theological stance, of course, and so for them the issue is not really a burning one. But for those of us who hold to what has been called an "inclusivist" position — that all grace, whether acknowledged or not, comes from Jesus Christ — the task remains to explain this position more clearly and more convincingly, lest we fall prey to a kind of pluralism that simply sees Christian faith and practice as simply one more path up Mt. Fuji. How do we witness to, and proclaim, the uniqueness of Christ on the one hand and readily enter into dialogue with people of other faiths? How do we acknowledge that interreligious dialogue

is a constitutive part of mission's "complex reality", as John Paul II calls it,²⁰ and continue to hold that Christians still need "to bear positive and uncompromising witness (ITim 2:5-7) to the uniqueness of our Lord . . . in all aspects of our evangelistic work including inter-faith dialogue?"²¹ This was not even a question a century ago, but it is *the* burning question today.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

Were I to choose a second most important issue for mission today, it would be the issue of justice. Christians witness to, and proclaim, the gospel in a world that teems with violence and injustice, and so more than ever in our day, those who engage in mission have to recognize that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world" are "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation".²² In the past, mission work involved an immense amount of charitable and developmental aid, but, particularly through the liberation theology that emerged in Latin America and around the world in the 1970s, Christians have come to understand that an essential part of Gospel proclamation and witness is getting to the roots of poverty and injustice. Such commitment to true justice needs to involve Christians as well in working for peace between nations and tribes and cultural groups, since the violence of war continues to devastate land, maim the innocent, and decimate the population, especially the youth who are often forcibly drafted into military service. Mission involves being against war at every level, of standing against the arms trade of the powerful nations. And mission is about commitment to ecological wholeness. It is no accident that the most toxic waste dumps are near the homes of the poor, and that the poorest countries are being stripped of their natural resources for the sake of the development of the rich.

Let me say a few words here about a particular group of people among whom the Church needs to work for justice and peace: the migrants and refugees of this world. There are some fifty million "people on the move" in our world today, whether displaced internally, forced to leave their land as victims of war or famine, or those who have migrated to another country in search of a better life. This is an area of mission that is particularly crucial in Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand.

Reconciliation

Closely allied to issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation is the issue of reconciliation. Those who have suffered at the hands of an oppressor, or who have suffered the horrors of war, who have been victims of terrorism, or who are victims of physical abuse from spouses or sexual abuse from a trusted member of the clergy are all deeply hurt people, and are in need of the Good News that reconciliation is indeed possible. Robert Schreiter has argued with particular eloquence that this word of reconciliation is a particularly relevant way that the Gospel can be preached in our world today, with its unprecedented levels of violence and fear.²³ Like mission itself, Schreiter insists, reconciliation is not primarily a result of human effort, but is first and foremost the work of God. Our task as missionaries is not to *bring about* reconciliation, but to announce its possibility and witness to its truth by our lives. This means that we need to find ways of being with people, listen to their struggles with guilt and rage, and create safe places where victims can begin to build up trust. Perhaps through our presence and in these spaces, the grace of reconciliation can bring a renewed peace and wholeness into people's shattered lives.

This is an issue that is receiving a lot of attention in missiological literature these days, and will be the subject of reflection at the 2005 CWME meeting in Athens, Greece.

Inculturation

One of the great accusations against mission in the past was that it often destroyed the cultures of the people who were evangelized. Despite warnings such as the 1659 letter of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which exclaimed, "What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy, or some other European country to China",²⁴ missionaries have, with notable exceptions, been dismissive or hostile to the culture in which they did their mission work. Scholars

such as Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako and Lamin Sanneh have written persuasively that the Gospel nevertheless took root among peoples despite these attitudes of missionaries. Nevertheless, Christianity in many parts of the world is still perceived by many as a foreign, Western, “white man’s” religion.

In the last decades, however, there has been a strong move to take local cultures and contexts much more seriously, and even to see them as sources for Christian theologizing. “You may, you must, have an African Christianity”, Pope Paul VI declared in Kampala, Uganda; and even a rather conservative evangelical like David Hesselgrave has written that “contextualization . . . is not simply nice. It is a necessity”.²⁵ In my own writings I have spoken of contextualization or inculturation as an imperative, not an option in our preaching, teaching and liturgical lives. Just as there is no such thing as a kind of generic “theology”, there is no such thing as a context-less, culture-less Christianity. There is only African Christianity, or, better *Ghanaian* Christianity, U.S. American Christianity, even Scottish Christianity.²⁶

Inculturation is one of the most urgent challenges of the Church in mission today — whether here in Edinburgh, in a barrio in the Philippines or in a university in Buenos Aires — but it is also a dangerous concept. Christians often ask if paying attention to the culture might be overdone, to the extent that it would eclipse the Gospel message. There is always the danger of syncretism, a false blending of Gospel and culture — although one Latin American theologian has said wryly that when it comes from above, the process is called inculturation, and when it comes from below those in power call it syncretism!²⁷

In any case, inculturation is one of the “great issues” in mission today. For all its dangers, it is a process that has been going on since the dawn of Christianity. As Andrew Walls has said time and again, Christianity is “infinitely translatable”, and it is that dynamic that keeps us discovering the “boundless riches of Christ” (Eph 4:8).²⁸ The “why” and the “how” of inculturation will occupy theologians and practitioners of mission for a long time to come.

Mission Theology

In his inaugural lecture Henry Winters Luce Professor of the Theology of Mission and Ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary, Darrell Guder, spoke of an important move today from the separation of mission and theology to the development of a “missional theology”. Such a theology functions “to accompany and support the Church in its witness by testing all that the church says and does in terms of its calling to be Christ’s witness”.²⁹ In my own writings, I have spoken of the need for systematic theology, specifically, to be open to “wisdom from the margins”, where mission and mission studies have often been located in the theological curriculum.³⁰ A theology open to mission will be one that starts from and ends in practice, that listens to the voices coming from all parts of the Church, and that is attentive to every context in which it finds itself. It will be deeply trinitarian, and will be sensitive to the workings of the Spirit both within and outside of the church, and will be profoundly in touch with the insights and riches of other religious ways. Christology will be a Spirit Christology, and will focus more on the historical Jesus than the Christ of faith, and ecclesiology will be transformed by the dictum that the Church does not so much have a mission as the mission — God’s mission — has a church.

I believe strongly that it is the task of practitioners and scholars of mission in our day to develop and promote a theology that is missionary from start to finish. I further believe that such theology should be the backbone of theological education in our time. Because of this, a final “great issue” of mission is that of mission theology and mission in theological education. In the last several months I have participated in several discussions along this line — one with the Gospel and Our Culture Network in the United States, and another as a representative of my institution, Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, with representatives from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, Princeton Theological Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. I look forward to reflecting on this important issue in the future.

Conclusion

I do hope I have “earned my keep” this evening. Although I have not said much or anything that is very new, I do hope that I have helped underline or highlight some of the most important

issues in missionary practice and scholarship today. There are certainly others. There is surely a need to look at how ecumenism must be pursued in common witness to the Gospel; a hard look should be taken at the phenomenon of independent churches throughout the world and of the emergence of Pentecostalism as the fastest growing church in the world today; the question of missionary spirituality could and should be explored. My hunch, however, is that these and other topics could be easily dealt with under the broader headings on which I reflected this evening.

A look at the eight topics treated at the 1910 Conference reveals some similarities, but, I believe, mostly differences. Most of all, as we noted in the first part of these reflections, the context has changed. Andrew Walls images the difference by speaking of well fed men meeting in the nineteenth century in London's Exeter Hall and twentieth century white-robed dancing and chanting Nigerians.³¹ Philip Jenkins speaks of the "typical Christian" of the twenty-first century as a poor woman living in a slum in the Third World. Mission today must address these spirit-filled Nigerians, and poor women, but it must also not neglect the challenges of secular, postmodern women and men. As always, we are called to "preach Christ, and him crucified" (ICor 1:23); we are called especially today to preach the "good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18), and to witness to and embody the ministry of reconciliation that has been "entrusted to us (II Cor 5:18)", we are called as well to be "all things to all people" (ICor 9:22) as we discover the "boundless riches of Christ" (Eph 4:8) in the contexts and cultures of those among whom we minister. Finally, we are called to recognize that life in Christ means participation in Christ's own mission, for we are sent as the Father sent the Son (Jn 20:21). The "great issues" today have always been great issues in the history of mission, but they are urgent today because of today's context.

Footnotes

¹Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Revised for the Second Edition by Owen Chadwick (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 332.

²W.H. Temple Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1910).

³William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952).

⁴Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 220.

⁵S. Neill, 331-334; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*. Volume II. Reformation to the Present, Revised Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 1343-1345; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 336-339; David L. Edwards, *Christianity: The First Two Thousand Years* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 468.

⁶Bosch, 337.

⁷M.A.C. Warren, "Preface," John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 10.

⁸Bosch, 338, See Kenneth R. Ross, "The Centenary of Edinburgh 1910: Its Possibilities". Manuscript, 2-3.

⁹See Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

¹⁰Kenneth R. Ross, "Edinburgh 1910 — Its Place in History", Manuscript, 5.

¹¹See the 1963 CWME Conference in Mexico City, and Michael Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission* (London: Collins, 1990).

¹²Latin American Bishops' Conference at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, "Conclusions: New Evangelization, Human Development, Christian Culture". In Alfred Hennelly, ed., *Santo Domingo and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 125 (par. 108).

¹³Kosuke Koyama, "What Makes a Missionary? Toward Crucified Mind Not Crusading Mind", in Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, eds., *Mission Trends, No. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 117-132.

¹⁴David J. Bosch, "The Vulnerability of Mission", in James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 73-86.

¹⁵See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 489; Bevans and Schroeder, 284-285. "Prophetic Dialogue" was first articulated by the 2000 General Chapter of the Society of the Divine Word.

¹⁶<http://www.www-coe.org/wcc/what/mission/hist-e.html>, 1.

¹⁷Neill, 332; Latourette, 1344.

¹⁸See Stephen Bevans, "Common Witness", in Karl Müller *et al.*, eds., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology*,

History, Perspectives (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 72-73.

¹⁹Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC, 1987?).

²⁰John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, par. 41.

²¹Manila Manifesto, A.3.

²²Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World*, "Introduction".

²³See, for example, Robert J. Schreiter, "Mission as a Model of Reconciliation", *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 52 (1996): 243-250.

²⁴"Instr. S. C. De Propag. Fide 1659 [ad Vicarios App. Societatis Mission. Ad Exteros]", *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta Instructiones Rescripta pro Apostolicis Missionibus*, vol. 1, 1622-1866 (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. De Propaganda Fide, 1907), n. 135, 42.

²⁵Paul VI, "Closing Discourse to All-Africa Symposium", quoted in Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 20; David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 85.

²⁶Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3-15.

²⁷Manuel Marzal, "Introduction," in Manuel Marzal, Eugenio Maurer, Xavier Albó, Bartomeu Meliá, *The Indian Face of God in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 18.

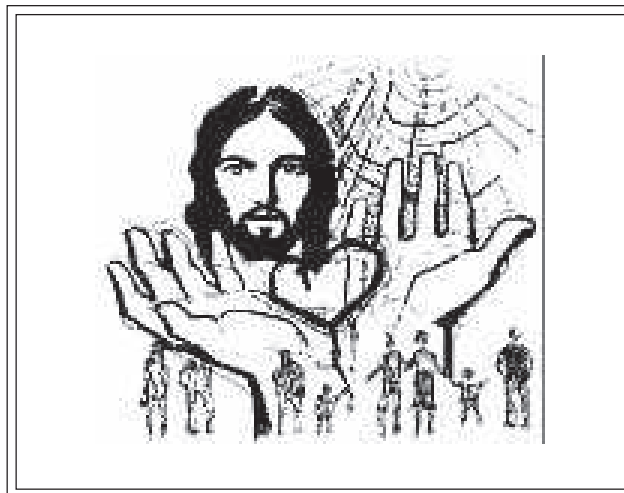
²⁸See Andrew F. Walls, "Culture and Coherence in Christian History", in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 22).

²⁹Darrell Likens Guder, "From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology", *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, XXIV, 1, New Series (2003): 47.

³⁰Stephen Bevans, "Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theology and the Missiological Imagination", *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 56, 2001, 21-42.

³¹Andrew F. Walls, "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture", in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 5.

Ref.: Text from the Author, 28 May 2005.



***“It’s in the Blood”*: Dialogue With Primal Religion in Papua New Guinea**

- Philip Gibbs, SVD -

Nowadays interreligious dialogue is accepted and expected. Attitudes were different, however, at the time of the first contact between Papua New Guineans and early Christian missionaries. In most cases the “Good News” was presented as a new form of belief and ritual that ran contrary to the people’s traditional religious beliefs and rituals. They were informed that such beliefs and rituals were associated with “evil spirits”. At their Baptism people were required to publicly renounce “Satan and all his works and all his pomps”. People interpreted this as renouncing adherence to their traditional religion. Today Papua New Guinea (PNG) calls itself a Christian country with many people of deep faith, even to the point of martyrdom, as attested by Blessed Peter To Rot [Beatified on Tuesday, 17 January 1995, at Port Moresby], and many others.

What happened to traditional religion? Did it just disappear? Was it banished along with Satan and the other forces of evil? In reality, there were elements in traditional religion that were neither noble nor virtuous, however, negative attitudes to Melanesian traditional religion are, to a large extent, a case of misrepresentation. Most early missionaries and colonial authorities were not equipped to recognise traditional religion for what it was, and the local inhabitants were not prepared or unable to verbalise their religious experiences (Mantovani 1999:35). Traditional religious beliefs and values continue today in many forms, and the possibility for dialogue remains. After a brief survey of the attitude of the Catholic Church to traditional religions, this paper will describe a contemporary attempt at dialogue with one group of people (Enga) in PNG, and will seek to draw out implications for a wider agenda of dialogue between Christianity and primal religions.

“Natural” Religions or a Preparation for the Gospel?

The Second Vatican Council changed the official Catholic Church view on religious freedom and the attitude to other religions. For example, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church recognised goodness and truth coming from God to be found in Non-Christian religions [*Lumen Gentium* (LG), n. 16]. Following the Council, attention was directed specifically to African traditional religions. A letter from Cardinal Arinze and Fr Michael Fitzgerald, M. Afr., of the Secretariat for Non-Christians (25 March 1988) noted that dialogue with African Traditional Religions should be understood in terms of a pastoral approach which would lead to a more adequate presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that the Church will have deeper roots in the African soil.

Not to be forgotten, five years later, traditional religions in other continents were addressed in a letter from Cardinal Arinze to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences of Asia, America and the Pacific (21 November, 1993). The document recognises both the values and shadows in traditional religions. It places particular importance on a “dialogue of life” and a “dialogue of action” in the field of integral human development, and calls upon Episcopal Conferences to appoint a group of competent and skilled people to undertake research in this field. It advises that the study and knowledge of traditional religions should be part of the formation programme in seminaries and religious houses of study.

In his recent Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001), Pope John Paul II refers to traditional religion in Oceania as a “challenge” for proclaiming the Gospel in Oceania (n. 20). In a later section he notes how the Church in Oceania also 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” (n. 25). The Second Vatican Council

recognized “grace” in other religions, whereby they play a proper role in the order of salvation as a *praeformatio evangelica* (preparation for the Gospel). Later statements cited above appear to retreat to a “fulfilment” theology, whereby salvation in Christ reaches members of other religions as the divine response to natural human (religious) aspirations expressed through their own cultural traditions. If traditional religions are regarded as “natural” religions, then they will be seen as playing no role in the mystery of salvation. With such a theological standpoint it is hard to see how traditional religions in Oceania could be respected as an equal dialogue partner. Moreover, without a healthy respect there is the danger that the study of such religions will only promote spiritual scavenging to supply exotic elements for attempts at inculturation.

Helicopters and Cosmic Religion

Why do people so readily exchange their traditional religion for the religion of the missionaries? The simple answer is that they don't. Aloysius Pieris explains the situation in what he calls the “helicopter theory of religious expansion” (Pieris 1996: 66). Pieris says that “cosmic” religions — which is another name for traditional or primal religions — are concerned with sacred, womanly, earthly matters. They represent the basic posture that *homo religiosus* adopts towards the mysteries of life (Pieris 1988:7). Metacosmic religions — concerned with transcendent other-worldly realities — act like helicopters, while the cosmic religions serve as natural landing pads. Their encounter is one of mutual fulfilment as they are complementary. Thus, according to Pieris, there is no need for a radical conversion from one to the other.

Pieris' theory helps explain why Thailand is Buddhist and The Philippines Christian. When it comes to metacosmic religions like Buddhism or Christianity arriving at a cosmic landing pad it is “first come, first served”. Once a helicopter has landed another cannot land on the same pad. Thus mass conversions from one metacosmic religion to the other are improbable. Christian breakthroughs have come in places where cosmic spirituality prevails, Oceania being one of them.

Donal Dorr makes a similar claim, that primal religions are quite different from historical religions such as Islam or Judaism and are, in fact, “the source from which all historical religions spring and the place from which they draw sustenance” (Dorr 2000:43). The implication from what Pieris and Dorr are saying is that people do not have to give away their traditional religion in becoming Christian, and in fact they cannot, since cosmic spirituality is part of the deep underlying religious dimension of the human spirit. If this is so, then dialogue between these two forms of religion is essential and could indeed be part of an inner dialogue within the individual.

Missionaries and the Enga¹

Not all early missionaries were insensitive or ill-prepared. For example, many of the early Baptist, Catholic and Lutheran missionaries to the Enga district and elsewhere made a point of learning the local language and of trying to include people's myths and stories in their teaching (Gibbs 2003:70-73). Language learning and translating the Bible into the local language provide opportunities for dialogue at the level of beliefs, values and practices. The New Guinea Lutheran mission hosted anthropological conferences (New Guinea Lutheran Mission 1968, Brennan 1970), and Paul Brennan, working with the Lutheran Church, established the Enga Cultural Centre and published a very informative book on Enga traditional religion (Brennan 1977). In the early 1950s, on several occasions, Fr John Schwab, SVD, accompanied young Enga men into the forest for week-long rites of initiation (Schwab 1995). Why then did Enga men so readily abandon the initiation rites? Is it because the worldview that gave meaning to such rites changed radically with exposure to a different world? Why did most Enga people feel that they had to make a choice between Christianity and traditional beliefs and practices? The reasons need to be investigated. That people attempted to choose one and reject the other is a fact, and this has become exacerbated in the past decade with the increased influence of fundamentalist churches that show zero tolerance for anything associated with traditional rituals, religion and spirituality.

Faith and Culture Dialogue

Concerned to counter the fundamentalist tendencies, we have developed a week-long programme

that has been tried ten times to date. The idea came after an experience of living six months in the forest with a small isolated community. During that six months there was almost no contact with outsiders and we spoke only the local language, and as a result I found myself changed because of an inner dialogue within myself. Near the end it did not surprise me at all to see a bird dancing on a tree branch above the grave of my host's brother, who had been killed by a falling tree. I came to see that, their genuine faith notwithstanding, these Enga Christians, interpreted death and other life and death realities, from the perspective of their traditional religion. As one man explained: how could it be otherwise — "It's in the blood".

The rationale behind the week-long programme is to dialogue together in order to touch on these life and death realities, as Christians. I found it best to have groups of either mature men or mature women, or young unmarried men or young women. That way there is more chance of a shared worldview and experience. Groups have ranged from fifteen young men to a group as large as 150 mature women. I go with a small team of facilitators and we live together for a week. With the men we are isolated in the forest. The women arrange for a special area to be set aside for their week of retreat.

On the first day of this exercise we reflect on culture and life in general and the teaching of the Church on faith and culture. If electric power is available we might show short sections of video footage from the opening masses of the Synods such as the procession for the presentation of the gifts from the opening mass at the African Synod or the presentation of *leis* to the Pope and Bishops and the Samoan dance accompanying the presentation of the gifts at the opening mass of the Synod for Oceania. At first I was unprepared for the strongly positive response of the viewers: "If they can sing and dance like that in St Peter's Basilica with the Pope, then those people who have been telling us it is wrong to do so in our own church have been lying to us!". The fact that I had been telling them it was OK seems to have little importance in contrast to perceiving that the Holy Father thinks it is all right since he allows it in "his" church!

The purpose of these sessions is not simply entertainment, though at times everyone was laughing until their sides ached, but rather to touch on life and death issues. Culture is the way we live. Life is not meant to be compartmentalised into sacred and profane or sacred and secular. It is an organic whole. When Enga people begin to reflect for an extended period of time on their lives and who they are they get in touch with the cosmic spirituality which some might have tried to deny, but which can never be abandoned or rejected. Then comes the question: what has Jesus got to do with all this? Enter local theology.

Weekly Programme

The weekly programme for men and women is set out in the following charts. The programme for young men and women differs slightly, but not in the main thrust.

| Women's Faith and Culture Workshop | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Day | Morning | Afternoon |
| 1 | Introduction: What is culture? | Catholic Church teaching on traditional culture and beliefs |
| 2 | Childhood | Domestic life (gardening, raising pigs, etc.) |
| 3 | Courtship and Marriage | Menstruation. Bearing and raising children |
| 4 | Conflict, fighting, sickness, death | Celebrations |
| 5 | Spirituality | Identity |
| 6 | Celebrating our gifts as Enga Catholic women in the community | |

| Men's Faith and Culture Workshop | | |
|---|---|---|
| Day | During the day | Evening |
| 1 | Introduction: What is culture? | Catholic Church teaching on traditional culture and beliefs |
| 2 | Initiation | Learning traditional wisdom and values |
| 3 | Relationships (especially relationship with their wives) | The role of the Christian husband and parent |
| 4 | Conflict, fighting, sickness, death | Spirituality |
| 5 | Identity | Myths, stories, dreams |
| 6 | Celebrating our gifts as Enga Catholic men in the community | |

Identity

On the fifth day we deal with identity issues. We start by looking for the specific characteristics of the men or women of their area. What is special about them and their life and culture which makes them different from the people in neighbouring provinces? This discussion takes place entirely in the local language, with the whole group together so that individuals can agree or not, and more important still, can complement what others have to say. If there is a black-board or a large sheet of paper available we will write a word or expression in the local language accompanied by a symbol for those (the majority) who cannot read.

People usually start off with obvious differences such as their language or the dialect of that language, or even the speed at which people speak. They note their style of dressing, for example the length of their skirts, or the shape of men's ceremonial wigs, or their distinctive ways of singing and dancing. They will mention string bags, for PNG women are adept at weaving such bags, with various creative styles. Often the designs point to a particular region or province. It is said that you can see the *hanmak* (mark of their hand) in the designs. At some point people will refer to the environment: the water, the ground, and distinguishing mountain formations.

Then they start to talk about ways of relating — how women will marry into enemy clans in order to act as a “bridge” for reconciliation. There are feelings, ways of expressing grief and joy; ways of forgiving. There are values such as strength and, especially for women, preparing a place for their children. The ideal woman is *enda ee matapuma, anda matapuma* (using the image of a belt to show how a good woman manages to hold house and garden together). The ideal man is *kame* (a protective fence).

Usually we end up with between twenty and thirty characteristics of an Enga man or woman. We go further into these and relate them to dreams and myths and tales. But the culmination comes when I ask them to divide into groups so as to develop ways to celebrate these characteristics as Christians the following day. The fact that it is usually a mass is my challenge as theologian/priest. Their task is to bring these characteristics of who they are and their Christian faith together. I have found that invariably the result is very creative and most meaningful. Sometimes we end in tears.

With the young people the programme differs somewhat. Two examples will suffice to show how even young people with Western education can get in touch with their inner cosmic spirituality. Fertility is an important theme for the girls. They can be carefree and often careless when it comes to traditional taboos around menstruation. When, however, on the fifth day, I was invited to attend and came to the gate I was told, “Father, wait, you can't come yet”. I waited, peering through the gateway, and noticed three young women performing a ritual in which they bit off a piece of leaf and with a prayer spat to the East and West, where the sun rises and sets. Then they opened the gate and beckoned me to follow. I entered an eerie atmosphere in the shadow of a small clearing surrounded by trees, with women holding burning pandanus leaves and all of those preceding me leaping over a fire of dried leaves. Later they explained how the initial ritual was one traditionally

used at the end of menstrual seclusion so that a woman would bring wellbeing to her husband. They had replaced the traditional spell with a Christian prayer with a similar meaning. The second ritual with a fire of pandanus leaves comes from the *angapane yangenge* ceremony performed when a woman emerges into the open with her new baby. Jumping over the fire is symbolic of drying blood, thus bringing about the woman's purification and her release from blood-related taboos. Again they included songs with Christian meanings. They performed the rituals out of their concern that I was the only male to enter the female compound, which, according to traditional beliefs about female essence, could have been harmful for me. I was fascinated, firstly because these ceremonies are seldom practised in recent years, and secondly because they, on their own initiative, had delved back into their storehouse of memory and brought these things to light but in dialogue with their Christian identity. Thirdly, including myself, all felt that they had touched something very sacred.

For the boys there is more emphasis on initiation. Once, I stayed five days in the forest with a group of fifteen boys and young men. After purification ceremonies, on the third day they were presented with a sacred *lepe* leaf.² After binding the leaf with ferns and placing it in a safe place, the boys came to me: "Father can you celebrate mass for us?" "Why?", I asked. "I have not brought the items we need for celebrating mass". Then they explained how the *lepe* leaf they had been given was the principal symbol of life in traditional Enga culture. They could feel how it was sacred. Yet they were Christian, and the principal symbol of life for Christians is their communion with Christ in the Eucharist. Hence their desire for that also. They were experiencing the sacred in receiving the *lepe* plant, yet sensed that something was missing which the Eucharist could supply. Impressed by their theology, I spent the rest of the day going to fetch a chalice and bread and wine and later that same afternoon, deep in the forest, we celebrated the Eucharist together. I sensed that for many of the young men it was their most meaningful experience of the Mass.

Implications

What can we learn from the examples given above from one area in PNG?

Firstly, though most Christians adopt new beliefs and cease to practice many traditional rituals, there remains an underlying spirituality which has its roots in primal religion. This spirituality becomes more apparent when facing life and death realities, for the focus of traditional religion in PNG is the struggle for life in the face of death. Primal religion remains as an underlying religious dimension of the human spirit. It's in the blood. If people can come to understand that these two forms of religion are not necessarily opposed, then a way is opened for dialogue which can start with an inner dialogue within the individual.

Secondly, dialogue with primal religion is not so concerned with sharing "about" experiences as a sharing "of" experiences. We could have spoken with people about their worldview and beliefs, but the process would not have reached the depth it did if we had not been together in an experienced-based discernment of how to integrate Christian beliefs and traditional spirituality. The young men and women could have described for us what had happened during their time of seclusion, but that was not necessary since we shared in the experience of integrating sacred traditions and Christian prayer.

Thirdly, if it is true that the "landing pad" is in place before the helicopter arrives, then we also have to admit that some forms of Christian evangelization arrive like helicopter gun-ships, driving traditional values and spirituality underground through force and fear. Dialogue does not use such methods, but rather, begins with a sympathetic understanding of the salvific significance of core cultural values, often values associated with life and wellbeing.

Fourthly, a scientific and secular worldview can blind scholars to elements of traditional beliefs and values. Those wanting to be part of the dialogue of life and of action, require a capacity to share in the sense of mystery which is so much part of traditional spirituality.

Finally, those concerned to include Christ as part of the dialogue, might well ask what sort of "Christ" they are witnessing to: a Euro-ecclesial Christ? A neocolonial Christ? An otherworldly metacosmic Christ? Following the incarnational principle as found in Phil 2:6-8, believers engaged

in dialogue with primal religions should be open to discovering a face of Christ expressed in forms that are quite new to them — a Christ associated with the sexual, the earthly, and the mysterious. Such a discovery would indeed be a valuable contribution to a more inclusive understanding of mission.

References

- Arinze, Francis and Michael Fitzgerald, "Pastoral Attention to African Traditional Religion (ATR)". *African Ecclesial Review*, 30 (1988): 131-134.
- Arinze, Francis, "Letter to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences of Asia, America and the Pacific, (21 November 1993)". In Francesco Gioia (ed.) *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)*. Boston: Pauline, 1997.
- Brennan, Paul (ed.), *Exploring Enga Culture: Studies in Missionary Anthropology*. Wapenamanda: New Guinea Lutheran Mission, 1970.
- Brennan, Paul, *Let Sleeping Snakes Lie: Central Enga Religious Belief and Ritual*. Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1977.
- Dorr, Donald, *Mission in Today's World*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2000.
- Gibbs, Philip. "Lepe: An Exercise in Horticultural Theology". *Catalyst* 18 (1988): 215-234.
- Gibbs, Philip, "Moral Muddle: The Missions and Traditional Enga Values". *Catalyst* 33 (2003): 61-91.
- Mantovani, Ennio, "Key Issues of a Dialogue Between Christianity and Culture in Melanesia". *SEDOS Bulletin* (1999): 35-41.
- New Guinea Lutheran Mission, *Anthropological Study Conference, March 29-April 2, 1968*. Amapyaka: New Guinea Lutheran Mission, 1968.
- Pieris, Aloysius, *Fire and Water*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996.
- Pieris, Aloysius, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988.
- Schwab, John, "The Sandalu Bachelor Ritual among the Laiapu Enga (Papua New Guinea)". *Anthropos* 90 (1995): 27-47.

Notes

* Philip Gibbs, SVD, born in New Zealand, has worked for much of the past 30 years in Papua New Guinea. He is a member of the Divine Word Missionaries. He has a post-graduate degree in Anthropology and a Doctorate in Theology. At present he is a faculty member of the Melanesian Institute, Goroka, Papua New Guinea].

¹ Enga speakers, whose home is the Enga Province in the PNG Central Highlands, form the largest local language group in Papua New Guinea, with some 300,000 speakers. The first Christian missionaries entered the Eastern part of Enga in 1947, but did not arrive in parts of Western Enga until the 1960s. Several references to Enga people and their culture appear in the bibliographical listing at the end of this paper.

²For the significance of the *lepe*, see P. Gibbs, "Lepe: An Exercise in Horticultural Theology." *Catalyst* 18 (1988): 215-234.

Ref.: Text given by the Author for the SEDOS Publication.



Missionary Institute London

The Missionary Institute, London, is pleased to offer the following courses to people involved in any form of mission activity in the world.

| Current Courses: (February and September intakes) | |
|--|---|
| MA in Peace and Justice (3 semesters) | <i>This well established MA offers insights and new approaches to human areas where Peace and Justice and Integrity of Creation are needed.</i> |
| MA in Mission Studies (3 semesters) | <i>A popular MA that tackles the views and concepts of Mission in the 21st century.</i> |
| Diploma Missiology (2 semesters) | <i>The diploma offers possibilities to both understand and transmit Gospel values in multicultural and multi-faith societies.</i> |

| New Courses from September 2005 | |
|---|---|
| MA in CHRISTIAN Leadership (3 semesters) | <i>This MA provides a sound theoretical and skill-based approach to work as a church leader.</i> |
| MA in PASTORAL Theology (2 semesters) | <i>This MA equips students with a sound theoretical approach and practical skills to work in contextual pastoral care.</i> |
| Diploma in Evangelization (2 semesters) | <i>The understanding of evangelization in recent years has undergone many changes particularly in the context of economic and political situations. This course will examine those changes and find today's basis for evangelization.</i> |
| Diploma in Mission Spirituality (2 semesters) | <i>Evangelization flows from a deep personal conviction. This course provides a sound foundation for mission, taking into account the challenges of today's world.</i> |

All enquiries should be directed to
 The Registrar - Missionary Institute London
 Holcombe House, The Ridgeway, London NW7 4HY,
Tel: +44 (0)20 8906 1893 — E-mail: mil@mdx.ac.uk

Coming Events

- Next SEDOS Conference 2005 -

Ecumenism and Mission

Tuesday, 25 October 2005

Sponsored by

UISG – USG – The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity –
The Faculty of Missiology of the Urbaniana University

(More details will follow)

Working Group

Wednesday, 5 October, **Bible and Mission** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**