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“INTERCULTURAL FORMATION FOR MISSION ‘AD GENTES’”



***- ARICCIA 2007 -
SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR***

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Contents

Editorial Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP

Presentation of the SEDOS President Fr Edouard Tsimba, CICM

An Afterview as Foreword Fr Pio Estepa, SVD

1. Theme: 'Ad Gentes' in our Multicultural World

- *Formation for Mission - 'Missio Ad et Inter Gentes'*

William R. Burrows, ed. Orbis Books

Panel Response: Eric Manaeghe, CICM

2. Theme: Intercultural Formation

- *Essential Lines Regarding Multicultural Formation in Initial and Permanent Formation*

Sr Chinyeaka Ezeani, MSHR

- *Multicultural Formation*

Fr Fernando Domingues, MCCJ

Panel Response: Probha Mary Karmokar, RNDM
M. Maddalena Lonardini, SMSM

3. Theme: Experiences of Intercultural Spirituality

- *Préparation à la Mission "ad Gentes" pendant la Formation Permanente chez les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie*

Sr Marie-Christine Bérenger, FMM

- *Multicultural Formation for the Franciscan Missionaries*

Fr Pero Vrebac, OFM

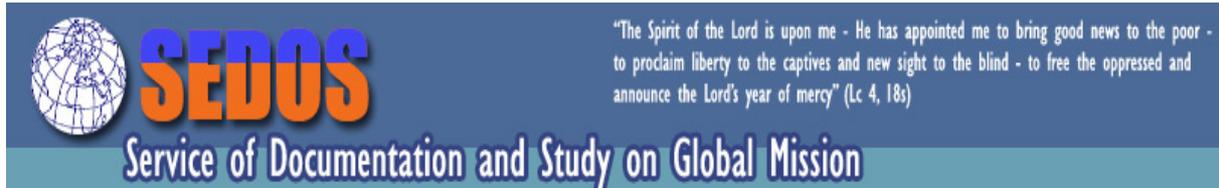
Panel Response: Antonio Flores Osuna, SX
Elisa Kidané, SMC

4. Working Groups' Projects

- *English Groups*
- *French Groups*
- *Spanish Groups*
- *Italian Group*

5. Summary: *Congregational Renewal Through Intercultural Formation – An Interpretative Summary*

6. *Acknowledgement of the SEDOS President* Fr Edouard Tsimba, CICM



'The Spirit has sent me to proclaim liberty to the oppressed and announce the Good News of the Lord'.

SEDOS always keeps this reminder on its pages to serve as a beacon to guide us in our search and understanding of mission.

We have been sent to 'be HIS witnesses', living witnesses. Our mission is not just to proclaim on the good doctrine with words, but to announce the Kingdom with our lives; to live our faith and shine earth as a beacon, to show to all the World that the Kingdom of God has come. How do we learn to be witnesses and how do we teach others to become witnesses?

Jesus says that we cannot build a house from the roof, without strong foundations. It will fall down. Thus we cannot emphasize the theological formation of our members without first providing them with a good, solid and comprehensive human formation. Theological and Religious formation cannot withstand the storms of life if they are not supported by a solid human formation.

At times, it seems that too much emphasis is put on the 'correct intellectual' formation of our members without the corresponding emphasis on their human and spiritual formation. Being a good teacher of theology seems to be respected more than being a good living witness of our faith.

To be aware of our own identity is a must, as the basis of our formation process. Since being a witness implies to be aware of our own identity and of the identity of the other; to respect and maintain our own identity and that of the other; to enrich the other and to allow the other to enrich us without forcing, without imposing, without dominating him/her.

A good formation of our members begins with a good formation for the formators. Today, more than ever, we need Formators who are 'obedient' to the Spirit who speaks and manifests Itself through and by the members of the community and the 'formandos'. We need Formators who, like creative artists, have a special sensitivity and a strong attitude of openness to be able to discover the marvels of God in our daily life and to be able to help our members to discover their own identity and talents, to awaken their own creative spirit and to guide them towards the discovery of the other's identity, talents and creativity so as to be able to interact with mutual respect.

Through these pages SEDOS wishes to share with all readers the works and the insights of our 142 sisters and brothers who gathered together at Ariccia to share our multicultural identities, our faith, knowledge and experiences, our fears and doubts, failures and successes in our search for a better formation for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters. We did that with our hearts full of hope and joy because together we labour to build His Kingdom. And as the Apostles said, we do not have gold or silver, but what we have we share with others. Hence in these pages you can find our contribution towards the search for a better formation that will enable us to become real living witnesses of our Risen Lord.

*Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director*

Opening Speech of the SEDOS President

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

in the name of the Executive Committee of SEDOS, I welcome you to our 2007 Residential Seminar. I hope that every one of you has had a very pleasant trip and that you found your room easily. Little by little you will find your way about the house. And if you have any problem finding your way around, since the house is quite big, please do not hesitate to ask anyone of us for help. The members of the Executive Committee are available to help you in any way they can, hoping that you will have a pleasant stay here.

A special welcome to those who are attending the Seminar for the first time. I can assure you that you will feel at home with us. I also want to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have come to accompany us during this Seminar with your reflections. We hope to take full advantage of, and benefit from, your sharing both in the small groups and in the plenary sessions. Thank you already.

Welcome and 'thank you' also to those who will help us with the translations in the different languages. I also would like to thank all those whose services, though unnoticead, will contribute to the success of our Seminar and our stay here in Arricia. They are so many: each and all of us. That is my wish.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the theme of our Seminar is: "Multicultural Formation for Mission 'Ad Gentes'". This Seminar is taking place during the Easter Season. This is not a pure coincidence: in fact, what we are as missionaries finds its source in the crucified and Risen Christ. He is the Master of the Mission; He is the One who calls us. He is the One who sends us. The Mission belongs to Him; the Mission is in Him, by Him and with Him. Otherwise, the Mission is impossible.

We live in a multicultural world, and belong to mostly multicultural Congregations. Which preparation, which formation is appropriate for our members? When we talk about formation, the danger is always to think about Initial Formation which is already well organized for most of our Congregations, at least in our congregational documents. In fact, there is also the Ongoing Formation. The formation that reminds us that we need "an ongoing and holistic conversion and spiritual growth process"; whose principal objective must always be: "conforming our spirits and our hearts to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ in our missionary commitment"; we must consider it as both Initial Formation and Ongoing Formation. Wouldn't you agree with me that the two constitute or always should constitute one and the same process?

We are called to be missionaries in a multicultural world even as we are already members of multicultural congregations. A challenge and an advantage. All depends on how we live and how we prepare ourselves. It all depends on how open we are to the same Holy Spirit that guided the Founders of our different Congregations. All depends on how open we are to the pressing needs of today's world. All depends on how each of us, how each of our Congregations, each of our communities, remains fascinated with Jesus and his Gospel and how strong our passion is for the good of all: Passion for Jesus and Passion for the world, that is what will increase our interest in a more intense formation. That is what must always motivate

us in our ongoing conversion as we face the future as hope-filled people even when things do not necessarily go according to our wishes. Passion for Christ and passion for the world, that is what invites us to trust the young men and women of other cultures who join our Congregations. If the Mission belongs to God, let us not be afraid, it will continue, with us, without us and sometimes even despite us. What is asked of us is to give the best of ourselves wherever we are.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, if we are missionaries, this is because we have been called. "You did not choose me, but I chose you, and I have appointed you, that you also should go and produce fruit" ... (Jn 15:16). This is a call to each and every one of us to follow Jesus in his proclamation of the Gospel, to follow Jesus as he invites us to share in his death and Resurrection, to follow Jesus as he invites us to conform our lives to His. This is a call we have all received since our Baptism. In fact, our missionary life is a faith response to, and a deepening of, our baptismal promises. The missionary vocation that we have all received is the reason for our attachment and affection for the members of our respective Congregations.

We ought to be true disciples in order to be true apostles. We ought to be true disciples in order to be true missionaries. We ought to be living communities of brothers and sisters, genuinely centred in Christ and on his Gospel in order to be true witnesses of the Risen Christ, giving life to all and for all, with a preferential love for the poor. That is something we can always do regardless of our dwindling financial and human resources and despite our limited physical strength.

May this Seminar, which I declare open, help us to move forward with the belief that all is possible, knowing that we are not alone and because all does not depend on us. May the Spirit of God that always guided the Founders of our Congregations continue to journey with us.

I wish you a Good Seminar and an enjoyable stay here in Ariccia 2007.

Thank you.

*Edouard Tsimba, CICM
President of SEDOS*



SEDOS Seminar Participants

An Afterview as Foreword

Pio Estepa, SVD

A BIRD sees a caterpillar crawling up the stem of a plant. More impressed than hungered by the sight, the winged biped asks the latter: 'How do you manage to walk so gracefully with so many feet?!'. The caterpillar never thought of it before. So as it tries to walk this time in slow reflection, the multi-legged critter loses its poise and falls off the stem. What was the intercongregational concern that gathered us for five days under one roof for this year's SEDOS Seminar? Like the caterpillar, the diverse religious and missionary congregations to which we belong have become culturally 'multi-legged' in membership. But unlike the caterpillar, we have not yet mastered the art of moving forward with intercultural grace. So we have come to reflect together on ways to forge ahead and beyond our multicultural confusion.

This year's Seminar breaks a SEDOS record. Its title enticed enrollees – over a hundred – two months before its announced deadline of registration. Later many more begged to join, but Carlos Linera, O.P. (our Executive Director), felt sorry to have to turn them down for lack of space in the convention centre's hall in Ariccia. Finally, the Seminar welcomed 132 participants of diverse nationalities from the five continents.... A few laypersons were among the men and women religious, Major Superiors and formators from some 35 congregations.

On the last workday of the Seminar, during the final round of secretarial reporting, one group humbly yet bravely named a stumbling block of theirs in facing the challenges of being multicultural: the crippling fear of institutional change. As a facilitator, I sensed a parallel one faintly expressed now and then in the group reports: the avoidance of, or even resistance to, the very language of change. For instance: politely dismissed as 'improper' are terms such as 'paradigm shift', 'counterculture' or 'parachurch', 'liminal' or 'anti-structural', and the like. Attempts to map out change graphically were viewed as 'imprecise' ... when no diagram anyway claims to be a precise mirror of complex reality, but just a helpful model for charting some route through the confusing maze of it all. Even the phrasing of contrasts 'from (model 1) to (model 2)' often ended up being tamed into 'both ... and'. My only hope is that the practical result of such conciliatory wording will not come to mean: 'We (my congregation) need not worry about changing what we already are; let others in the Church do the complementary shift at their own risk...'

The danger with dwelling on fears is that sooner or later it breeds defensive questions that focus our energies on just repairing worn-out tracks rather than exploring 'roads less travelled by'. In light of such a situation, I was impressed during this Seminar to note the maturity of the participants in both group and plenary discussions. It shone through the trusting frankness in airing personal doubts and objections, the open attention given to these comments without fierce debate ... and the subsequent wisdom to set aside moot questions and follow the lead of path-finding ones. Allow me to mention only two main examples of such intercongregational learning that happened.

FORMATION: FARMING BANANAS OR MANGOES?

From outside, the skin of both banana and mango is green when raw, and yellow when ripe. But whereas the banana remains inwardly white – raw or ripe, the mango ripens from white to yellow from inside out. During his talk on

the first day Bill Burrows cited this analogy made by an evangelical Asian theologian to explain a historic transformation that happened in the past century: Christianity has ripened from being a 'Western' (white) religion to an authentic 'world' faith. Thus, it is now symbolically owned as yellow by Asians ... yet in a parallel way also as black by Africans, and red by Latin Americans.

The contrast gave rise to questions ranging from a heated one: 'Aren't these Asian theologians themselves writing in English, addressing Western readers, trained in Western schools of theology?'... to a heartfelt other: 'How can missionaries evangelize ad gentes without imposing their foreign colours on the faith-experience and faith-expression of local believers?'. Logical as these questions may sound, they would have only misled the Seminar to a fruitless debate on drawing moot lines between what is Western and what is not.

The genius of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss consisted mainly in defining culture as some deep tacit language (this 'foreword' is sorry not to have space for expounding this idea). In light of such an insight, we may ask: does a foreign missionary really forget his/her mother tongue in learning other languages? Besides, in our fast globalizing and pluralizing world, have not many peoples now become cultural 'polyglots' themselves ... with just a few who may still be left in monocultural bubbles?

In the subsequent workdays, the question to-be-or-not-to-be-Western? calmly gave way to a path-finding one: how can missionaries humbly offer their foreign 'otherness' to serve as a catalyzing gift to intercultural dialogue around the Gospel? The Spirit must have reminded the participants that on Pentecost day the first Disciples spoke the language of Jesus – yet it was heard by foreign listeners in their respective ones. Furthermore, from Pentecost onwards, down to almost two millennia, the white light of God's Word depended precisely on the prism of intercultural dialogue for refracting Its 'rainbow colors' of spiritual wealth.

FORMATION: RAISING CRUSTACEANS OR VERTEBRATES?

A critique raised by Bill Burrows (now a layman) on the traditional religious training he had had was the highbrow stress on measuring up to doctrinal and canonical standards – rigorously applied by professorial guilds and formation teams. The spiritual home to which he pleads return is personal conversion. Every religious or missionary's heart must be nourished by a deep experience of God and intimate friendship with Jesus ... so that her/his very person and presence become an eloquent witness of the Gospel before, or even without, verbally proclaiming It. For this to happen, so Fernando Domingues followed up, let every religious realize that s/he is ultimately the main agent (not mere patient) of one's own formation. Only thus can any congregation have 'vertebrate' members sustained by inner spiritual backbones and able to survive even outside 'crustacean' religious structures.

To sum up the complementing insights of Bill and Fernando, I resorted to the language of liberation theology by speaking of the needed shift of stress from 'orthodox to orthoprax formation'. My quick choice of short-cut terms (which betrays my theological sympathies) then seemed to have sparked more heat than shed light. It raised the surprising question: 'If formation has to shift from orthodoxy to orthopraxy, where will [valued] doctrines go?'

Once more, the maturity of those (or the one) who raised the question prevailed. Insisting on an answer from the plenary session would have misled the Seminar from its path-finding goal. What the question overlooked was the

experiential context on which the abstract summary was based. Allow me to just evoke that context by citing an extreme that has worried many a formator or superior. A brilliant candidate has a faithful mastery of ecclesial doctrines and documents, and even shows cogent appeal in explaining them to others. Yet her/his lifestyle shows weak commitment to consecrated life and short compassion for people in the ministry. As a formator or superior, would you let him/her proceed to perpetual vows? Would you not further ask the critical question: 'how has the formation of this promising youth failed to help her/him grow integrally as a person?'

In the subsequent workdays, the questions pitting orthodoxy against orthopraxy also quietly gave way to these path-finding ones: What are the risks and rewards awaiting any congregation in its journey from multicultural membership to intercultural fellowship? And what structural props and interpersonal ties can help promote every religious missionary's growth toward intercultural competence at the service of the Gospel?

The following pages feature the texts of the Seminar talks, panel responses and discussion reports ... efforts at seeking out new paths toward 'intercultural formation for missio ad gentes'. Yet the success of the Seminar had begun with the participants' having sifted and chosen what key questions to guide our intercongregational reflection – while knowing beforehand that we might only come up with tentative answers. After all, vital renewal always starts not with having clear-cut instructions, but with following the lead of stirring questions.





***‘Ad Gentes’
in our Multicultural World***

Formation for Mission

'Missio Ad et Inter Gentes'

- William R. Burrows* -

What follows is far too much to discuss or present in a single conference. In my oral presentation, accordingly, I will spend time on the important issues. Those who wish to can read the entire paper.

1. INTRODUCTION

Much of what follows revolves around play with the Latin words *ad* and *inter gentes* and what that difference in images may mean in regard to how the next generation of Catholic missionaries is formed. In all that follows, I am presuming that formation for mission in a globalizing world aims at intercultural competence, for never in history has the multicultural nature of the world made it so necessary for the ministers of the Gospel to function in intercultural settings. In all that follows, the background is the conviction that Pope John Paul II was correct in saying that proclamation and witness to Jesus the Christ is the defining element in mission.¹

In the Catholic tradition of proclaiming and living the Gospel, religious communities add to the richness of the Church and have the potential to put a vital face on the Church's internal and *ad extra* missionary life by creatively and dynamically living out their founding charisms in new circumstances. What we are together stumbling our way toward is an understanding of how one does this in a world where no culture – including no *ecclesial culture* – holds legitimate title to universal status. Given that fact, it becomes ever more important that we take our bearings on a solidly biblical theology of mission and anchor it in the core of Catholic theology.

In my own pilgrimage on the nature of mission and formation for mission four steps were necessary.

1. seeing the profound interrelationship between the Old and New Testaments and how deeply Jewish the Gospel of Paul is.²

2. realizing that the “Gospel” is the realization of the promise wherein Jesus the Messiah concretizes the promise of God to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3) to create a people to bring God's saving justice into a world distorted by sin,

3. deepening insight (through interchange with Edward Schroeder, Lutheran theologian and late-life missiologist) into the fact that the Gospel is not a “new law of love” but a “promise” that God offers “forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life” because of Christ, not because of our works; and then that in, the words of Zechariah, speaking of John the Baptist, God's People will be given “knowledge of salvation ... by the forgiveness of their sins” (Lk 1:77);

4. grasping that Christian mission is our cooperation with God in making the world “right”, living in hope of the final revelation of God's love and justice; according to Psalm 33[32]:5, where what God loves is “righteousness and justice”; and “the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord”.

In that context, the words “justice”, “forgive” and “sin” require a great deal of study, but the most basic step occurs when one realizes that “sin” in the New Testament and the Septuagint

comes from the word *hamartia*, the Septuagint's translation of several Hebrew words — *bata*, *pasa*, and *'awon*. Sin is what separates us from God and a just relationship with our fellow human beings. Those who “sin” (the verb form is *hamartanein*) wander about not knowing the way, confused about where they are going. They go from misfortune to misfortune because they are in this state of darkness, and they harm others and themselves because, in this state, they believe their own rights and needs – imagined and real – take precedence over others. Social sin is the result of being “curved in upon oneself” (St Augustine) writ large. In the death of Jesus at the hands of men who embody this state of *harmartia*, God's Son, who has done no evil and who has devoted his life to preaching the Way of God's promises to those who will embrace God's way of righteousness (*seduqah*) and right judgment (*mishpat*), is killed.

Forgiveness (*aphienai*) of sin is the remission of the debt we owe God and our fellow human beings but in the context of the entire New Testament, it is less the forgiveness of an external debt (even if the language of the New Testament is forensic — see, for example, Mt 9:6 and Rom 2:4) — than empowerment through embracing Christ in the Spirit to put the past behind and “lead a life worthy of the calling” to which we are summoned (Eph 4:1).

What is the point of this excursion into the thicket of Gospel and law, promise and forgiveness? The simple answer is this. In a world of *missio*, the missionary is called to make manifest God's promises to Israel and their realization in Jesus and the Spirit. Accepting the Gospel of Jesus as the Messiah-Christ releases the debts and burdens piled up in self- and group-centredness and frees disciples to entrust ourselves to Christ as Way, Truth, and Life. The prime mission of all led into this Way by the Spirit is to live in ways that make this visible and to be vehicles through whom the Spirit imparts this dynamic truth *ad omnes gentes* (“to all peoples”).

At a second level, insights from two scholar-practitioners (who between them have spent more than fifty years trying to help nurture “missional” congregations among a variety of Protestant, Anabaptist, and Anglican churches around the world) offered me several basic insights. One of those men, Pat Keifert, begins his most recent book noting that the temptation of a consultant on how to nurture a missional spirit is to say that she would not want to start from where that church now is. That, says, Keifert, is a mistake. Instead, he invites a congregation — and I apply that word to the congregations of religious and apostolic life who are members of SEDOS — to put your own X on the map, not only because it makes sense to start where you are, but because ... God provides all the gifts necessary for the future that God prefers and promises each local Church. Unfortunately, most local Churches either don't believe this or aren't interested, or don't know how to attend to those gifts; they fail to engage in the spiritual discernment of God's preferred and promised future.

Be that as it may, each journey begins where you are, not where you should be or where the ideal Church is or should be. The journey begins with “We are here now”. So, where are we?”³

One answer to that question is provided by Keifert's colleague, Alan Roxburgh. We are in an age where one group resolutely believes we can return to the past. A second (“liminals”) has experienced the inability of past methods to meet the needs of the new missional era. But aware of the many treasures of tradition, they try to bring their church along. A third (“emergents”) abandon older church structures and try to invent new ways of being missional Christians in the world.⁴ Catholics, though, don't become “emergents”. Instead – as we see dramatically illustrated in Latin America today – they leave a church unable to meet their needs and often embrace other Christian paths. SEDOS members, I believe, tend to be Roxburgh's “liminals” as they struggle to form members for mission in a multicultural world in which the viability of the centralized “Constantinian” model of governance is seriously called into question.

In what follows, I reflect on insights I have gained from several Asian Theologians. In particular, my thoughts revolve around what these insights may mean for the members of SEDOS, especially for congregations of men and women (1) whose *raison d'être* has been defined as *missio ad gentes* and (2) whose life ways and structures were formed in an era when

that mission went in a North-South direction in which the North was viewed as the actor and the South as a recipient. The title of my paper, of course, signals that I think today's missional era is one in which *missio inter gentes* is increasingly the paradigm within which *missio ad gentes* is carried on.

2. WHAT IS 'MISSIO INTER GENTES'? AND WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

A number of matters I had been pondering on the future of mission in our new ecumenical climate came together in a Eureka moment in June 2001, when I was invited to respond to a speech by Father Michael Amaladoss, SJ, at a meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁵ I observed that, without denying the validity of *missio ad gentes* ("mission 'to' the nations" — that is, *to* followers of other religious traditions), Michael had put the accent on a particularly Asian dimension of mission in our day. Although he did not use the term in his address, my response characterized the evolution as a move toward *missio inter gentes* ("mission 'among' the nations"). By this I mean that a plethora of concrete realities leads us to a situation in which mission outside the circle of believers will become mission *among* followers of other religious traditions who are one's neighbours, friends, and fellow countrymen.⁶ This reflects the reality that mission in the sense that Pope John Paul II so clearly defines it in *Redemptoris Missio* (n. 44) is shifting from activities of foreigners and cross-cultural missionaries to an activity carried on among one's neighbours. And when foreigners engage in mission, they will be invited by local churches and assisting local ministers of the gospel. In the context of SEDOS, member congregations are made up of men and women who: (1) do missionary work among other peoples far from their countries and cultures of origin; (2) labour among peoples of other faiths that include their neighbours and fellow citizens within their own cultures; (3) live in religious communities with persons of diverse cultural backgrounds in both the previous two situations; and (4) carry on primarily pastoral work among their fellow Catholics in each of the three previous situations. Permutations and combinations of these situations can be spun out almost endlessly. But what remains a constant is that in all of them, one is increasingly called upon to carry on missionary life in an *intercultural* situation. What I want to suggest is that our view of *missio ad gentes* changes when one thinks of oneself doing it as *missio inter gentes*. To help unpack what I mean by that we move now to examine the thought of four Asian missiologists whose work may help us not just grapple with but appropriate a vision of mission and strategies for embodying that vision.

Jonathan Y. Tan

Professor Jonathan Tan of Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, a lawyer and Catholic theologian, has fleshed out the meaning of *missio inter gentes* in two impressive articles.⁷ For Tan, the distinction between *missio ad* and *inter gentes* is not between an outmoded and bad model, on the one hand, or modern and good model, on the other hand. Rather, what this Malay of Chinese ethnic extraction, who was first trained as a lawyer in Singapore and who later obtained a Ph.D. in theology at Catholic University of America under Peter Phan, is driving at is something quite different. Although sensitive to the accusation that Christianity is a Western religion and that Christian mission was a colonial imposition, for him that is not the whole story.

It is important to stress Tan's *experience*. Addressing the American Society of Missiology several years ago, he recounted how he himself was fired with enthusiasm for proclaiming the Gospel and did so intentionally and explicitly as a young man. When he took stock of his efforts after several years of zealous witness, he realized that his mother had brought more people to the faith by her life of prayer, fidelity, neighbourliness, and service in the community. Reflecting further, he realized that Malaysia is a country in which many tribal people follow traditional religions, Indian migrants follow their traditions, ethnic Chinese follow various strands of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and Christians from every ethnic group, members of numerous denominations, live side by side with a Muslim majority that is highly influenced by revival movements imported from Western Asia. An assertive evangelistic posture is simply impossible and counterproductive, says Tan.

To a large extent, this situation is duplicated throughout Asia. Asian Christians, except for Filipinos, live as minorities in the midst of immense cultural and religious diversity. As we consider what *missio inter gentes* means practically and operationally, it is important, above all, to realize that the ethnicity and national identities are, ironically, becoming more important even as globalization proceeds apace. Tan's two articles on *missio inter gentes* in *Vidyajyoti* are masterpieces of careful analysis. Even so, critics have said that he is downplaying the need for mission as proclamation. I think that the critics miss Tan's sense that proclamation needs to be carried out in manners adapted to local contexts and belief that over the long haul methods of mission that resemble the "hard sell" of marketers will produce scant results.

The question is, I believe, "What sort of message needs to be shaped to make it more readily understandable in Asia?". Hwa Yung, the Methodist Bishop of Malaysia, has written a book that puts the question succinctly when he asks: whether Asian Christian theology and identity more nearly resemble a mango or a banana?⁸ The mango, he notes, is an indisputably Asian fruit, green before it matures. Depending on the variety of mango and growing conditions, it ripens to shades in the yellow range. The fruit beneath the skin, however, is yellow through and through. The banana's origins are uncertain, but when it ripens, the green changes to yellow, while the fruit is always white. Surveying Asian theology and attempts at Asian theologizing, Hwa Yung sees them vitiated by tendencies to borrow from the progressive Western social agenda, advocating liberation and overthrowing structures of domination imposed by colonialism and globalization, as if that were the whole gospel. The ability of such theology to reach into Asian hearts and resonate with their deepest religious impulses is compromised. While such theologies dissociate Christianity from Western political hegemony, a question arises. Although they appear yellow on the surface, have they really sunk deep roots into Asian religious traditions? Is Christian theology in Asia, in other words, more like a mango or a banana? Hwa Yung concludes his book with the observation that Asian Christian identity is not yet clear, but he is clear also in saying, "What we need are more theological 'mangos' and not 'bananas'" (Hwa Yung, p. 241).

Jonathan Tan is trying to produce mangos in a brilliant article demonstrating that the symbol and reality of the Crucified Christ are vitally important for Asia and translatable into Asian thought forms.⁹ I am not qualified to judge the adequacy of Tan's detailed exegetical work on Confucian and Taoist texts. What becomes indisputably clear is that the resources of Asian philosophy for articulating the deepest insights and paradoxes of Christ's revelation of God should not be doubted. Moreover, Tan's work shows that the death and Resurrection of Jesus and the salvation prefigured and accomplished in them can be expressed in Confucian categories and that Asian soteriology need not be expressed solely in terms of socio-political liberation. Rather than bifurcating soteriology into transcendent and immanent (socio-political) dimensions, Tan shows that the Crucified Sage embodies the total Way of discerning and manifesting what the Sage has learned from God for all humanity. Jesus, the crucified and Risen sage, according to Tan, in the climax of his life in his death and Resurrection, proclaims and makes manifest the "Way of the Lord of Heaven ... the Reign of God to all peoples".¹⁰

In regard to formation for mission, Tan's work shows the importance of offering those candidates who are capable of advanced studies the opportunity to enter deeply both into the religious and philosophical texts of Asia and those of the Christian tradition. The religious congregation that lacks a critical mass of members who can help their fellow religious understand and appreciate the depths of other people's original religion is a congregation whose insertion into other cultural contexts runs the risk of superficiality.

Amos Yong

Amos Yong of Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, describes himself as a "Chinese-Malaysian-born, American-educated, systematic-and-constructive-theologian." In an address to the American Society of Missiology in June 2006, Yong addressed one of the key problems facing Christianity in an era when recognition of religious plurality and tolerance are seen to

be essential.¹¹ How, he asks, does one reconcile that tolerance with the standard interpretation of the Luke-Acts narratives in which one reads words like “there is no other Name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)? Yong’s speech examines how Pentecostals should respond to the missionary call of the Spirit, but his splendid exegesis has lessons for the broader Christian world. It is also an example of the depths of both Evangelical and Pentecostal theology, a depth many Catholics have never encountered.

Yong sees need for recovering forgotten universal horizons of Luke-Acts wherein the Holy Spirit is portrayed as “poured out on all flesh” (Acts 2:17). He notes that “this does not mean that entire religious traditions are to be uncritically accepted or that every aspect of any particular religion is divinely sanctioned”.¹² But one finds in the Lukan parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) and elsewhere an image of Jesus ready to enjoy the hospitality of non-Jews and a Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is active in the world, the Holy Spirit whose behaviour is manifested in the story of Cornelius (Acts 10) as forcing Peter to recognize God’s saving presence outside Jewish communities.

At risk of moving to summarize Yong’s conclusions without giving a sense of the careful attention he gives to the Biblical texts, I refer to his analysis of Acts 10, where it is precisely through the relationship of those “inside” and “outside” the faith that leads to “the changed lives of both the missionized and the missionary” and then to the assertion, “that it is the religious other who shows the Jews how to embody God’s love for the neighbour”. For Yong, this implies “that Christians can learn from religious others and that God might choose to reveal Godself through religious others in ways that we might not expect” (Yong p. 60).

The religiously “other”, in essence, is not a mere object of efforts to convert but a person who can be the guest and friend of the Christian and who can extend friendship and hospitality to the Christian. In other words, in the full Gospel sense of the word, those outside the family of faith are neighbours. One of the legacies of the traditional way of reading Luke-Acts is to see the other solely as someone to be converted. Yong moves, although he does not use the term *missio inter gentes*, toward an idea of Christian mission exercised as one would among one’s neighbours. Speaking explicitly of his fellow Pentecostals and Evangelicals, he has, I believe, some wisdom for Catholics in this present age:

Whereas conservative evangelical and fundamentalist theologies of exclusivism focus on proclamation, apologetics, and conversion, and whereas liberal theologies of pluralism emphasize socio-political activism, the pneumatological theology I am recommending requires that we discern the best approach among the many different situations we might encounter (p. 65).

I submit, Pentecostals and all Christians can and should bear witness to Jesus the Christ in word and in deed, while listening to, observing, and receiving from the hospitality shown them by those in other faiths. The result may be either mutual transformation of an unexpected kind, perhaps akin to the transformation experienced by Peter as a result of his encounter with Cornelius, or perhaps even our very salvation, such as described in the parable of one whose life was received as a gift through the hands of the good Samaritan (p. 66).

In terms of a formation of young religious for mission in today’s context, at least this much needs to be said. All need face-to-face experiences with persons of other faiths in relations marked by friendship and neighbourliness. Both our formation and work communities need to be places where non-Christians feel welcome as friends and neighbours. The SEDOS conference theme speaks of intercultural formation for *missio ad gentes*. A solid part of all initial and ongoing formation for such *missio ad gentes* must involve living in situations where interreligious interchange takes place.

Vinoth Ramachandra

Our third figure is one of the best missiologists I know anywhere in the world today, Vinoth Ramachandra. Trained as a nuclear physicist in Britain, Ramachandra, a Sri Lankan, came to a deepening of faith and began a life-altering change that led eventually to his return to Sri Lanka becoming the regional secretary of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.¹³ He is based in Colombo but travels widely.

In an incisive essay in a book from a conference of the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies, Ramachandra shows himself aware that imperialism and colonialism sought to alienate those they dominated by devaluing the original culture and religion of the colonized.¹⁴ He does not deny that studies on the part of the colonizers aimed at gaining “... ‘knowledge’ about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them” (p. 124). But neither is Ramachandra blind to the fact that Christianity embodies an ideal of equality that subverts and delegitimizes all hierarchical structures (pp. 133-40) and that its accent on the worth of the individual and the importance of the personal means its social message goes far deeper than a secular liberal agenda that can only see people as ‘victims’ of evil systems (or as ‘sinned against’ and never as ‘sinners’ except in the sense of passivity in the face of structural evil) ... [that needs] to be challenged to recover a biblical realism about our own responsible agency as well as our endless capacities for self-deception and self-destruction (p. 138).

It should be noted that this case is illustrated in rich historical detail by Lamin Sanneh in his study of how and why Christianity began to flourish in West Africa when freed slaves who had followed a circuitous route from the American South to Nova Scotia, to England came back to Africa as missionaries. They brought a Gospel that had nurtured resistance on the part of slaves to their domination, a resistance that intensified when they realized the Bible subverted the rationalization of the slaveholders.¹⁵ In turn, one way to understand the life work of the eminent Edinburgh historian Andrew F. Walls is to see it revolving around the notion that one of the greatest accomplishments of mission and missionary societies is the fortunate “subversion” both of the “sending” church and the colonial enterprise.¹⁶

Ramachandra asks, Who speaks for the poor and oppressed? And he notes that many of those who put themselves forward to do so also espouse a Western “progressive” agenda on issues such as same-sex partnerships, abortion rights, and the equal value of all religious worldviews (p. 142). I could spend the rest of my talk unpacking other dimensions of Ramachandra’s paper. I will refrain from that however and say only that he exemplifies an approach that has confidence that the Bible witnesses to a living Jesus, who is the Christ of the entire universe. The pattern of God’s full immersion in human life in Jesus and the attempt to make Israel aware of, and respond to, the paradoxes of God’s subtle presence and reign led the unjust — dramatically represented by the leaders of Rome and the leaders of Israel — to turn against Jesus when he began to develop a large popular following. The next chapter in his life entails an unjust condemnation of Jesus, so that neither the rule of Rome nor the patterns of privilege enjoyed by the priestly Sanhedrin would be disturbed. But the crucifixion is only the first event of a three-part Paschal drama. It is followed by the Resurrection and the pouring out of the Spirit, which in its turn becomes the foundation of the Church’s *missio ad omnes gentes*.

A section commenting on the liberation promised in Lk 4:16-30 in a book co-authored by Ramachandra with Howard Peskett shows their contention that the biblical diagnosis of human sin gives us unique insights into the nature of human conflict. Trapped in self-centredness, we tend to see others as competitors to be feared, as means to further our own ends, or as threats to our well-being. We have an innate bias towards defending and advancing our own interests. We always tend to speak of the wrongs we have suffered at the hands of others, but rarely of the wrongs we have done to others. This estrangement often turns inwards, so that we are strangers to ourselves, not understanding our motives and passions, let alone the true ends for which we exist.¹⁷

One of Ramachandra's greatest challenges to international religious congregations is the need for members of congregations to be immersed in the socio-religious context of the peoples among whom they live and to be in dialogue with a concrete people's grasp of transcendence and search for liberation. There is, I fear, a tendency still to think that the best way to train members of a religious institute is to send them abroad for studies. The danger in that, Ramachandra constantly reminds us, is that persons so formed can import foreign analyses and methods and propagate them as the means to solve local problems. Methods of first and ongoing formation must be found, however, to insure that work is grounded in the cultural soil of a given people while also being carried on with awareness that all cultures change and that globalization is bringing about dislocations everywhere.

Moonjang Lee

My fourth Asian theologian, Moonjang Lee, is Korean. He has degrees from institutions in Korea, the United States, and Britain. He has taught in Germany, Scotland, Korea, Singapore, and the US. I first met Moonjang at a Seminar on Studies of World Christianity arranged by Andrew Walls at Princeton Theological Seminary. The central insight of his paper that day — "On the Asianization of Theology and Theological Education" — will be the focus of this section. I believe it ties together what each of the previous three theologians has said and focuses it on our topic, educating missionaries in our age.

Lee's paper has gone through several revisions and will soon be published in *The Journal of African Christian Thought*. I have his permission to share his ideas with you, but I will not quote him directly. Lee sets the context of his thinking as one in which Christianity is a "Post-Western" religion and one in which there is no identifiable Christian centre. In every major continental area, Christians struggle to articulate what it means to be part of the world Christian movement. They also struggle to articulate what it means to be a follower of Jesus in their local contexts, be those continentally, nationally, sub-nationally, ethnically, or culturally defined.

For Lee Asians seek to make Christianity an Asianized faith rooted in Asian life ways and culture. For him, however, one of the problems is that the very means of reflection and theologizing employed to accomplish this are themselves Western. Indeed, despite giving notional assent to creating Asian (and for that matter, African, Latin or North American, Oceanic, or European) theologies, the methods employed borrow far more from atomizing, analytic, deconstructing Western ways of reflection on historical, sociological, and textual data than from specifically *Christian* ways of reflecting on faith. Asian students, he notes, come to seminaries to seek wisdom but find that the themes being discussed are alien to the questions they have. A great gap yawns between the desire to *know* Christian truth and the way academic institutions function — often as if there were not an overarching Truth embodied in the Christ who is meant to become the novice's living way and very lifeblood.

As Lee presented his ideas that afternoon, it began to dawn on me that in the Western Catholic tradition, we once practiced what he was terming an Asian "religious" way of studying. It was done in monasteries where psalms were chanted, daily chapters unfolded the Scriptures in the light of the feast of the season, and formal study was also *lectio divina*. For Lee, the goal of theological studies is something Bernard de Clairvaux would have recognized and applauded, a threefold way of:

1. embodying truth
2. attaining spiritual awakening, and
3. self-transformation

What the Asian student formed in Northeast Asia under the influence of Taoist, Confucianists, and Buddhist thought seeks — consciously or unconsciously — is akin: (a) to learning the Tao (Way) of Jesus revealed within the heart; (b) being enlightened as to the true nature of the self, the human community, and nature and their true end; and finally (c) be

introduced to a path of self-transformation that will enable one to live ever more authentically as a Christian human being.

The importance of these insights from Lee can hardly be overstressed. *Are our theological education and formation centres initiating students into the total Way of Jesus. Or – especially in the case of programmes for students bound for ordination – are study and formation programmes a bundle of compromises patched together to satisfy the guilds their professors belong to (i.e., Scripture, ethics, history, dogmatics and systematics)? Are training programmes for sisters, brothers, and priests equipping them for a life of prayer and continual reflection both on their Christian faith and the reality of their people? Or are these programmes, despite so many attempts at overseas training programmes and the like, a form of testing ground that candidates must pass in order to be admitted to membership?*

4. FORMATION FOR MISSION ‘AD ET INTER GENTES’ IN OUR DAY – Mission As “Art” and the Need for *Poiesis*

The first practical observation I want to make is that work in mission is an art calling for *poiesis* (Greek for the *art* of fashioning something beautiful from everyday realities, whence “poetry”) much more than it is the unfolding of principles. The same is true for creating the kind of communities that carry on the actual work of mission, and equally so for the initial formation of men and women for mission. Most of all, the judgment that underlies everything that follows is this: every missionary community’s ongoing life must be a continual circle of observing, judging, and acting in concrete contexts in the attempt to fashion something beautiful out of the social realities in which the missionary community lives. In that context, no community’s initial formation can equip a man or woman at the age of twenty-five or thirty to do what he or she will be doing at the age of fifty or sixty-five. The art of formation, I want to suggest, is primarily *poiesis* — introducing the novice to the art of fashioning environments that aid missionaries in inserting themselves creatively, intelligently and vitally into the context in which they live work. And if the work communities to which missionaries are assigned do not continue the practice of seeing and seeing anew, reflecting continually, and fashioning fresh approaches, then they are failing in the task of ongoing formation. That formation can never be accomplished with an occasional seminar or annual retreat.

Because doctrines and theology are framed in discursive language, many are prone to think that Christian life is a matter of embodying the principles that doctrines enshrine. After Vatican II, in fact, we took our cues on renewal from ever shifting *ideas* about the Christian project. Given the Western preoccupation with true knowledge as proven ideas and theory (*theories*), on the one hand, and application of principles in practice (*praxis*), this is probably inevitable. Moreover, most religious communities and societies of apostolic life were founded in a period when organizations were judged by the efficiency with which they put ideas into practice. Some think themselves successful to the extent that they are frequently mentioned in the press and are clearly and favorably “branded” in the public eye.

If we shift to realizing that theology and practical Christian living (including missionary life) are much more an act of *poiesis* than an application of principles or having a good public relations or “branding” profile, everything changes. Christian life, I want to suggest, brings into existence a Christic dynamic out of the material of our lives in the way the artist, the poet, or the artisan brings a work of art into reality. The fundamental Christian ethic is to make good things happen that would not happen if the disciple of Christ were not there. What we are about in initial formation for mission, then, is finding a way in which to help the person who presents himself or herself for membership experience the kind of study, discipline, and creativity that brings into existence a Christian person who creatively reflects the missional charism of the community and who chooses to commit his/her entire being to that task. Ongoing formation refines that dynamic and equips the missionary to meet new demands and situations.

The Global Missionary Context

Moving further, the art of forming missionaries for intercultural ministries, I want to suggest, is not the art of forming men and women for routine pastoral ministries, but helping men and women who are led by the Holy Spirit to join a concrete group of disciples and become competent in intercultural settings. One might fairly object, "That's good theory, but what about concrete practice?". In recent months, as I have spent a good deal of time working on the English translation of a biography of Pierre Lucien Claverie, O.P., the martyred Bishop of Oran (01-08-1996), by Jean-Jacques Pérennès, also a Dominican, it became evident to me that Claverie is the quintessential missionary of the twentieth century and may serve as a model for what missionary formation in our era needs to become.¹⁸ A brief reference to Claverie's life may make my theory more practical.

In the abundant use that Father Pérennès makes of Claverie's letters to his family and personal papers, one sees a man who was deeply affected by his novitiate and theological training at le Saulchoir. Born a *pied-noir**, he had lived his early life in the colonial bubble of French Algeria as if Arab-Muslim Algeria did not exist. The Dominican novitiate was a transformative event for Claverie. His intercultural breakthrough came when he did his compulsory military service in Algeria after having become a Dominican. Later assigned by his superiors to work in Algeria, he plunged into the study of Arabic and the Quran. As the years went by, he went deeper and deeper into the paradox of the revelation of God in the Crucified One, and realized that the role of his tiny Catholic flock in Oran was not to witness to the glories of Catholicism but to incarnate and bear witness to Jesus as a tiny minority in a Muslim sea.

As the situation in Algeria worsened, you see Claverie becoming ever more deeply a friar preacher helping a flock that numbered more and more martyrs understand this dimension of Christian life and their mission in that context. A man with many Muslim friends, he saw the rise of "Islamism" as a deformation of Quranic teaching that he understood more deeply than the zealots. In his writing, speaking, and pastoral leadership, he was a man inserted totally into the Algerian reality, all the while realizing profoundly that he was an Algerian only, as the French subtitle catches it in words difficult to translate into English, *par alliance* – in a form of covenant relationship with Algerian culture and people. In the end, having led his flock and much of Algeria in absorbing the shock of the two religious sisters who were killed in September 1995, the abduction of the seven Trappist monks of Tibhirine in late March 1996, and the discovery of their severed heads on 31 May 1996, he and his young Muslim driver were killed on 1 August 1996. Three days earlier he had written:

The death of these monks who were our brothers and friends for so long wounded us once more, but strengthened our ties with the thousands of Algerians who are sick of violence and eager for peace. Their silent message has resounded in the hearts of millions throughout the world. We are remaining here out of fidelity to the cry of love and reconciliation that the prior of the community left in the spiritual testament in which he clearly foresaw his own death. I [Claverie] am taking precautions, and I have the protection of the security forces, but it is God who remains the master of the hour of death, and only he can give meaning to our life and to our death. Everything else is just a smokescreen.¹⁹

One sees in the life and death of Claverie the formation of a missionary in its two essential dimensions. *First*, having come to know Dominicans in his early life, when his own conversion took place, he felt an attraction to their way of life. He was not recruited by advertisements offering him a fulfilling life. In an era before the Council, as a boy, he encountered the vitality of French Dominican life in Algiers and later both in the novitiate and at le Saulchoir, the latter without doubt one of the world's premier theological centres. He and the Order took each other's measure and each liked what it saw. When he was offered the chance to work in Algeria, he took on that assignment as a way of living out the charism of the Order. He realized he needed to master contemporary Arabic, the Quran, and modern Algerian writing and literature if he was to live a life fully inserted in the reality of the Maghreb. The Dominicans

gave him the opportunity to do so. He took up that opportunity in a way that led him not just to get by but so that native Arabic-speakers were deeply impressed.

At a second level, Claverie was formed by insertion into the life of the Church in Algeria, but also by his deep empathy for the life of Islamic Algeria in all its vicissitudes. He had a gift for friendship and he made friends. I don't know that he knew the word "interculturality", but he modeled its reality and by entering deeply into community he became an intercultural missionary. He once joked that he had heard it said that the only way to leave the Dominicans after solemn vows was either to get married or to become a bishop. He became a bishop, but his letters show that he felt himself ever more deeply a preaching friar for whom life in community with regular prayer was important. *My point?* His formation for mission was never finished. He engaged in serious study, prolonged study, study that lasted throughout a lifetime. But it was not mere academic study. It was reflection on his intercultural missionary reality. The community he lived in even after becoming a bishop made that possible. It was the warp and woof of everyday life. Claverie may have been lucky to have been a bishop in a church of only a thousand or so Catholics and to be part of a larger community made up not just of Dominicans but of men and women of other congregations and laity with whom he kept reflecting and growing, he was able to concentrate on essentials and not be buried in the administrative minutiae that absorbs so many religious.

Missionary congregations that become so overwhelmed by practical pastoral-missionary work are not places where prayer, continued study takes place. If I may use the Latin word, *otium* (time to devote oneself to things other than work) is in too short supply in such congregations. Conversation, study, reading — including conversations about "secular" matters and reading the literature, culture, and politics of the region in the vernacular of the region — be it in Arabic, Urdu, Mandarin or Twi — are an essential dimension for growth in missionary life. It is hard to imagine how a missionary moving in and out of a country in a two or three-year cycle of short-term mission can master such languages. Can he or she be anything but an ecclesiastical type of United Nations or Foreign Office civil servant whose primary reference remains the goals of the sending organization and not those of a local people?

As free associations of faithful, missionary communities should not get trapped in maintenance. Let me say quickly that the border between pastoral maintenance and missionary apostolates is not easy to define. Moreover, I am not talking about uprooting, for example, a seventy-seven-year-old priest or sister who went to Zambia in 1950 and sending them to an inner city mission in Taipei. They have the right to remain as a pastor or nurse as long as their people want them and no one should make them think they are less a member of the congregation for it. I am talking about how one forms new Zambian, Italian, Chilean or American members, male and female, and to what kind of missions one sends them in places as diverse as Michigan, Uzbekistan, or Stuttgart.

In different ways, the central pastoral crisis today in the Americas, Europe, Oceania, Australasia, and Africa is identical. How does the Church carry on the pastoral care of people who have already become Catholics? And by that I mean a pastoral care that successfully nurtures faith, helps it mature, and creates local congregations with missional outlooks in the neighbourhoods they are situated. And in that context, how do missionary congregations serve local Churches without getting bogged down in maintenance and while living in ways that stretch these churches beyond their comfort zones?

Above all, how can missionary religious challenge local Churches and the Church's central administration to face up to the dire crisis we face in pastoral care virtually everywhere? The ageing of the clergy in Europe and North America and the virtual disappearance of vocations to Orders of priests, sisters, and brothers are well known. In Oceania, and Africa, candidates for traditional priestly and religious life vocations abound, but they are insufficient to provide

the kind of formation necessary to the laity, and in many places the Church witnesses wholesale departures of Catholics who flock to African Initiated Churches, and various forms of Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism. In Latin America the inability to take care of the millions who want to be Catholic at a deeper level leads to wholesale departures to Protestant churches. After a talk I gave at a Protestant mission training centre several years ago, a doctoral candidate there, a man with twelve years experience in Evangelical churches in Central America and Mexico, made an observation and asked a question:

I started three different churches in my years there. On beginning each mission, I resolved to work only among those who were not active Catholics. I did not want to be a sheep-stealer. Despite that effort, within a few months, Catholics who had been leaders and catechists had joined us Evangelicals, and some of the most fervent Catholics came over to us. No one was taking care of them. Given four hundred years when you Catholics had the field to yourselves and all your theological and spiritual resources, why is your Church today so feeble in responding to the people's needs?

Two Principles and Some Practical Questions

While Catholicism is the quintessential top-down, global, bureaucratic organization, and while its centralization has grown stronger since the nineteenth century, as means of communication have improved, monastic and religious communities have served as leavening, parachurch agents since the third century. *My first principle is that to serve as effective intercultural missionary agents and leaven today, such communities need to be willing to live in faithful but real tension with the "mainstream" Church.* I am not counseling rebellion. I am counselling a willingness — for the sake of embodying the Gospel — to live the charisms of their Founders even if they do not fit easily on the diagram of a diocesan pastoral plan. And only men and women who are themselves deeply committed to the value of consecrated celibacy have the credibility to suggest altering the traditional models. Only women who are totally dedicated to the Gospel and show no self-interest can lead an honest discussion of the role of women in the ordained ministry and other offices in the Church.

The truest missionary is formed not primarily by instruction in classrooms by learned professors or even in spiritual direction or at the hands of formation directors. Rather a man or woman is attracted to a community of disciples and, as heart speaks to heart, s/he meets the Lord in the breaking of Bread liturgically, in prayer, in fellowship with experienced disciples, and in solitude. To the extent the members of that community live and breathe in the Spirit of Christ, their life's work and actions lead the new member deeper into the encounter with Jesus. *The second principle, accordingly, is that "recruitment" and formation are two sides of one coin and formation is a lifetime task about which we need to be serious.*

This is nothing new. The best missionaries have always become that way in something like the process we see concretized in the lives of Bishop Pierre Claverie and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. But it is also true that as 19th century missionary communities expanded, classes of aspirants got larger, methods of formation were developed that would allow communities to incorporate large numbers of men and women in regular classes. Novitiates became much like schools where conformity reigned and observance could pass for internalization of values, something to be endured by a person who wanted "to go the missions". If the community was preparing men to be priest-religious-missionaries or a priest-member of Societies of Apostolic Life, they had to satisfy general ecclesiastical rules on philosophical and theological training. If the community was female, when they got to the "missions", their insights were depreciated. The tendency was to want women to run schools, clinics, hospitals, and orphanages, but not to participate in the leadership of a mission or diocese. In all cases, the language that gave primacy to spiritual development was, of course, honoured. But in reality, the pressures were immense on "sending" provinces to get as many priests, brothers, and sisters "to the missions" as possible.

That day is long past. If this is the case, the key question of forming missionaries for the future is, “How does a community identify and equip the persons for the work that best embodies the charism of the community?”. Required are persons young and old who want to be vital parts of community and who can provide both the energy of youth and the leaven of experience and insight to be part of a second founding of the congregation.²⁰

In the Global North today, recruits for missionary communities are few. In parts of the Global South they are plentiful. Granted that bringing in young religious from the South can help bring life to an ageing community in Europe or the United States, does a community not have to be careful lest they merely feed them into old Provinces in ways that merely keep them on life support?

I end without a conclusion. The problems we face as a Church are not easy ones to solve. Prayer, reflection, discussion, study, reading, debate, and dialogue alone can align us with God’s Spirit as we attempt to discern God’s preferred future for ourselves as individuals and as members of our congregations.

Notes

*William R Burrows, managing editor of Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, holds an STL from the Gregorian University (1972) and a Ph.D. from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, where his dissertation was entitled: “The Roman Catholic Magisterium on ‘Other’ Religious Ways: Analysis and Critique from a Postmodern Perspective” (1987). He is currently at work on a book in Orbis’s Theology in Global Perspective Series, tentatively entitled, *Church, Mission, Culture in a Globalizing World*.

¹ In *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate (7 December 1990), Pope John Paul II, recalling the words of Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (§ 27), says: “Proclamation is the permanent priority of mission. The Church cannot elude Christ’s explicit mandate, nor deprive men and women of the ‘Good News’ about their being loved and saved by God. ‘Evangelization will always contain – as the foundation, centre and at the same time the summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ ... salvation is offered to all people, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy’” (§ 44).

² See James Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006); N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) and *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

³ Patrick Keifert, *We are Here Now: A New Missional Era* (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing, 2006), p. 23.

⁴ Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Sky Is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing, 2005).

⁵ Michael Amaladoss, SJ, “Pluralism of Religions and the Proclamation of Jesus Christ in the Context of Asia”, *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 56 (2001) 1-14.

⁶ William R. Burrows, “A Response to Michael Amaladoss”, *CTSA Proceedings* (2001), 15-20.

⁷ Jonathan Y Tan, “From ‘Missio ad Gentes’ to ‘Missio inter Gentes’: Shaping a New Paradigm for Doing Christian Mission in Asia”, *Vidyajyoti*, 68 (2004) 670-88; and 69 (2006) 27-41.

⁸ Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford Regnum, 1997).

⁹ Jonathan Tan, “Jesus the Crucified and Risen Sage: Toward a Confucian Christology”, in Vimal Tirimanna, ed., *Asian Faces of Christ* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), pp. 49-87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36 (note that I am citing a typescript of Tan’s article; I did not have access to the published version, bibliographic data for which is given in the previous note).

¹¹ Amos Yong, “The Spirit of Hospitality: Pentecostal Perspectives Toward a Performative Theology of Interreligious Encounter”, *Missiology* 35 (No. 1, 2007): 55-73. Much of what we discuss here is developed at great length in his *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005).

¹² Amos Yong, *ibid.*, p. 59.

¹³ Vinoth Ramachandra is author and co-author of several books. They include: *The Recovery of Mission: Beyond*

the Pluralist Paradigm (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); *Gods that Fail: Modern Idolatry and Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1996); *Faiths in Conflict: Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (InterVarsity, 1999); and (with Howard Peskett) *The Message of Mission: The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space* (Intervarsity Press, 2003). Vinoth and I are in conversation about a collection of his essays on critical topics in mission theory and practice, which I hope will eventuate in an Orbis Book in the near future.

¹⁴ Vinoth Ramachandra, “Who Can Say What and To/For Whom? Postcolonial Theory and Christian Theology”, in Timothy Yates, ed., *Mission and the Next Christendom* (Sheffield: Cliff Publishing, 2005) 119-46.

¹⁵ See Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ See Andrew F. Walls, “Missionary Societies and the Fortunate Subversion of the Church”, in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books) 241-54.

¹⁷ Vinoth Ramachandra and Howard Peskett, *The Message of Mission: The Glory of Christ in Time and Space* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), p. 169.

¹⁸ Jean-Jacques Pérennès, *A Life Poured Out: Pierre Claverie of Algeria*, trans. Phyllis Jestice and Matthew Sherry (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), original French edition, *Pierre Claverie: un Algérien par alliance* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2000), Italian edition, *Vescovo tra i Musulmani: Pierre Claverie martire in Algeria* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2004).

¹⁹ Jean-Jacques Pérennès, *ibid.*, p. 227.

²⁰ This insight is central to the work of Gerald Arbuckle, *Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations* (Mahwah, NJ, 1988).

* *Pied-noir*: Algerian-born Frenchman.



Bill Burrows giving his talk during the Seminar



Working together



Panel Response

Fr Eric Manaeghe, CICM

Please allow me first of all to thank Bill for the inspiring overview of what really matters in mission today. Presenting a general overview always is an ungrateful task because it has been done so often. Thank you so much Bill for doing it in an original way.

The word play *ad* vs. *inter gentes* may indeed help the missionary focus on a dimension of mission which was emphasized throughout history, starting with the Acts of the Apostles. The *inter gentes* aspect is easily undervalued by dogmatic theologians who focus on the content of mission. At a time when affirming Catholic identity is again “in”, a dogmatic approach is tempting indeed and must be balanced by a more empathetic one: being *among* the people and learning from them, thus allowing the other to shape the message to a certain extent, allowing the other to become revelation.... However, to call this a new paradigm as some are doing (Bill is not one of them), would be inappropriate. To start with, it is as old as mission itself; secondly, missionaries practiced it throughout history albeit to different degrees.

The main disadvantage of a general presentation is that it is general! The author can't help it, this is what he was asked to do, yet the exercise itself has its setbacks. Our reflection on mission is often simplifying too much. I would rather plead in favour of an approach which helps missionaries and particularly the formators of missionaries to take a hard look at the whole picture in its full complexity. There is precious little practitioners can do with general considerations. Here are a few examples.

When we say that we should not be recruiting new members but that our institutes should instead attract young people, we may have the impression that we say something important but, as a matter of fact, this rather abstract statement says very little. A lot depends on the context. Admittedly, institutes need to attract young people but at times this might not be enough and systematic recruitment must be added to it. In other contexts our institutes attract huge numbers of young people and there is no need to recruit. However, we often fail to discern what exactly attracts them! E.g., an emphasis on *ad extra* in a country where one of the major aspirations of the young is to leave the horror of home will attract crowds, yet very few will be attracted by mission. Hence, ongoing group discernment at all stages of initial formation is a must. This discernment must be very open, avoiding the politically correct and never using group discernment in order to impose conformity.

It is certainly true that neighbours, friends and fellow countrymen are often more convincing witnesses than foreign missionaries for the simple reason that they are part of the people. Admittedly, the Catholic Church tends to underestimate the neighbour, i.e., the disciple who does not belong to an established group or category like the religious or clergy. Yet this does not mean that the foreign missionary or the priest no longer has a role to play. One must try instead to understand how each of the actors contributes to the development of a community at the service of mission. This is precisely what we try to do in *Spiritus*: publish a number of down-to-earth stories in an attempt to build a larger picture from below.

A “hard sell” may be a temptation for most Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Catholic missionary institutes no longer believe in it. Sure, it is good to know that some Evangelicals

and Pentecostals came to the same insight and that they are willing to share and dialogue with us. However, one must never forget that they are usually considered marginal in their own communities, pretty much in the same way as Catholics committed to in-depth dialogue with believers of other religions are viewed as marginal by their fellow Catholics. A complex picture indeed.

It is true that we are at times tempted to set up formation programmes that do not sufficiently take into account the concrete context of the *formandi*. This also applies to intercultural formation which is often too theoretical. In my experience, multicultural formation communities must learn to build themselves the necessary skills for multicultural living together, among others through sharing about the world views of the members. One must always start from the concrete experience of the members and then move on to broader insights. This demands a sound theoretical insight from the animators but does not mean that they need to pass it on at this stage (more a matter of specialized training).

I fully agree with Bills's emphasis on a holistic approach, *poiesis*, the art of creating, etc. However, in many places this is going against the prevailing idea of formation and training in many cultures (conformity is the rule!). One must look for ways and means to innovate in a countercultural way, something only the members of the culture itself are able to achieve. Likewise, saying that missionaries must not be trained for routine is a bit simplistic. As a matter of fact, no one needs to be trained for it! Yet, routine is always part of a task, even of the most creative one. The issue here is a different one: how do we deal with routine in such a way that it allows for creativity and creates space for a more in-depth encounter?

I admit that the fall in numbers is a signal. Yet I disagree with the Pentecostals and Evangelicals Bill was quoting that they point to a failure or disaster. Learning from the history of missions, I would rather be seriously worried when I notice a sharp increase of numbers.... This is the very moment when major mistakes are made because complacency prevails.

To the question, "Where do missionary institutes stand at this moment?", I would like to respond: "At the beginning of a movement of refounding". A new and very diverse membership is emerging and gradually taking full responsibility. All new members bring with them their cultural backgrounds and corresponding views of mission; this will indeed lead to the emergence of new missionary institutes.



Multicultural Formation

Essential Lines regarding Multicultural formation in the Initial and Permanent Formation

- Sr Chinyeaka Ezeani, MSHR -

Introduction

“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes for the place we are approaching is holy else we may find ourselves treading on another’s dream; more serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival, and will continue to be there after we are gone”.

- Anonymous -

The above quotation stands as our point of departure and arrival as we engage in the discussion on multiculturalism – that is deep respect for other persons. We can learn something from the early Christian community. Originally, it was predominantly Jewish. With time, it began to grow into a viable multicultural community of believers. This happened because the Apostles were willing to come together to address their challenges and issues, which enabled them to grow and function more effectively as a multicultural community (Acts 6:1-7). Good formation remains very vital. At times in religious communities, persons from minority cultural groups accuse the majority groups¹ of oppression and domination. Conversely, the former could be accused of being too touchy. “Many Cultures, One Heart – Called to bring the tenderness of God to our wounded world” was the theme of the 2001 meeting of the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) at which they invited all to create harmony and mutual respect in religious communities within the socio-cultural transformation happening in the modern world. We cannot do this without solid formation strategies. What I intend to do in this short presentation, is to:

1. Briefly examine some present-day global realities which show that multiculturalism is inevitable both in secular society and in the religious communities.

2. Look at the gifts and graces of interculturalism

3. Explore some of the challenges involved which can actually be stepping stones to growth and conversion. This includes looking at some of the sources of difficulty that affect intercultural formation and community. Exposing these operating dynamics can be helpful in understanding the depth of the respective difficulties.

4. Finally propose some possible elements and strategies which I consider useful in the selection and actual formation (initial and on-going) of candidates and missionaries for further growth in authentic intercultural witnessing to Christ in the world today.

Multiculturalism is inevitable in the world today

Migration and Rapid Global Changes

No time in history has humanity experienced so great an increase in social mobility involving huge migrations of people from one country and culture to another than our times. Today, people come in close contact with other cultures more than ever before in history. As a consequence, many nations of the world could be described as countries of origin, destination or transit, or even all three at the same time! This has great implications because now, more than ever before, people are compelled to swim in the unfamiliar waters of other cultures. The modern man and woman are therefore left to grapple with ways of coping with this new and

rapidly changing situation. Every country and culture is inevitably challenged to open itself up; the task is to develop new strategies that will enable their citizens to appreciate their cultural heritages and at the same time embark on a genuine and respectful relationship with people of cultural backgrounds different from theirs. There is no doubt that these innovations enrich human existence and add the flavour of variety to life. That is why the aspect of globalisation that seeks to enforce uniformity can destroy the richness of multicultural variety.

Even Missionary Orders cannot escape Multiculturalism in Today's Global Village

Religious Orders are not left out in these global changes. In the present circumstances, it is important to pay adequate attention to these changes, their dynamics and how they affect us in our formation and day-to-day encounters with each other. In addition, there are some historical facts that are part of the reality of each congregation. For example, each congregation has a particular cultural, social, historical, and political root. Almost every congregation was founded with some form of "national" or "cultural" character. This is not difficult to understand since each originates in a culture and is founded by someone or people from a particular nationality. This implies that each congregation has a dominant culture, which derives from the Founder's culture and the members of the congregation who come from the same culture.² Many of the congregations that were initially mono-cultural at their foundation and maintained it for a long time are increasingly becoming multicultural.³ Again, with the upsurge in the number of vocations in Africa and certain parts of Asia, some Orders from the West are moving in this direction, recruiting, and establishing formation houses there. These new realities have implications for the kind of formation programme put in place to train the entire membership. The reason is that being multicultural does not automatically imply cohesiveness and openness to others. We will explore the implications of this statement in the subsequent section.

Multiculturalism or Interculturalism?

Multiculturalism implies the mere presence of many cultures, hence the notion of diversity. It is about recognising the existence of a variety of cultures and that each one deserves that its dignity and uniqueness be respected. Multiculturalism in itself is not complete. The core of the Gospel message invites us to "**inter**"-culturalism, which goes deeper than multiculturalism. It often happens that religious living together consider themselves an intercultural community simply by virtue of their diverse origins. This is not enough. That members of different cultural backgrounds live together may not necessarily imply interculturalism. When we talk about "multi"-culturalism in community, some people understand it to mean simply having sisters, priests or brothers from different cultural backgrounds. Others understand it to mean that since we have more than one culture, we should let each culture be without unnecessary imposition on anyone. It is an attitude of "let us be while we let you be". This attitude does not promote mature experience of unity of cultures because it tends to overemphasise the sanctity of difference of cultures.

Interculturalism, on the other hand challenges people to live together in unity, respect and mutuality with each other in a world torn apart by disunity attributed to differences. It is the coming together of different cultures, working towards the unity for which Jesus prayed (*cf.* Jn 17:22-23) and appreciation of cultures through a common human experience. I believe that genuine sharing and the building up of God's Reign entails relationship between all cultures because the "seed" of God's reign is present in every culture. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, the prefix "inter" denotes between or among one another; with each other, which implies mutuality and reciprocity. It therefore involves mutuality in cultural interactions because in order to appreciate another culture, one needs the gift of openness and dialogue. This presupposes that a person is open to learn from others and their cultures and to let go of his or her own attachments that interfere with the growth in mutuality.⁴ Interculturalism does not imply denying one's cultural identity. Individuals should appreciate and be firmly rooted in their own culture, and at the same time be open to criticize the sinful elements in them. In this way, they are better able to accept and let themselves be enriched by others. Jesus is our model of interculturalism. First, he was well grounded in his Hebrew culture, able to judge it and at

the same time, he was open to people of other nations and was willing to “enter into their own world” and relate to them as one to the other without necessarily getting lost in the other. We see that in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:5-42).

The Gifts of Interculturality

In a world torn apart by excessive nationalism, ethnocentrism, racism and all forms of discrimination that strain healthy human relations, interculturality offers us the way towards authentic Christian love. The goal of Christian life is to unite all peoples and draw them to Christ. The realization of this value is expressed in intercultural living. In it, Christ unites persons who were otherwise kept apart through various barriers of culture, language, worldviews and outlooks (*cf.* Eph 2:13-16). We have an opportunity of living out the Gospel value. Jesus broke down walls of division of every kind. He chose a kind of life that enabled him to relate to people of other cultures, and to people treated with disdain he related with respect and dignity. There is a fresh lease of life that is tangible in experiencing community life with diverse cultural backgrounds in sharing life and ministry together. The animation and underlying force are found in the life and example of Jesus the intercultural man. Authentic intercultural community living is a virtue. It is a virtue in the sense that the individual willingly accepts the Gospel challenge of not only keeping to, being with and loving one’s own friends and the “we group” and hating the “enemy” (*cf.* Mt 5:43-46). It embraces the call of loving beyond frontiers, which is the core of Jesus’ message.

Even though interculturality in community and ministry has its challenges, it has its gifts. I have been personally enriched by interculturality. As a missionary in Sierra Leone and Cameroon, interculturality helped me to widen my horizons – to learn that life was larger than just my previous “little” world. It enabled me to learn to interact with sisters from different cultures and relate with them as my sisters. Teaching students raised in different cultural set-ups and mentalities challenged me to grow, to try to understand and accept them in a way that facilitated us. I have to admit however that the growth process in interculturality did not come that easily all the time.

Intercultural living is at the heart of **mission**. An integral part of its value lies in its expression as mission itself. It is not possible to carry out Christ’s exhortation to be his witnesses unless there is willingness to witness to his universal love. The Church expects and enjoins religious communities to be models of intercultural understanding and action since prophetic witness is at the core of the religious life. Interculturality is not and needs not remain simply rhetoric and fantasy, but a constant practice of witness to Jesus’ mission. For this reason missionaries need to regularly engage in a reflective self-evaluation of how we are on mission – to learn new and healthier ways of “being on mission”!

In opening up to others in intercultural encounters, one can acquire the rare gift and privilege of “entering into” another’s world. When people to whom we are sent see that happening, coupled with the realization of this growth in ourselves, deep peace and joy are experienced. Included in this is the possibility of learning another language, which enriches instead of diminishing us.

Finally, everyone is called to transcend self, to be united with God in the love of the other. Intercultural living engages us in a process of conversion and transformation. It involves questioning how we are in relationship with and to the other. It brings richness to formation and community life where there are a rich variety of ideas, viewpoints and creativity which enhances instead of stifling our individual and corporate life. Although this is by no means an easy task, the desire for growth can spur people on despite the challenges and possible resistance that could be experienced. Allowing ourselves to live interculturally in our congregations helps us raise our consciousness and to grow into more loving and Christ-centred individuals and communities.

The Challenges to Interculturality are “stepping-stones”

No one is an island. Human beings live in interaction. Even intimate situations that can be described as non-social take into account the presence or absence of other persons. However, though we tend to interact and be in communion with others, we also fear losing ourselves in others. Human beings tend towards both autonomy and dependence; hence we experience a kind of dilemma in relating to others. Sources of difficulty can arise in the actual dynamics of one

trying to interact with another in a meaningful way. This can help us to understand why Religious Orders facing the reality of becoming intercultural can pass through confusion and apprehension about letting “them” become part of “us”.⁵ Individuals in formation equally experience this kind of struggle as they try to integrate with other candidates coming from cultures different from theirs.

Ethnocentrism

Because of the tendency to view one’s culture as the best, a lop-sided cultural adaptation could happen in multicultural formation. This usually shows itself in the majority culture of the group expecting other members to adapt to their culture, and often using that as the criterion for the evaluation of all.

Owing to the fact that already, our individual cultures and religious formation incline us towards repressing unacceptable and the not-quite-ideal elements in our cultures, we either tend to attribute those to others or outright deny them. For example, there is hardly a priest or religious who would find it easy to admit to operating out of some crude form of racism and ethnocentrism. Without falling prey to generalization, Caucasian people and some Eastern cultures especially those with a long imperial history seem consciously or unconsciously conditioned to attitudes of superiority, while Black people, especially those who have been colonized, to inferiority. Human beings tend to be intensely socio-cultural creatures, which makes ethnocentrism a hindrance in intercultural formation and community life; and all us – Caucasian, African, Asian, Pacific – have ethnocentric tendencies in us!

Prejudice and Racism

It is said that it is in human nature to identify with and feel to belong to one’s own particular group: the “we group”. “They”, that is, all others who do not belong to the “we group” may consequently be perceived as the opposition.⁶ Given that the way people are socialized makes them automatically believe that their own way of behaving, feeling and thinking is the most normal and natural, while others could see it otherwise, and because of the need for self-preservation in anxiety-provoking situations, racial prejudice could find fertile ground in a multicultural setting.⁷ Perhaps, an understanding of how it operates could help us to face and overcome it. In the second stage of psychosocial development, which is described at the “judicious” stage, one learns to distinguish between “our kind” and others judged to be different. Others who are not like our own kind can therefore be automatically assessed as wrong or bad. This is believed to be the ontogenetic basis of the worldwide estrangement that is called a *divided species*, and the origin of intrahuman prejudice.⁸

Prejudice as a negative pre-judgment of a group can lead one to hostile and irrational reaction against an entire group or against its individual members. When a person’s subjective perception is blurred, the person views the world and others in a similarly distorted way. The danger inherent in prejudice is that if for instance you ask a prejudiced person why he is behaving the way he does to the other; he will tell you that the person deserves the treatment. For example, a particular group is massacred, and the response of a prejudiced person is: “*Your people are hunted and killed because you’re too selfish and money-minded*”.

Learning from our Mistakes as Missionaries

For the purpose of heightening awareness, it will be good if we try to identify some common mistakes that we missionaries can make. Sometimes, we fall into the trap of confronting the challenge of interculturality immaturely. First there are missionaries who deal with the problems and challenges of intercultural community living by taking flight into intellectualisation. These missionaries simply explain away the frictions of interculturality as the problem of “human nature” or personality without giving consideration to the possible societal influences and upbringing of individuals. Intellectualism in this sense masks the defensive strategies of denial or evasion in dealing with the dialectics of interculturality. This method is hardly the most mature or effective.

Secondly, some missionaries go to the other extreme of relating to their fellow sisters or *confères* solely on the basis of cultural background. Once they encounter a person, they see that person first and foremost as from this or that culture or nationality and relate to him or her

principally from that premise. There seems to be in this attitude a subtle evasion of authentically relating to persons as “persons” and fellow human beings. Reaching out to another is not bad. However, an awareness of the possibility of treating human beings solely on the basis of culture can be a deficient way of witnessing to Jesus who reached out to people as individuals and not merely on the basis of their nationality.

“Make hay while the sun shines”, is a beautiful English proverb. Some missionaries do not seem to accept that this proverb does not apply to every situation. The “vocation boom” in certain parts of Africa and Asia attract missionaries from other parts of the world. Sometimes they seem to be in a hurry to recruit local vocations and build huge formation houses. Hence, they do not allow themselves enough time to get to know the people and acquaint themselves with the culture and context before embarking on such a serious project. What happens is that they make wrong choices and run into serious trouble with a clash of cultural values and interests.

In addition to the above points, another manifestation concerns an immature attitude in intercultural living. This has to do with the unreflective and careless ways missionaries could perpetuate some already existing ethnic and sectional hatred and division, as a result of our zeal to identify with the people to whom we are sent. The sad truth is that this can be quite subtle. In what ways can this happen? Consistent and vehement criticism or devaluation of certain *confrères* from a particular ethnic group; insinuating or attributing their misconduct or faults to their culture, in the presence of members from other cultures of the same country can indirectly create or sustain hatred. If we are not careful, we can inadvertently make ourselves collaborators of the perpetrators of ethnic genocide through seemingly harmless, but malicious comments and criticism of certain compatriots. Admission of our struggle and awareness of sources of challenge to interculturality are inevitable for a healthy intercultural community living. This is the paradox of life.⁹

Human beings usually tend to respond to situations according to their psychological make-up, which includes their needs, values, acquired attitudes and behaviour. These can be conscious or unconscious, and the more unconscious, the more serious their influence can be. Individuals need to be grounded in their own cultural background and able to critique it in order to be capable of accommodating and accepting others. One cannot offer what he or she does not have. When one grows in self-acceptance, accepting others becomes much easier.

Important Considerations Regarding Intercultural Formation: Initial and On-going

Why did I choose to use the term “on-going” instead of “permanent” formation? I do so because formation never really has the sense of *permanence* to it. Each of us discovers this as we get on in life. We never reach a stage where we can claim to have been formed permanently. Formation is an on-going process which goes on until death. We discover each day, to our amazement, that there is still a lot we need to learn about ourselves as individuals and about authentic interculturality. Owing to our time constraint, apart from some few particularities of initial formation, I will try to handle issues of both initial and on-going formation simultaneously.

a) Quality of the Selection and Discernment Process

A very fundamental dimension of preparing people to live in a multicultural community is to discern and select only individuals who are called to this way of life, which is most likely outside his/her own country or culture. In other words, people who have the potential, disposition and openness to engage and actually thrive in and through interculturality despite its multifaceted challenges. What can happen sometimes is that for those from the affluent socio-economic contexts where the number of vocations has dwindled, Superiors and Formators fear to be strict lest they lose the small number that is coming. In the less affluent societies, there can equally be a tendency to be less exacting in this expectation because it is argued that the numbers are needed to be able to work on many projects and ministries, as if the religious life is about providing a work force for the Church!

b) Formation in Intercultural Sensitivity and Awareness

In my little experience so far in different aspects of the initial formation, I have cause to believe that much attention must be given to promoting deep intercultural understanding.

This is a very important strategy we employ with every available opportunity in our initial formation as well as in the temporary vows stage – that is, helping people to develop intercultural awareness and sensitivity. This will also involve the exploration of cultural beliefs, prejudices, and attitudes to people of other ethnic or cultural groups living in the same country or other countries, if authentic intercultural relationships can truly develop. Often, in-built assumptions and historical experiences of hurt that people have had either as a particular ethnic group or as a nation have the capacity to adversely affect relationships between people. We can consciously devote a great deal of attention to helping candidates in formation become aware of both the giftedness and baggage of each of their groups. We can also assist them in grasping the basis of what the Gospel is all about and some skills to help them talk about difficult experiences and particularly what the Gospel is asking of them in how to respond in concrete situations. There is no doubt that the genocide in Rwanda, the Holocaust and the civil war in Nigeria and in other places in history, could have been fuelled on both sides by distorted and even deliberate false propaganda about whoever the enemy was perceived to be at that time and place.

c) Formation in Basic Catechesis and Core of the Gospel

In initial formation especially at the pre-novitiate stage, it is recommended that much attention be given to good catechesis, theory and practice particularly. Basic lived Christianity ought to be the foundation of everything we do in formation. In congregations where this matter is not given central importance, it could be dangerous because the core of Christianity can get submerged under a mountain of so-called spirituality and external practices of religious life, without all the necessary foundational work being done and attended to daily. If omitted, or given inadequate attention, this will show itself clearly at times in very unchristian attitudes and behaviour. Some of the tragic happenings in different places, like genocides and senseless civil wars still haunt us realizing that some priests and professed religious actually took part in some of the interethnic atrocities.

d) Creating an “All-inclusive” Environment

This is an essential element in good intercultural formation. An intercultural formation setting needs an intercultural team as well as an attitude of inclusiveness for all. This is an important way of introducing the values of interculturality to those in formation. Things like consideration and inclusion of all the members – both the Formators and those in formation in liturgical practices, menu, etc., can be a very helpful strategy. Things that seem secondary like food can be an issue of great sensitivity to people in intercultural community life.

e) Formation for Healthy Self-esteem, Interdependence and Self-giving

The work of formation in a multicultural setting should include training people in interdependence and generous self-giving. Helping people to grow in their ability to live in reasonable peace with themselves, their companions and their work is important in the formation in interdependence. Formation of a healthy self-esteem is another way of assisting candidates for intercultural living. Mature and solid personal identity contribute to a person being able to “enter” another’s culture cognitively and affectively. This involves perceiving, accepting and respecting both its strengths and weaknesses. The resulting mutuality and respect, understanding and appreciation make possible the transcendence of cultural limitations that can block self-giving.

f) Exposure to the Congregation’s Life

People learn better by practice and through experience. For this reason, it is good to give those in formation the opportunity to experience intercultural living in the congregation’s communities. The practice of cross-cultural experience (in some missionary congregations including mine) where novices can spend a couple of months, prior to first profession, in a country and culture other than theirs is of great value. Opportunities can be given to younger or newer members to experience more practically the congregation’s way of life, spirit and missionary spirituality in the every day community living. In this way, people can be helped to break free from excessive embeddedness in some aspects of their cultural mindsets. Most

African cultures, for example, are communal. For this reason, they tend to create a socio-centric identity. On the other hand, Western cultures have more a tendency towards individualism. In order to “break” the group pressure and help persons to develop more, it is suggested that those from more socio-centric cultures be sent to work alone in some ministry under supervision, and those from more individualistic cultural backgrounds could be assigned to work in team ministry. Organizing intercultural formation programmes can be a very helpful tool also. This could involve Sisters, Brothers or Priests in a particular age bracket or period of first profession coming to live, study and pray together for an extended period of time in an intercultural setting. Some congregations have tried this out and have found it worthwhile.

g) The Power of Witnessing

We are all aware that no one can offer what he or she has not got. This goes to challenge Formators to be properly steeped in intercultural living, not just at a cognitive or intellectual level, but also at a deeply affective and interior level. Pope Paul VI noted in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n. 41) that people do not necessarily listen to teachers, and when they do, it is only because they are witnesses as well. Hence, the witness of the Formators is essential in the formation of new members. In effect, the Formator’s way of presenting Jesus’ intercultural values to the candidates and its expression in his or her life is of paramount importance. Not only the Formators are called to this witnessing; everyone who is willing to engage in the process of ongoing formation is to be involved. We all can creatively invite in and help to sustain the younger members in the journey of authentic intercultural life. Hopefully, all the intercultural formative efforts will help to bring individuals and congregations to conversion.

h) Evaluation of Congregations’ Formation Process/Programme

I think that forms of accompaniment – both group and individual – happen in different congregations. Nevertheless, we need to evaluate their quality and also that of the process of formation practised in our congregations. It also raises the need for well trained, and a sufficient number of, competent Formators. It is important that Formators are well prepared and formed to journey with people through acceptance of God’s unconditional love in a personal way. The more this essential element of solid accompaniment is done in the early stages of formation in intercultural relating, the stronger the resulting bonding will be and the more self-awareness and other-awareness will grow. This in turn will make the later professed religious eminently more effective missionaries in whatever culture or ministry they serve. In addition to close accompaniment, those in initial formation need to be helped to develop skills in constructive communication so that inevitable friction and misunderstanding can be faced in a manner which will lead to growth for all involved.

i) Conversion: Individual and Corporate

Jesus’ cultural background was Jewish but his message transcended all cultural elements to proclaim above all the love of God for all, whether Jew or Gentile. That was why he allowed himself to be challenged by the Syrophenician woman to rethink his stand and open himself up to relate to her on the basis of compassion and her humanity, not with cultural superiority (Mk 7:24-30, Mt 15:21-28). Self-transcendence therefore, becomes inevitable in our growth in intercultural formation and living. This implies transcendence of oneself in love, and of the cultural patterns that have helped to form one’s outlook on life. There are a number of questions that have been proposed that a congregation could address for its own personal growth in authentic intercultural life.¹⁰

- Does the congregation engage in electing an international government group, or does the culture of the foundation still dominate, with the underlying hegemonic mentality that congregation members of other cultures and nations are “not yet ready”?
- Can one see the values, worldview, attitudes, and mentality of the dominant culture in the congregation’s formation programme, in such a way that each member is “homogenized” to the dominant culture?
- In congregational committee work, is there international representation, or does the congregation, using the vow of poverty as an excuse, only choose people physically near to the Generalate?

- Is the model of communication unidirectional in the sense that all the communications flow from the top down, precluding dialogue and the exchange of differences?

The above questions are pertinent to the subject. They will be helpful in on-going intercultural reflection and evaluation. I will add though, in relation to the points enumerated above that trust is indispensable in all our intercultural dealings. It will not be good, for instance, to vote for a person on the basis of cultural background alone, simply to make a congregational leadership team appear intercultural or “inclusive”. Nevertheless, if a religious congregation intentionally decides to be intercultural and international, the constant process of conversion as a group and as individuals is vital. True conversion has to lead to deep awareness as one passes from one stage of intercultural living to the other. Being conscious of these stages can facilitate conversion, which changes “hearts of stone into hearts of flesh” (Ez 36:26).

Real conversion and change of heart can find a fertile ground on which to thrive and bear fruit when a group opens itself up to be touched at the core of its being and reality. The process of conversion needed in intercultural community will be effective not with intellectual content alone, but with psycho-spiritual experience that touches the human heart to effect moral and religious conversion. Such conversion should go beyond what is merely imagined or appears to be so, to what is truly so. In *moral conversion* a person moves beyond satisfaction about his or her decisions and choices to the values. One no longer needs to be persuaded or forced to do good. For example, a sister will no longer need to be reminded to be sensitive to another sister from a different cultural background in expressing her opinion about “foreigners”. On the other hand, *religious conversion* happens when one falls in love with God in a “total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications or reservations; a surrender which is not an act, but a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts”.¹¹ In other words, the conversion does not stop at just becoming aware of a single act or process, not “*Oh, I will not talk this way any more to her because she feels hurt*”. Instead, the person’s whole life is taken up with God and with the quest for objective goodness: “*I will talk to her with respect because she is the image and likeness of God*”.

Intercultural conversion has a special significance for missionaries who, following in Jesus’ footsteps, are faced with the task of building up God’s Reign of peace and justice. Although this needs to begin at the individual level, for “charity begins at home”, congregations are required to make a conscious shift in order to facilitate the individual member’s own conversion.

Conclusion

For us as missionaries, the test of faith, love and charity is in authentic intercultural formation, actual living and mission. We can deepen our faith and love through such mutual up-building. There are challenges involved yet we can be tremendously enriched. Ideally, intercultural life should not just “happen” to missionary congregations. It should be a deliberate, conscious choice to respond to the signs of the times and to the voice of the Spirit at the appointed time in the history of a congregation. We can allow Jesus who transcended even the bond of blood to welcome and accept others as his mother, sisters and brothers (*cf.* Mt 12:47-50) to show us the way. This call is for all – newer and older members of congregations alike. It involves a call to openness and cooperation with the grace already given, namely, the inherent capacity for self-transcendence that is in the soul of every person. All actions are more meaningful and life-giving when motivated and guided by self-giving love that leads one to transcendence of the self for the sake of God. I recall the story of the old Rabbi who once asked his disciples how they could tell when the night was over and the day on its way back. They asked and speculated that it could be when one saw an animal in a distance and was able to identify it as a dog or a sheep. After speculating once more that it could be when one saw a tree in a distance and could figure out whether it was a peach or a fig tree, the Rabbi’s answer was “*No*”. He patiently explained that it was only when you can look any man or woman or child in the face and see that he is your brother or she is your sister. If you cannot do this, then no matter what time it is, it is still night for you! This is Jesus’ dream for us: that we may be one as he and the Father are one. That we may be so perfected in unity that the world would recognize that it was the Father who sent him and that the Father loves us as He has loved Jesus (Jn 17:22-23).

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Notes

¹ The expressions "minority" and "majority" or "dominant" groups as employed in this presentation are in the strictly sociological sense, that is, in terms of largeness of number and not in a qualitative sense of who is superior or inferior.

² Cf. J. Malone, "Internationality: At What Price?", 111. *Review for Religious*, January-February (1992).

³ For example, my congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary had to face up to this reality at some time in its history. In a special General Chapter in 1969 and the Eight General Chapter of 1978, it was officially proclaimed "international" and "intercultural" respectively.

⁴ G. Arbuckle, "Multiculturalism, Internationality, and Religious Life", 329. *Review for Religious*, May-June (1995).

⁵ J. Malone observed that different congregations going through change of becoming international face that reality with different kinds of coping mechanisms, ranging from down-playing the reality to different degrees of resistance; "Internationality: Consciousness Raising and Conversion", 365-366.

⁶ P. Essed., *Everyday Racism*, (trans) C. Jaffé, Alameda, 1990, p. 7.

⁷ F. Hoare, "The Formation of Christian Community: An Intercultural Process", 394.

⁸ C.S. Hall *et al.*, *Theories of Personality, Fourth Edition*, New York, 1998, 199.

⁹ According to the notion of the *Basic Paradox*, a difficulty or problem that is acknowledged and accepted is easier to manage than that which is virtually unconscious, unaccepted or denied.

¹⁰ Cf. J. Malone, "Internationality: At What Price?", p. 111.

¹¹ B.J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Toronto, 1994, pp. 240-244.



Sr Chinyeaka Ezeani, MSHR, giving her talk

Panel Responses

- M. Maddalena Lonardini, SMSM -

Trovo interessante la distinzione tra “**Multiculturalismo**” e “**Inter-culturalismo, o Interculturalità**”, ben rappresentata anche nel disegno che ci ha dato. Il primo, visto come una varietà di culture messe insieme, un *cocktail*.

Il secondo, invece, visto come un “mettere insieme” gente di culture differenti per andare verso l’unità voluta da Gesù (Gn 12,22-23). Creare un inter-azione/inter-scambio tra culture senza sminuire la propria. E’ una provocazione per noi, una sfida al vivere insieme in unità, mettendo al bando l’uniformità.

Nel nostro mondo “globalizzato” che da una parte tende ad uniformare e dall’altra esaspera i nazionalismi, va sottolineato che l’Inter-culturalità diventa una testimonianza credibile, come diceva Giovanni Paolo II in “Vita Consecrata”, n. 51 “... Il dialogo della carità, soprattutto là dove il mondo di oggi è lacerato dall’odio etnico o dalla follia omicida (...) le comunità di vita consacrata, dove si incontrano come fratelli e sorelle persone di età, di lingua e di culture diverse, si situano come *segni di un dialogo sempre possibile* e di una comunione capace di armonizzare tutte le differenze”.

Naturalmente questa testimonianza non va da sè, ha un suo prezzo! (*Non è sempre romanticismo!*)

- E’ un processo di conversione continua;
- Richiede vigilanza sui pregiudizi e le diverse forme di razzismo che sonnecchiano in ognuno/a di noi;
- Esige che la persona sia radicata nella propria cultura per essere in grado di accogliere l’altra come una ricchezza ed un’apertura di orizzonti. Questo concetto è già emerso più volte.

L’inter-culturalità è una sfida a mantenere l’equilibrio tra la duplice tensione che l’essere umano vive: *desiderio di autonomia e bisogno di inter-azione, inter-dipendenza*, carattere tipico della maturità umana. Quest’ultimo è indice della capacità di vivere in comunità.

Interessante la sottolineatura dei due errori comuni a tanti missionari:

1. **l’intellettualismo/razionalizzazione** = negazione della dialettica della sfida dell’interculturalità;
2. **Identificare la persona con la cultura o la nazionalità** = cementare i pregiudizi anziché guardarla e/o trattarla prima di tutto come persona.

Ho anche sperimentato, nella mia vita missionaria, quanto male puo’ fare il missionario straniero quando, in un paese all’interno del quale ci siano guerre di vario tipo, prende partecchia per una etnia o per un partito; davvero puo’ fomentare una guerra all’interno della guerra stessa: guerra in comunità....

Uno sguardo meritano gli “**Elementi essenziali per una formazione interculturale**” (prima formazione e formazione continua):

* **Discernimento e qualità della selezione.** Altra sfida per i formatori che non conoscono la cultura dei candidati.... Quindi superare la paura di ‘perdere i pochi che vengono!’. E credo che oggi, non pochi abbiano questa paura....

* Formatori coscienti e capaci di credere nell’amore incondizionato di Dio nella vita di ciascuno (senza distinzioni culturali) e nel cammino personale di ciascuno.

* Conoscenza di se stessi (formatori) e accettazione dei propri limiti.

A mio avviso, la corretta conoscenza di sè serve da trampolino di lancio per il formatore/trice, situandolo/a in una giusta posizione di fronte al formando/formanda, aiutandolo/a così a crescere

anche nella corretta stima e accettazione di sè e in una solida maturità e identità psicologica e affettiva, che lo/la renderà capace di accogliere il diverso/a da sè).

* Formare alla mutualità, all'inter-dipendenza, al dono di sè.

* La possibilità per i candidati in formazione di una esperienza di comunità interculturale (*stage* di comunità) con attenzione alla cultura di provenienza (*nella mia congregazione cerchiamo di fare questo e constatiamo che è una esperienza molto utile e formativa*).

* **Team di formatori/trici internazionali a creare un ambiente internazionale:** liturgia, pasti, letture, ricreazioni.... Io credo che questi siano i tre ambiti in cui si possa misurare l'interculturalità della comunità: la liturgia appunto, i pasti (il modo di cucinare, quindi), le riviste: riceviamo riviste di una sola lingua? Qual è quella predominante?

* E' poi evidente che solo una testimonianza credibile dei formatori/trici aiuta il formando/a a camminare, a integrarsi (*cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 41 → Testimoni e Maestri).

* Necessità di conversione personale, comunitaria e di congregazione (siamo sempre in divenire).

Un mio personale commento:

Negli elementi essenziali, per un processo di formazione all'inter-culturalità, mi sembra importante invitare ogni membro della comunità interculturale a fare una esposizione alla comunità della propria cultura, (con cio' rispondo anche al punto (b) della seconda domanda che pone la relatrice). Sottolineare cio' che caratterizza la cultura: nel pensiero, nel comportamento, nei costumi.... Io l'ho sperimentato e si è rivelato positivo. Un altro fatto che puo' aiutare molto la comprensione degli uni e degli altri: di fronte a un evento importante chiedere ad ognuno/a come reagirebbe nella propria cultura.

Un appunto: Trovo che manca nelle due relazioni un aspetto molto importante per una formazione all'interculturalità, cioè il rapporto "**Cultura – Voti religiosi?**". L'impatto della concezione dei voti in Africa, in Asia, in Europa, in America, in Oceania.

Sperimentiamo tutti le difficoltà di trovare delle linee di azione comuni anche all'interno del proprio Istituto. Potrei dare degli esempi vissuti, il voto di obbedienza concepito da una novizia dell'occidente, dove impera l'individualismo e da parte di una dei paesi in via di sviluppo, dove l'obbedienza e la sottomissione agli anziani è un valore importante.

La povertà. Mentre formavo le novizie all'uso del denaro e dei beni comunitari, a prevedere un *budget*, al discernimento comunitario sul come e quando aiutare i poveri che bussavano alla porta, una novizia mi dice: per voi Europei il denaro è fatto per essere accumulato nelle banche, per avere interessi, per noi Africani invece è fatto per circolare.... Come aiutare a conciliare abbandono alla Provvidenza e necessaria previdenza!

La castità: l'aspetto della maternità e paternità fisica, così radicato in certe cultura.... Spero che in questi giorni cercheremo di vedere e di capire, insieme, alcune dinamiche.



M. Maddalena Lonardini, SMSM,
is presenting her feed-back after the Ezeani's Conference

Multicultural Formation

- Fr Fernando Domingues, MCCJ -
Pont. Collegio Urbano - Rome

Introduction

The very fact that we are here today intending to reflect together on the issue of multicultural formation indicates a clear concern common to many of us. Many are perplexed at the reality of so few vocations from certain areas of the world, and so many from other areas, but more difficult to understand is the reason why such a high percentage leave in the higher stages of formation and in the first years of commitment for life which used to be thought of as the time of greater generosity and enthusiasm.



Fr. Fernando Domingues

Another worrying reality is that, after long programmes of formation in international centres where all cultures seem to be highly appreciated, the new members very often seem ill equipped to minister in the concrete cultural context where they are sent. Of those who accept to remain and serve there, not a few do so in the secret hope that serving in that particular cultural, ecclesial, economically developing context will only be the price to pay for more fitting placements in a near future.

In informal conversations, the suspicion is often voiced that many new members from developing countries join the congregations with the sole intention of getting a good standard of education and finding a way into the rich Western world.

Two questions that we need to take up: How can we avoid losing so many people? The second: Is multicultural formation the cause of that kind of personal superficiality that seems to be at the origin of so many defections during the first years of ministry?

Three different ways to respond to these questions would seem to be:

1. We are international and the candidates need to learn our international ways from the beginning. So we do not change. If we lose many, so be it: it probably means that they were not meant for us.

2. We are international, but pluralism destroys our clear sense of common purpose and common identity. We need to go back to *one* clearly defined set of values, priorities, *one* theological outlook, *one* liturgy, the whole, implemented by a strong common discipline. It is best to form them all together, or in very large groups which follow exactly the same *one* guidelines wherever the formation centres are located.

3. Send each one back to his/her country of origin at least until final vows/promises. Most of them will serve within their own cultural area. A few of the more mature ones can then enter exchange programmes and serve in other cultural – ecclesial areas where the institute works.

Often, problematic situations which seem to have no way out can find a solution when we agree to look at them from a different observation point.

With this presentation, I would like to invite us all to look at the issue of multicultural formation in our institutes not from the observation point of our own problems but simply by asking a different question: What kind of ministry does the Church need from us today? How can we prepare our young members to respond adequately to that need?

1. Multiculturality: problem or asset?

Before we attempt an answer, it may be helpful to remind ourselves that we cannot choose whether to live or not to live in a multicultural human reality, especially in the sphere of education. The international flows of persons, ideas, information, have been with us for a long time and can only increase in intensity. Even without looking at our institutes, the trend of international centres of study is certainly well established now in most of our world.

In 2002 it was calculated that at least 1.5 million students were attending universities and study centres outside their own country at any time of the year. About 80 percent of

all international students come from developing countries and study in 'the West'. The two major suppliers of international students present in the USA were India and China; and of these, at least 80 per cent do not return to their countries of origin after completion of their studies.¹ Those who will eventually return home will take with them an academic culture profoundly marked by the culture of the country that hosted them, and that will certainly affect the culture of their own country, as they will be taking up leading posts in academics, in economy and in politics. And even for students who do not leave their own countries, the multicultural experience is brought to them through the ever more common 'twinning programmes' between universities and other institutions of higher learning that exchange both lecturers and students for given periods of time.

The danger of creating a 'union of unequals' or yet another form of neo-colonialism is real,² but we cannot ignore the fact that the processes of globalization are here to stay and they can only grow ever more pervasive.

Any attempt to create a formation structure where our candidates would be formed exclusively within their own culture seems to me a serious anachronism.

1.1 Some problems with multicultural formation

The Multiculturality of the contexts in which our formation structures are located is not, in itself a problem, but we need to say it honestly, it does bring some serious problems:

- Language: by the time some of the candidates have learned the language used in the noviciate, the programme is over. What have they assimilated?
- Can someone really study theology in depth in a language that is not his own and that he/she knows only superficially?
- Is profound intercultural exchange and mutual enrichment really possible in a formation community made up of persons from 20 different cultures?
- What kind of formative relationship is possible between the Chinese candidate and the Portuguese Formator?
- Is some kind of 'common culture' possible in such a formation community?
- If the local culture is simply chosen, or imposed on all, making them 'forget' their own cultures of origin, will they be prepared to cope with yet another culture when they will be sent abroad to minister later on?

1.2 Some problems with mono-cultural formation

A very much uniform model of formation where everything is clear and well-defined, be it at the level of contents or at the level of strategies and discipline, may be easier to run, but the ministers formed there will easily find themselves in difficult ministerial situations:

- Having assimilated only one kind of theology, liturgy, way of understanding priesthood, or consecrated life, the minister is asked to serve in a church community with a very different experience and understanding of Christian life.

Eg. A priest who has learned to see and celebrate the Eucharist as a gift from God, made by the priest who was given special sacred power by God to consecrate the Bread and Wine, mainly for the purpose of adoration by the people (and also for 'adoring communion...'), later on easily comes into conflict with a community where the Eucharist is seen and celebrated in terms of communion and mission accomplished by Christ through his community presided over by the priest.

- A priest profoundly identified with one way of animating the Christian communities who is incapable of accepting as 'true Church' the communities he has called to serve when transferred abroad.

Multiculturality (and plurality of views) is simply the way the Church exists today, and, with all the difficulties it may entail, we need to form the ministers that this multicultural and multi-faced Church needs today. Such a pluralistic outlook of our new members will be even more necessary as we look outside the Church and perceive the wonderful and challenging plurality of mentalities, cultures, religious experience that exist in this world that we are called to serve and in which we are called to live and to minister.

Our main question will not be, then, whether or not to accept globalization and the multicultural outlook of our world and of our Church; our concern will then be how to form ministers that will

be competent and happy serving the world and Church, multicultural as they are.

You will have noticed that I put together here the issue of multicultural formation with the issue of a certain pluralism in theology, liturgy ... Christian life in general. They are, of course, distinct realities, but they do come together in the subject that concerns us here: a person who assumes a one-sided kind of theology will not be able to take a positive part in any process of inculturation, and, *vice-versa*, one who cannot see beyond the boundaries of his own culture of origin will also be closed to ways of seeing and living Christian faith different from his own. The question that concerns us here is not primarily theology or culture but the fundamental attitude of openness to diversity and plurality that the Church of today needs in her ministers.

The great challenge to formation in this regard is, it seems to me, how to cultivate this theological and cultural openness in our candidates and in our members while, at the same time, avoiding that superficiality which will make the person too vulnerable to resist the unavoidable difficulties of ministry, like the seed thrown on rocky ground, which springs up quickly but will soon be scorched by the heat of the sun and withers away because it has no depth of soil and no deep roots (*cf* Mk 4:5-6).

The image of the story-teller used by the Filipino Bishop Luis Antonio G. Tagale to speak of the mission of the Church in Asia, when he addressed the recent Asian Missionary Congress in Chiang Mai, Thailand (19-22 October 2006),³ may help us here to reflect on the question of 'depth' in the multicultural formation of our members.

2. Forming 'story-tellers'

Bishop Tagale remarks how certain people were able to tell the story of Jesus in excellent ways; he mentions Mother Theresa as a good example. They show well what every single Christian and each local Church is called to be and to do. Through the action of the Spirit, Jesus entrusts his story to his Disciples. Telling his story renders him – Christ himself – present and active today. On one condition, though: that the life of the story-teller becomes part of the story. Only when his/her life is deeply transformed by the message to be told can the story-teller really accomplish the task. Tagale also notes how each teller enriches the story which can be told in a wonderful variety of ways: "The person's gestures, behaviour, the voice modulations, the facial expressions, the body positions, all that becomes part of the story being told".⁴ And the best narrators are those whose whole life has become part of the story of Jesus' presence and action in the world today, so much so that everything they are, every decision they take, every service they take up has but one scope: to continue to tell his story, and eventually to create other authentic tellers of the same story.

The image of the story-teller points to the heart of multicultural formation: the profound encounter between the person of Christ and the whole person of the candidate in his/her concrete life context.

1. Identity and openness

Typical of the story-teller is the capacity to remain faithful to himself and to his story while adapting to the needs of a different audience, but also ability to integrate new elements of his own on going personal experience in the story he tells.

In the case of the persons in our formation communities, Christ himself is the story to be told, and so the personal encounter of the candidate in formation with the person of Christ, lived and explicitly articulated in progressively stable patterns of behaviour, is the deep soil where his person will sink his roots, the depth dimension that will give unity to the plurality of theology and of culture that the candidate will encounter and will progressively integrate in his own life and ministry.

Guiding the person in living a profound experience of faith is far more important than providing him or her with ready answers for all situations or with fixed patterns of behaviour to defend him or herself from all possible threats. Personal identity and a sense of personal security, strategies of perseverance ... need to spring from within the person, not be put in place from the outside. Someone expressed that speaking of forming vertebrates, people able to stand thanks to the strength of the skeleton they have inside, and not snails who are soft inside and need to be defended by an outer shell.

From the cultural point of view, this balance between personal depth and identity within one's own culture on the one hand, and openness to other cultures on the other, could be expressed in terms of what used to be called 'the third culture',⁵ typical of the person who lives in a foreign country for a long period of time, and who never really manages to become

fully identified with the local culture, and who, when going back to his own native country will feel almost a foreigner there too. Yet he has a clear, deep personal identity wherever he is, and is able to function with competence and to interact as a mature adult with the people of both cultural contexts, often at a very profound level.

2. Multicultural formation, an opportunity, not a problem

Recently I had a friendly discussion with a professor who was thinking of changing the title of the course he taught at university: “Cultural Anthropology and the Problem of Inculturation”, was the new name he intended to adopt. I put it to him that the word ‘problem’ was misleading. In fact, for missionaries as for most theologians in the Church, inculturation is not a problem. It is the process that springs from the intrinsic need that the Christian faith has to be expressed adequately in every single culture that it comes into contact with. As we know well, such a process of re-expression of the Christian faith and life in terms of a new culture, transforms the culture itself and in turn enriches the ecclesial faith with new possibilities of theological expression, liturgical celebration, spiritual insight and also new forms of proclamation to others.

Inculturation is, therefore, not a problem, but an issue to be faced and understood anew every time that faith reaches a new culture. Let us not forget that inculturation needs to take place also whenever faith and culture begin to drift apart in traditionally Christian societies.

This passage of the Christian faith from one people to another, from one culture to another, is now taking place both in the areas that some people still call ‘mission countries’, and also in the West where the flows of migration bring our Christian communities into continuous contact with people from other cultures and religious traditions. The hypothetical alternative between forming our young members for mono-cultural or for multicultural apostolate seems to me an unrealistic one today. The question, therefore, is not ‘if’, but how to form them for the multicultural apostolate.

3. Multicultural formation, and personal assimilation of values

It is here that we, Formators, find the greatest challenge: How to foster the personal assimilation of the fundamental values of the vocation; how to lead the candidate in a formation journey taken as a personal responsibility, if the candidate is continuously being bombarded by the large variety of views, experiences, backgrounds, that is typical of a multicultural formation community?

a) Some dangers to be avoided:

- Minimum common denominator, for the sake of peace. The Formation House becomes a residence where each candidate or group of candidates live in a ‘cultural island’ so that conflict is avoided and the cultural identity of each one is preserved.

- The ‘melting pot’. Every little element of life is communitarian in a style that continuously mixes various elements of each of the cultures present so as to form a new culture out of the fusion of all those present. In fact everyone will be frustrated feeling that his/her culture is not respected and nobody will in fact really identify with the ‘new culture’ fashioned in this way.

- ‘In the image and likeness of the Formator’. Incapable of discerning the uniqueness of each of the candidates and the concrete ways God uses with each of them,⁶ the Formator simply presumes that he himself is a good enough model to be copied by all. Another version of the same is the fundamentalist way: identify (or imagine!) in the past a ‘golden age’ to be restored and reproduced in the present-day candidates. Yet another version is that of identifying in the present time one specific way (an ecclesial movement, a particular way of living the charism of the Institute ...) and presenting it as ‘the way’ to be reproduced in all its details in every new candidate.

All these have in common the lack of discernment of the unique elements of the journey that the candidate is realizing with God. The end result will be a life strongly marked by external observance but with little inner personal conviction.

b) Formative basic dynamics: education, formation, configuration

With a different degree of emphasis, these three basic dynamics need to be present in every stage of multicultural formation to ensure that the vocation journey progresses integrating personal identity and multicultural openness in a balanced way.

Education: Every challenge that comes from the outside, every new step that is proposed on the

journey needs to be solidly anchored in, and connected to, the previous personal journey of the candidate. There are no jumps in formation. The candidate assimilates and integrates only what he/she is able to see in continuity with what he/she already is and has already done. In the life of the candidate, there must be, therefore, an on-going dialogue between his own cultural and religious background and the new proposals received in the multicultural formation process.

Formation: A vocation does not grow spontaneously, it needs to be cultivated. In the name of the Church and of the particular ecclesial institution where he/she operates, the Formator has the responsibility to present a set of concrete values that are at the centre of a specific vocation. This set of values, priorities and concrete practices will eventually become a central part of the personal identity of the candidate.

The Formator cannot, therefore, be a passive spectator or a neutral presence, simply observing and judging from the outside the journey of the candidate.⁷ His is the responsibility and the art of presenting to the candidates the fundamental characteristics of a specific vocation in such a way that each of them can then make them his/her own. A necessary part of this proposal are the fundamental values of the charism of the Institute, or of Diocesan ordained ministry.

It is also up to the Formator to guide the candidate in the continuous effort of integrating the various components of the formation process into a personal synthesis: elements like the theology or other matters studied, the pastoral exposure, the experience of intercultural living in the community, the encounter-shock between the culture of origin and that of the country where the formation community lives, the various experiences of prayer, the encounter with other spiritual experience, the experiences of contact and service within new pastoral contexts.

Since the human person grows very slowly, this has to be a continuous effort both on the part of the candidate and on the part of the formator, an effort that cannot be reduced to a talk given now and then to the whole group. It is something that needs to mature slowly through a number of concrete formation strategies and regular personal encounters.

Some practical suggestions:

- Regular moments in which the candidate is helped – though personal encounters or group dynamics – to confront the academic theology he studies with his own personal life and with the variety of ecclesial experiences he encounters in the multicultural formation community.
- Frequent moments (group meetings) where the candidate meets colleagues from other ecclesial and cultural contexts for a frank exchange of views and experiences (better if the Formator is not present?).
- Daily times of silence dedicated to personal assimilation and deepening of contents, personal experiences ... in the context of the personal encounter with the Lord.
- Regular celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, set in such a way that allows for each of the participants to feel that their own ecclesial, spiritual and cultural backgrounds are present, while at the same time providing a strong experience of the Lord who builds communion in diversity.

Configuration: Eventually, the candidate him/herself needs to be empowered to become a creative protagonist of the charism he/she receives through the dynamics of formation. Here, the formator will become a facilitator that provides the right stimulation at the right time. For example, a time comes when the candidate will need to be faced with questions like: What kind of priest/consecrated person, missionary ... do *I want* to be? What kind of contribution do *I want* to give to the way our Institute lives our charism? What kind of contribution am *I called* to offer to the clergy of my diocese? Where am *I called* to challenge other confrères and sisters? To what field of specialization, or in which specific area of our ministry do *I want* to concentrate my personal energies?

The candidate is then helped to find his own personal configuration within the common vocation of all the diocesan priests, or within the common vocation of all the members of the institute. The Formator will act here like an elder brother/sister and a co-discerner.

A multicultural formation will mean that the Diocese or Institute where this candidate will serve can be tremendously enriched. We can think of the contribution that the Apostle Paul brought to the Church in Jerusalem – and to the whole Church! – from his multicultural formation in Antioch.⁸

Also here the candidate must not be left on his/her own. The Formator will become an elder brother/sister who encourages and offers constructive criticism, always 'from a respectful distance'....

3. A word on Formators

Apart from the qualifications required for Formators in any ecclesial context,⁹ are there any special characteristics needed by those who serve in multicultural formation houses?

- People who feel at home with the 'third culture': well identified with their culture of origin and with a good experience of living and serving in a different cultural context.
- Ideally, those willing to dedicate their life to this service since it takes a few years to become 'fluent' in the language and practice of multicultural formation.
- People with the capacity to work in an international *team* of formators. The international team is important for two main reasons: first because we form most of all with our own example of personal identity and profound openness to multiculturalism, second because the candidates will sometimes need to discuss some issues with someone well acquainted with their culture of origin.
- They must be good 'story-tellers': with the capacity to tell the Gospel in creative ways that integrate their own life experience.
- More than many years of experience, it is important to have Formators who are able to learn with their experience and with that of the others.

Notes

¹ Cf. P.G. Altabach, "Globalisation and the University: Myths and Realities in an Unequal World", *Seminarium* 3/4/ (2002) 817 ff.

² Cf. P.G. Altabach, "Globalisation and the University: Myths and Realities in an Unequal World", *Seminarium* 3/4/ (2002) 824, 833.

³ Cf. L.A.G. Tagle, "La missione in Asia: raccontare la storia di Gesù", *Omins Terra*, n. 87 (oct.-dec. 2006) 199-206.

⁴ Tagle, "La missione in Asia", 202.

⁵ Fr Thomas Green, S.J., in the introduction to his book *Opening to God* (AveMaria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 1977) refers to this sociological category of the 'third culture' and explains it with the example of the colonial administrator, but it can just as correctly be seen in the life experience of so many missionaries who take seriously the culture of the people they evangelize.

⁶ It may be of help to recall here what St John of the Cross indicates as the three most dangerous blind guides so that the soul can follow in its spiritual journey: oneself (he dedicates two paragraphs to that, §66-67), the devil (in three paragraphs, § 63-65), and the spiritual director to whom he dedicates thirty-three paragraphs (§ 30-62) (cf. St John of the Cross, *Fiamma viva d'amore* B, III, in *Opere*, ed. OCD, Roma Morena, 2001, p. 790 ff.). Reflecting on this teaching of St John of the Cross on the 'blind spiritual director', Fr Thomas Green three main causes: Lack of experience (the director isn't committed to his/her own spiritual journey), lack of sensitivity (for a number of possible reasons, the guide is not able to perceive the particular moment or phase that the directee is going through), possessiveness (out of a subtle kind of personal pride, the director does not give space for the personal freedom of the directee to own his (her own journey); the appropriate description of the good service of the spiritual director would be that of a 'co-discerner' (cf. Th. Green, *The Friend of the Bridegroom*, Ave Maria, Notre Dame 2000, 84-85).

⁷ Cf. R. Mion, "Il processo di mondializzazione: una nuova cultura con luci e ombre", *Seminarium* (April-June 2002), 229-257, here p. 256).

⁸ We could remember so many other examples throughout the history of the Church of people who greatly contributed to the progress of the Church precisely through their capacity to dialogue with other cultural traditions: St Irenaeus formed in the East who then served as bishop theologian in the West (Lyons); the amazing Christological synthesis of views from Africa (Alexandria), the East (Antioch) and the West (Rome) made by the Fathers of Chalcedon; Thomas Aquinas and his dialogue with the university culture of his time; Anselm of Canterbury (Aosta) and his dialogue with the feudal mentality, San Giustino de Jacobis and his dialogue with the religious tradition of Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, and so many of our own times who continue the same effort though many of them have to pay a high price for their courage!...

⁹ Some important indications for the Formators of diocesan seminarians, which are useful also for the Formators of all the consecrated can be found in the document *Direttive sulla preparazione degli educatori nei seminari*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1993.

Panel Responses

- M. Maddalena Lonardini, SMSM -

Nell'introduzione del testo di P. Domingues ho riscontrato questioni e riflessioni pertinenti che suscitano seri interrogativi su:

- Le ragioni per cui un'alta percentuale di giovani vocazioni lasciano nei primi anni di impegno pastorale, allorchè dovrebbero essere gli anni di grande entusiasmo e generosità.
- Il perchè dopo tanti anni di formazione multiculturale tanti giovani si rivelano "mal equipaggiati" per affrontare il contesto culturale in cui sono inviati.
- E poi la ormai vecchia 'questione' (ma che non ha ancora trovato risposte adeguate) se alcune tra le vocazioni provenienti dai paesi in via di sviluppo abbiano motivazioni vere per essere tali, o piuttosto vengano a cercare un *standard* di educazione e di vita più comodo?

A seguire, il P. Domingues si domanda: Come evitare questi scogli? E propone tre tentativi di risposta che potrebbero introdurci in un dibattito più vasto (li cito in breve):

1. Noi siamo internazionali e i nostri candidati devono impararlo fin dall'inizio.
2. Il pluralismo internazionale distrugge il nostro senso di un fine comune e una comune identità, quindi ritorniamo all'unità dei valori e delle priorità uniche, e ad una forte e comune disciplina.
3. Ogni candidato/a ritorni nel suo paese di origine, per un periodo, prima del "SI" definitivo.

Positivo e stimolante l'invito ...

... A non soffermarci sui problemi inerenti alla formazione multiculturale, ma a chiederci piuttosto:

- Qual è il ministero o i ministeri di cui la Chiesa ha bisogno oggi?
- E come prepararvi adeguatamente le giovani vocazioni?

Mi pare ovvio che dobbiamo tener presenti questi obiettivi, quando parliamo di formazione multiculturale, nel nostro contesto di "globalizzazione" (anch'esso altrettanto ovvio).

Pertanto, pur invitandoci a non soffermarci sui problemi della formazione multiculturale, Lei Padre, ne sottolinea alcuni aspetti che ci coinvolgono fortemente:

- Ø La lingua: Quando la formazione non è fatta nella lingua madre del formando/a;
 - Ø L'assimilazione del programma: A che livello? E come?;
 - Ø Una troppo vasta interculturalità: Quale scambio con 20 culture diverse?;
 - Ø La relazione tra il formando/a e il formatore/trice, quando le culture sono troppo diverse tra di loro (*Portoghese e cinese*);
 - Ø Possibilità o no di una "cultura comune";
 - Ø L'imposizione di una cultura, che porti ad una certa repressione di quella originaria, preparerà il candidato/a rapportarsi correttamente ad altre culture?;
- (Sono grandi sfide che dovremmo tentare di affrontare in questo contesto, tutti insieme).*

Interessante anche la riflessione sulla formazione sacerdotale che, se intesa in senso verticale, impedisce un'apertura ed una flessibilità nelle celebrazioni eucaristiche e liturgiche. Basti pensare alle diverse espressioni nelle Chiese locali, all'Inculturazione del Messaggio/*kerigma*....

Se aiutiamo il candidato/a a sentirsi a suo agio in diverse forme liturgiche, sarà probabile che diventi *'narratore/trice di Dio'*, in diversi contesti.

Nel paragrafo *"identità e apertura"* condivido pienamente il concetto di dover guidare le persone —

le vocazioni — a sperimentare esse stesse una profonda esperienza di fede, a radicarsi in Cristo; è stato fortemente sottolineato anche ieri. Formare dei ‘vertebrati’ con una identità personale.

Altra provocazione per il formatore/trice: Come verificare una matura identità nel candidato/ta quando il formatore/trice non ne conosce affatto la cultura?....

Circa la “*terza cultura*”, nella mia esperienza, ho cercato di “inculcare” nelle novizie questo concetto: noi missionari, in qualsiasi paese andiamo, dobbiamo sentirlo come nostra patria, ma nel contempo, quando ritorniamo nel nostro paese dobbiamo accettare di sentirci “*spaesati*”. Di fatto è così: perdiamo un pò della nostra cultura.

Interessanti le tre dinamiche di base nella formazione.

L’educazione alla necessità di una continuità con ciò che il candidato/a è, ed ha già sperimentato. Solo così può assimilare e integrare fra loro le varie fasi.

La formazione alla presentazione di valori tangibili del carisma da parte del formatore, valori che stimolino l’iniziativa del formando/a. E poi la verifica attraverso l’accompagnamento personale e sistematico, e con riunioni di comunità.

La configurazione a lanciare giuste sfide al formando/a nei tempi giusti. Portarlo/a a chiedersi: A chi voglio configurarmi? Quale contributo posso e voglio dare al mio istituto? Alla Chiesa? Ecc....

Per l’integrazione di questi elementi ho trovato molto utile aiutare le novizie a “*rileggere*” le proprie scelte, gli atti che compivano, a metterne allo scoperto, esse stesse, le motivazioni.

Sulle caratteristiche necessarie al formatore/trice, non sono completamente d’accordo sul fatto che debbano dedicare *la loro vita* a questo servizio. Nessuno è inesauribile e il susseguirsi vertiginoso del tempo e degli eventi logora.... Riflettendo sulle esigenze della formazione oggi, in un contesto interculturale, e sperimentando i limiti della nostra umanità, mi viene alla mente un libro di André Louf, uno dei grandi formatori del nostro tempo “*La grâce peut davantage*”. Lui stesso diceva: di fronte a tante sfide, teniamo presente che....

Riprendo il punto iniziale ... gli abbandoni e le loro cause: questione spinosa. Vorrei riprendere alcuni spunti dagli atti del “*66° Conventus Semestralis dell’USG*” il cui tema è appunto “Fedeltà e abbandoni”.

Tra le cause principali il P. Luis Oviedo (OFM), specialista della sociologia religiosa, individua:

Problemi affettivi	= 43%	questi due per me vanno assieme
	= 21,3%	
Problemi psicologici	= 21%	(Indagine compiuta nel 2004, all’Antoniano, Roma)
Insoddisfazione e lassitudine	= 28,6%	

Tutti i sociologici sono d’accordo, oggi, nel dire che la maturità psico-affettiva si è protratta nel tempo e questo, ritengo, tanto al Nord quanto al Sud. La fedeltà, in generale, non è più vista come un valore, ha lasciato il posto alla temporalità: “finché mi piace o mi fa comodo”.... E le vocazioni provengono da questo contesto....

Credo che dovremmo pure interrogarci sul tipo di formazione che diamo ai giovani, negli ambiti del nostro apostolato! E chiederci anche: Come possiamo aiutare le giovani vocazioni ad andare contro-corrente?

- Probha Mary Karmokar, RNDM -

· I believe that interculturalism as described by Sister is a central challenge for religious life and mission. She is right to differentiate it from internationality or simply multiculturalism. They are not the same thing. Internationality is a fact: in our congregations we have people who are citizens of many different nations, different cultures. But interculturalism – to truly respect, learn from, value and embrace the fact that we are from different cultures – is a challenge that is at the heart of the Gospel. Jesus constantly stretched beyond the expectations and even legalities of his own Jewish culture to embrace the stranger, the other, the different one with love. Membership in his family stretched beyond ties of blood to all who believe and are in search of goodness. Learning to share one's own culture (involving self-awareness) AND listening with respect to others when they share theirs is, for me, the beginning of intercultural community, which is a true sign of God's Kingdom.

· My other main experience with deepening interculturalism was in my work in formation: Aspirants, Postulants and Novices in two different countries – Bangladesh and East Africa (Kenya). There were only 5-6 cultural groups. But it was a struggle. I keenly experienced what Sister refers to as “persons of minority cultural groups accusing the majority groups of oppression and domination” and “the Former being accused of being too touchy”. Members of one ethnic group tended to stick together, often speaking their own language which excluded others. I also experienced some who would use “culture” as an excuse for unacceptable behaviour. I was confused. My questions were, “am I hurting their values, their cultures?”. We worked with this issue the best we could, mostly by asking for the honest sharing and respectful listening referred to above. We are all burdened by our ethno-centrism; we all tend to think that our way is best, even superior. How do we promote pride in one's own culture, its values and ways, and at the same time encourage the absolute Gospel imperative of learning from those who are different, respecting the other, knowing that my view, my cultural way, is only a partial, incomplete perspective on truth, beauty and love? We neither want to lose who we are, the values that come from our own upbringing and soil, nor do we want to close ourselves to the perspective that comes from those who are of a different culture.

· I believe international religious communities are called to model for our world the possibility and beauty of true intercultural love and unity. Community is a unity in which diversity is safe – in which diversity is shared – in which diversity is embraced for the good of others. In many parts of the world there is a fear of the “other” and a pessimism about our human ability to overcome differences of background, religion, “blood” and form a truly viable community of peoples that lives in peace. We need to show that this is possible, and that it is all important for our world's survival. I lived in a community where we were from Kenya (three different tribes), Ireland, India, Latin America and Bangladesh. The remarks we would often hear, “How are they able to live together? Do you fight among yourselves?”. I must say that it is possible to live in peaceful harmony even though we are from many ethnic groups.

· Both Fr Fernando and Sr Chinyeaka spoke about ‘third culture’. For me, though attention to culture and the richness of diversity is important in intercultural communities, attention to the Gospel as what unites us is even more important. While respectful of every culture, we must realize that NO our culture is our true home – home is with God, Jesus who is the Way, and that the Gospel is our point of reference in following the Way. I really think this needs to be stressed so that we don't turn culture – within which God works for sure – into an idol. Our way is Jesus and the Gospel is our guide. This is why I certainly agree with Sister when she says that what is essential for each of us as religious and for those in formation is an openness to Conversion, a conversion that doesn't turn culture into an idol, but neither does it ignore that God works in every culture and that I will be enriched if I open myself to that discovery. I believe that Sister is right in saying that a congregation must make a conscious, intentional decision to be intercultural (not just international) in life and mission, and then be willing to ask the hard questions and make the sacrifices required to bring about the conversion required to make this happen.

· Sister says that “every congregation has a dominant culture, which derives from the Founders' culture ...”. Actually, since many of our congregations are diminishing in Europe (which was the

culture of our origin), the dominant culture now is often NOT the Founder's culture, but another one in which the congregation has grown as a result of mission and now is in control of both "the most money" and the "greatest facility with articulation and the language of administration". I believe these two factors – money control and language – are huge in a congregation that wishes to be intercultural. They must be faced with honesty and courage.

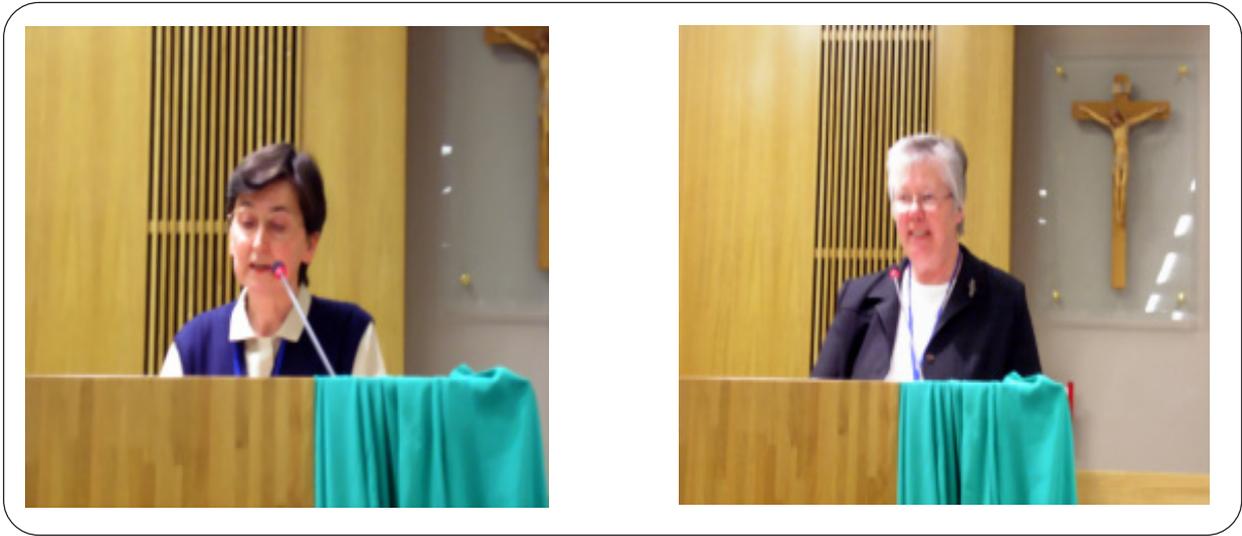
- I liked best his image from Bishop Tagle (of the Philippines) on the intercultural Formator/Minister as "story teller", especially his insight that the "best narrators are those whose whole life has become part of the story of Jesus' presence and action in the world today". This emphasis on the personal encounter between Jesus and the whole person of the candidate as the heart of formation is, for me, beautiful, true and absolutely essential in formation discernment. Being the person responsible for Initial Formation in our Congregation, I had the opportunity of meeting all our 257 members in initial formation. One of my questions to them was, "What attracted you to our congregation?". And 90 per cent of the responses were that they admired the life and mission of the Sisters. One particular young sister told me, "I saw Sr Sneha so happy. Early in the morning she went to School to teach, she cleaned the lice from a child's head, she washed the clothes of the little orphans, scrubbed the drains with the girls, she played with the children. And she did them so a smile on her face".

- Fr Fernando points to the following quality as most essential for ministers today: "openness to diversity and plurality" while avoiding superficiality and wishy-washiness. This might be linked to the humility I spoke of above. Formation's challenge (in this regard), he says, is: "how to cultivate this theological and cultural openness in our candidates while avoiding that superficiality which will make the person too vulnerable to resist the unavoidable difficulties of ministry...". I think I agree that this is a central challenge – to stand on our own two feet, secure in who we are, and to have heart and mind open to others who are different ... (what he later calls the integration of personal identity and multicultural openness).

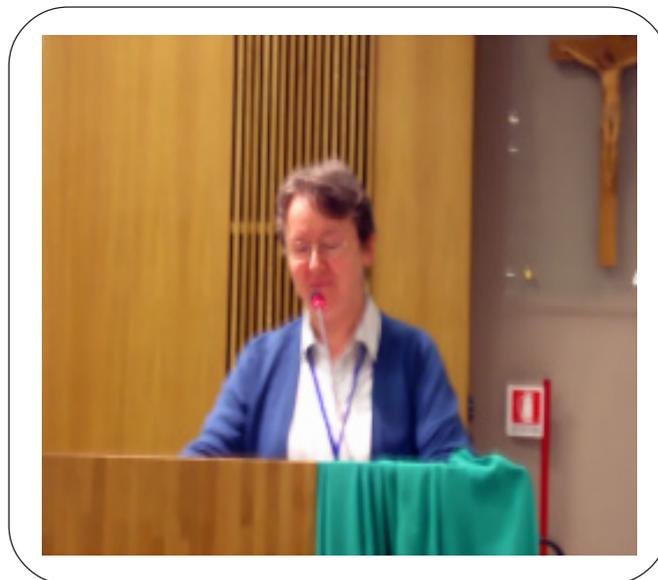
- Both Sr Chinyeaka and Fr Fernando also emphasized that Formators need to have the gift of working with a team. And the witness of the Formator is essential in working in formation. I would also emphasize that not only the Formator but the formation team needs to bear witness to who they are accompanying. The questions need to be asked: 'Who the team members are? Are they able to work as a team, particularly in a multicultural community?'. We need to be very careful in this regard otherwise we can do more damage to our formers.

- Humility is, I think, a key virtue in the effort to live interculturally – a strong and true humility, not a false, self-effacement. Humility enables the recognition of the subtle forms of racism that reside in all of us, the admission of our mistakes and insensitivities as we that enter the tasks of honest intercultural life and mission. Humility does not suppress or repress the issues that arise in the mind and heart that might cause some conflict; humility enters into those issues, shares them with listening respectful, the desire to learn from the other, and an honest sharing of feelings. It is a virtue of the strong, not of the weak; it is a virtue of those whose identity is not threatened by differences.

- We have heard many times that the essential requirement of intercultural living is the "Openness" of mind and heart. Fr. Fernando said, "the question that concerns us here ... not theology or culture but the fundamental attitude of openness to diversity and plurality.... And for me, this is the key to all the questions or struggles we have in an intercultural community. The Christian community of my village has a tradition. Each year during Lent they organize an ecumenical prayer service: 500-600 Christians from the surrounding villages participate in this prayer service. The ministers from different churches are invited to deliver speeches for reflections. 28th March was the day for this prayer this year. A representative from the village went to invite our Parish Priest (Catholic). The first question he asked, "Will you have the Eucharistic celebration?". The answer was "no". And the Priest said, "If you are not having Mass, I am not coming for the prayer". "Well, we will have to do without you". Was the response from the representative. Not long after Easter, the Bishop transferred this young native Priest and replaced him by an older non native Priest. So what does this say to us?



Seminar's Participants are talking to the Assembly





Sr Marie-Christine Bérenger, FMM, on the right.
She is one of the Seminar's speaker

Experience of Intercultural Spirituality

Préparation à la Mission “ad Gentes” pendant la Formation Permanente Chez les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie

- Marie-Christine Bérenger, FMM -

Permettez-moi de me présenter rapidement. Je m'appelle Marie-Christine Bérenger.

J'appartiens à la famille franciscaine missionnaire de Marie de quelques 7,192 soeurs, de 78 nationalités, envoyées en mission dans 79 pays (dernières statistiques de décembre 2006).

Ces précisions vous indiquent déjà la spiritualité et un certain style de vie: simple, fraternel, joyeux et avant tout “missionnaire !”.

J'ai eu le privilège de vivre une assez longue et fort belle expérience “*ad extra*” ou “*ad gentes*” dont 21 ans à Madagascar, d'abord comme infirmière, puis comme accompagnatrice des jeunes religieuses en assurant aussi leur préparation immédiate aux vœux perpétuels (six mois chaque année).

J'ai été rappelée en France en 2003, puis à Grottaferrata en 2006. Lorsque ma Supérieure Générale m'a demandé de venir vous partager mon expérience sur le thème sus-cité, j'ai tout de suite pensé : “Qu'ai-je donc à dire là-dessus? Nous disions que nous nous formions dans la vie et par la vie! et c'est vrai. Simplement j'ai baigné, j'ai nagé ... c'est à dire que j'ai vécu quotidiennement dans ce multiculturalisme sans même m'en apercevoir !”.

Oui, grâce à notre fondatrice, Mère Marie de la Passion ou Hélène de Chappotin, nous vivons en communautés ou fraternités interculturelles, depuis les origines – chaque fois que possible – en vue de la Mission Universelle.

En prenant le temps de relire mon histoire missionnaire, je me suis rendue compte et je me suis émerveillée de toute la formation reçue: que ce soit pour l'étude de la langue ou sous forme de sessions, de Week-ends, de conférences, de films, de lectures ou de revues choisies ... ou encore mieux au cours de rencontres formatrices et des partages au niveau général, continental, provincial ou local.

Notre Chapitre Général de 1984 a pris comme une de ses priorités la Formation Permanente afin que celle-ci s'intensifie encore plus dans les différentes provinces de l'Institut. Selon mon expérience ce fut vrai pour les provinces de Madagascar, puis de France, où pendant 20 ans environ j'ai eu la chance de faire partie d'une équipe de réflexion et de réalisation.

Je remercie mon Institut qui m'a beaucoup donné ainsi que toutes les personnes rencontrées – appartenant à différentes cultures ou à différentes religions- avec lesquelles j'ai pu partager “le pain et le sel” tout au long de ma vie missionnaire !”.

A mon avis, ce qui rend possible “**le miracle quotidien**” de la rencontre et du vécu interculturel, peut se diviser en trois points :

- 1) les étapes importantes à parcourir pour arriver à la rencontre interculturelle,
- 2) les conditions pour un vivre ensemble interculturel,
- 3) des moyens concrets de formation permanente à partir d'une expérience : – la mienne!

I. Les étapes à parcourir pour arriver à la rencontre interculturelle

Dans un premier temps, la rencontre avec une autre culture a un aspect attractif: – c’est l’attraction de la nouveauté, de l’inconnu, de l’aventure, de “l’autre” différent de moi. Il y a d’abord :

a) *Le choc culturel :*

Je débarque sur “une autre planète” c’est évident avec ses richesses et ses limites. Et, j’arrive là avec ma propre culture, mon éducation, ma manière de vivre, celle d’exprimer ma foi ... et surtout avec mon savoir, mes idées, mes certitudes, mon impatience ... et je prends conscience des nouvelles valeurs qui me sont offertes, proposées, mais aussi des différences : ainsi je suis renvoyée à mes propres limites...

b) *L’acceptation “de ces milliers de kilomètres” qui séparent les cultures :*

Les cultures sont si diverses et le plus difficile, peut-être, est d’accepter ces diversités.

Une bonne dose d’humour, la reconnaissance des différences et de l’originalité (dans le bon sens du mot) aident à dépasser les représentations, les appréhensions, les peurs, et à vivre les richesses en complémentarité.

Il y a tout un long travail de conversion que je dois entreprendre si je veux m’intégrer vraiment et arriver un jour à assumer cette autre culture que la mienne.

c) *Le “vivre ensemble” au quotidien :*

C’est l’acceptation de la vie communautaire et fraternelle dans deux univers culturels (voir plus de 2, lorsqu’une fraternité est composée de cinq sœurs et que ces cinq sœurs sont de nationalités différentes !) où chacune s’enrichit des valeurs de l’autre.

C’est souvent la joie, le bonheur, c’est ce que j’appelle le **“miracle” de la rencontre**. Mais c’est aussi un défi quotidien avec ses souffrances, ses renoncements, ses pardons offerts et reçus ... en vue d’un témoignage “celui d’un monde réconcilié”.

Pour nous FMM, vivant ainsi en communautés interculturelles, il est essentiel de cultiver notre esprit de famille basé sur l’Evangile. Là aussi, il s’agit d’entrer dans une nouvelle culture, celle où le Seigneur appelle chacune à le suivre de plus près

Ex: Je me souviens, d’un groupe de la télévision japonaise, faisant un reportage sur notre maternité de l’Ave Maria, à Antsirabe. Chacun allait de l’une à l’autre et demandait : – “mais comment faites-vous pour vivre ensemble? si différentes et en plus des femmes ! (il y avait cinq nationalités) ; est-ce qu’il vous arrive de vous disputer? Et combien étaient-ils surpris, lorsque nous leur répondions: “nous essayons de nous pardonner, de nous réconcilier, le soir et chaque fois nous redonnons toute notre confiance à l’autre”.

d) *L’émerveillement :*

Oui, émerveillement devant tout ce que l’autre m’apporte d’original, de nouveau, de beau... On a envie d’apprendre sa langue, de comprendre sa manière de vivre, ses centres d’intérêts, ses joies, ses soucis, ses préoccupations, ses croyances... On rêve de faire partie le plus vite possible de ce nouveau monde! Tout en sachant qu’on n’en fera jamais vraiment partie! Donc la réalité est là qui vous précipite d’un seul coup dans une extrême pauvreté – comme un bébé j’ai tout à réapprendre: la langue, la manière de se saluer, de se parler, de manger, de me situer dans la famille, de travailler, de prier ... afin de pouvoir vivre ensemble.

II. Les conditions pour “un vivre ensemble interculturel” :

Depuis son entrée dans l’Institut chacune sait qu’elle peut être envoyée “*ad extra*” tout comme “*ad intra*”. Je pense qu’aujourd’hui tout le monde est d’accord pour dire : – que **la mission commence “là, dans ma maison, dans ma rue” et qu’elle va “jusqu’au bout du monde”!**, et que cette formation à la mission est si importante qu’elle doit être **permanente**, car **nous n’aurons jamais fini de nous convertir** pour mieux servir, mieux nous donner, bref pour aimer l’autre comme Jésus lui-même l’a aimé, quelque soit son origine ou sa religion.

J’aimerai insister sur cet approfondissement incessant de quelques attitudes intérieures qui doivent nous habiter, que nous avons sans cesse à cultiver, à faire grandir, et qui nous permettent d’être “des agents” de la mission. Le premier “protagoniste” étant évidemment “l’Esprit-Saint !”.

- **L'accueil :**

Dans la langue malgache, le mot "étranger" n'existe pas. On parle de "*vahiny*" = "l'hôte", celui qui est de passage".

Avec mes sœurs j'ai tant appris sur l'esprit de famille, sur le partage ou sur la solidarité! Un proverbe malgache dit: "*S'aïmer jusqu'à partager une sauterelle!*". J'avais sans cesse à redécouvrir ce qui peut-être s'efface trop rapidement dans nos sociétés si individualistes !

Ex : Pour la préparation immédiate aux vœux perpétuels, la Province de Madagascar a souvent accueilli des jeunes religieuses fmm, venant d'Afrique, comme le Sénégal, le Burkéna-Faso, les deux Congo, l'Angola, les îles Maurice et la Réunion. Dès leur arrivée nous leur donnions l'opportunité de se connaître entre elles, au cours d'un voyage en visitant quelques unes de nos fraternités. Tout de suite après, une soeur aînée malgache leur donnait une session de huit jours sur les us et coutumes, puisque ces jeunes allaient avoir au moins six mois à vivre ensemble! Cette manière d'accueillir a toujours été appréciée par chacune.

- **Le dialogue :**

L'écoute mutuelle suppose respect, discrétion et empathie.

Il s'agit de s'émerveiller ensemble de tout ce qu'il y a de beau, de vrai, de bon, de vie, dans une culture mais aussi au fur et à mesure, de devenir capables, à l'aide précisément de l'autre, de voir, reconnaître et admettre les limites, les incohérences, les laideurs qui sont inhérentes à toute culture.

Il s'agit de rejoindre l'autre dans son univers de pensée et de découvrir, de reconnaître humblement tous les éléments de vérité et de charité qui habitent une autre culture. C'est ensemble que nous cherchons. Cela ne veut pas dire que nous nions notre propre identité culturelle, car nous savons bien qu'on ne peut dialoguer qu'entre personnes qui ont une identité claire et qui osent s'affirmer, sans pourtant jamais s'imposer.

Il est bon d'acquiescer suffisamment de doigté pour savoir jusqu'où aller dans les questionnements et s'arrêter pour éviter la curiosité et arriver à un partage vrai et fraternel.

Beaucoup de "non-dits" (positifs ou négatifs) se découvrent tout naturellement, et s'expriment simplement dans la collaboration, le travail quotidien, la vie de chaque jour, les rapports francs, joyeux et fraternels et dans l'observation silencieuse qui est aussi écoute. Tout cela fait partie du dialogue.

Ex: Lorsque je suis arrivée à Madagascar en 1980, le pays avait fait sa révolution en 1976 et il vivait sous un régime "marxiste-léniniste, pur et dur". Les soeurs avaient chacune son "Boky mena" = son Livre Rouge, comme celui de Mao-tse-Toung et il n'était pas prudent du tout, même en communauté, d'aborder un sujet politique ou économique car "française" je représentais l'ancienne puissance coloniale! Mais si peu à peu on arrive à parler de tout cela, c'est qu'il y a eu de part et d'autre beaucoup de Foi, patience, amour fraternel, confiance et humour.

- **Le respect de l'autre :**

J'ai à respecter ma sœur qui appartient à une autre culture, car bien souvent elle est venue au christianisme par le biais d'une autre croyance. Je dois m'intéresser, chercher à connaître cette ancienne religion.

Ex: "Le culte des Ancêtres" à Madagascar, avec ces cérémonies des "jamadibana" = retournement des morts, qui à la fois peuvent être des occasions formidables de retrouvailles familiales, de pardon ... et qui en même temps sont souvent des occasions d'endettement (à cause des frais engagés pour ces grandioses cérémonies de deux ou trois jours : (avec repas, boissons, fanfares, groupe folklorique ...).

Respecter la culture de ma soeur, respecter sa foi qui est marquée par cette culture, m'évitera de faire plein de gaffes, comme par exemple: entrer dans le tombeau avec mes sandales au lieu d'y entrer pieds-nus; ou sortir du tombeau en me présentant de face alors que je dois sortir à reculons; ou montrer quelqu'un du doigt (avec l'index) alors que la main entière doit rester fermée et tournée vers la terre; ou marcher sur l'ombre de la personne qui est à côté de moi, car l'ombre est son "ambiroa" = son double !

Face à tout cela je suis tentée de porter un jugement mais finalement en agissant ainsi je m'écarte du chemin d'inculturation de l'Évangile que nous voulons parcourir ensemble.

- Enfin, comment ne pas mentionner les **traits franciscains de : simplicité, de minorité et de disponibilité** qui sont une aide précieuse si on les met en oeuvre, pour l'accueil, le dialogue, et le respect de l'autre.

III. Quelques moyens concrets de formation à partir d'une expérience

Cette formation permanente pour moi, s'est toujours faite avec le plus grand nombre possible de sœurs de la Province, que ce soit par tranches d'âge, ou par centres d'intérêts, ou par secteurs d'engagements...

➤ **1. Apprendre la langue qui véhicule les valeurs de la culture :**

Ex: J'ai eu le privilège d'aller pendant six mois, dans un monastère de Bénédictines à Ambositra, doté de moyens audio-visuels et de répétiteurs et où une soeur bénédictine formait les futurs missionnaires et les coopérateurs qui le souhaitaient. En plus du cours nous avons une bibliothèque fort bien achalandée et souvent des journées d'information avec des experts sur les us et coutumes, sur la famille, sur la situation politique, économique, sociale et religieuse du pays. Nous participions aussi à des fêtes comme une naissance; une première coupe de cheveux et le don du nom; une circoncision; des fiançailles; un mariage; un enterrement; un retournement des morts. Dès le début, ma "besace franciscaine" fut bien remplie afin de "marcher en humanité" et "pèleriner" sur les routes de ma nouvelle mission. Cela ne m'a pas empêchée, surtout la première année, de me sentir pauvre à l'extrême, voir même inutile....

➤ **2. Se connaître soi-même :**

- ❖ par des sessions de formation humaine,
- ❖ par des sessions sur la personnalité,
- ❖ par des sessions sur la culture du pays, par exemple: – sur l'anthropologie malgache, avec la valeur du "fihavanana", ce très beau concept philosophique où chacun désire être et rester en harmonie, en paix: avec lui-même, avec sa famille (lien du sang), avec son clan, avec la nature et avec Dieu.

❖ Si chaque sœur de la fraternité est bien d'accord, nous pouvons faire appel à "un coach" (personne extérieure à la fraternité, spécialiste en "relations humaines") cela aide beaucoup pour travailler sur soi.

➤ **3. Connaître le pays**

○ la situation politique :

Afin de s'y intéresser, nous avons ouvert "notre 3^e table" = celle du repas et des partages, (après celles: de la Parole et de l'Eucharistie !) à des politiciens, des experts, des familles, des pauvres, des prêtres engagés comme les S.J. avec "foi et développement"....

Mais attention "au politique" car on se laisse facilement prendre par les revendications que l'on trouve justes, par l'atmosphère enthousiaste des 'meetings'....

Ex. "En 1992, j'ai participé à un "siting" pendant 8 jours, sur la place du 13 Mai à Tananarive, pour faire partir un président-dictateur. Mais nos manifestations pacifiques selon la NVA du Dr Hildegard Goss-Mayr – avec des cantiques, des discours, des prières ... (comme aux Philippines où elles avaient pu faire partir l'ex. Président Marcos) se sont terminées par un bain de sang. Toutes les soeurs étaient dans la rue ... et nous avons un peu trop oublié, je crois, "d'user nos genoux" devant le Saint-Sacrement Exposé, plutôt que de participer au "siting !".

○ la situation économique :

Le monde du travail, celui de la famille, de l'éducation, de la santé...demande un engagement qui se diversifie selon les défis rencontrés comme : "Justice et Paix" ; la NVA (Non Violence Active) ; JPIC (Justice, Paix, Intégrité de la Création) ; CNOE (Comité National d'Observation des Elections) ; ACAT ; Franciscan International.

○ la situation religieuse :

Ce qui m'a beaucoup aidé fut :

- Notre participation à la vie Diocésaine et Nationale de l'Eglise Catholique, ou à l'union œcuménique des Eglises Chrétiennes de Madagascar.

- Une étude sur les Sectes faite avec le grand séminaire et l'université catholique.

➤ **4. Approfondir notre Vie Consacrée Missionnaire, au sein d'une autre culture**

▪ **Au moyen de revues, de livres ou d'abonnements**, en fonction de nos besoins et afin d'apporter de meilleures réponses aux différents appels, après discernement.

Avoir toujours dans une main "la Bible" et dans l'autre "le Journal" nous recommandait le Père Jacques Loew que j'ai eu comme professeur, à l'École de la Foi de Fribourg en Suisse, en 1973 ; je ne l'ai jamais oublié même quand il faisait 40° et plus, à l'ombre !

▪ **Au moyen de week-ends trimestriels et de sessions annuelles, en Institut ou en intercongrégations**, organisés par la Commission-formation de l'Union des Supérieures Majeures.

Chaque fois nos propres sessions FMM ont été ouvertes aux autres congrégations qui étaient moins nombreuses et plus démunies en ressources humaines pour les organiser ou les faire.

➤ **Approfondir sa propre Spiritualité en lien avec les valeurs culturelles :**

+ La formation FMM

Les valeurs malgaches vécues par nos Sœurs Clarisses, Capucines et cinq autres congrégations franciscaines féminines et par nos frères franciscains et capucins, se sont exprimées dans nos rencontres et célébrations et nous ont beaucoup aidées à mieux comprendre et intégrer la culture.

Ex : Une année pendant les grandes vacances nous avons demandé aux jeunes religieuses de composer un "hira-gasy" pour exprimer notre Charisme FMM (Le "hira-gasy" est un chant mimé dont le but est de donner un enseignement, une morale ...). Le résultat fut heureux et compréhensible pour tous car aujourd'hui encore cette petite présentation théâtrale se donne facilement pour les invités de nos cérémonies de vœux perpétuels.

Nous avons aussi nos propres sources d'information :

Chaque Province reçoit tous les deux mois, des articles venus de diverses Provinces de l'Institut, par le biais d'une revue appelée "Espace-Rencontre". En plus, certaines Provinces communiquent aux autres provinces leur propre bulletin (mensuel ou trimestriel), qui narrent des expériences, des situations de toutes sortes, fort intéressantes, venant des quatre coins du monde. Cela est très enrichissant à condition de les exploiter en en découvrant les valeurs culturelles.

+ Les recyclages ou l'année sabbatique : proposés en fonction des aspirations des soeurs et des besoins de la Province ou de l'Institut.

Ex: Grâce à une soeur MIC (Missionnaires de l'Immaculée Conception), dont le frère était recteur de l'Université de Sherbrooke au Canada, j'ai eu l'opportunité de faire des études de théologie, avec tout un groupe de soeurs de différentes cultures et congrégations. Les professeurs canadiens ont été surpris de voir combien un cours pensé pour la société québécoise a pu ainsi nous aider à réfléchir et à actualiser nos découvertes dans notre propre contexte.

Ex concernant ce cours audio-visuel : Lorsque nous avons étudié les Sacrements de l'Eglise, nous partageons dans nos travaux écrits tout le travail d'inculturation qui se fait dans l'Ile. – Que de merveilleuses nuits de Pâque ai-je passé où 100, 150, hommes, femmes, enfants reçoivent l'eau vive! et entendent la voix de l'Esprit...Voix devenue irrésistible pour eux !

+ Enfin, comment ne pas mentionner l'importance de la prière liturgique, lors des célébrations et des fêtes! (nationales ou personnelles)

Notre Liturgie est "interculturée" c'est-à-dire typée avec chants en plusieurs langues, danses, symboles, tam-tam africain, "arati indien"... correspondant aux cultures.

Par exemple, à Madagascar, dans les cérémonies de profession religieuse, nous essayons de souligner et de mettre en valeur les aspects de la culture qui sont évangéliques et qui ont une signification profonde pour la population. Ainsi la bénédiction des parents est indispensable, les cadeaux sont simples, significatifs et utiles (comme natte en raphia pour prier, pour manger, pour dormir).

Ma conclusion : sera très brève, et se résumera en trois phrases :

1. Outre l'amour et la foi, "le miracle de la vie interculturelle" suppose conversion personnelle, ouverture et interconnaissance sérieuse et profonde ;
2. Les attitudes intérieures dont j'ai parlé (accueil, dialogue, respect de l'autre, simplicité, minorité et disponibilité) sont à cultiver sans cesse ;
3. La Formation Permanente est pour toutes et si possible en inter-congrégations.

Comme disent les malgaches: "Un arbre ne fait pas la forêt !".

Multicultural Formation for the Franciscan Missionaries

- Pero Vrebac, OFM -

I would like to share with you my experience of the “International Missionary Preparation Program” in Brussels, Belgium. It deals with an immediate preparation for the mission *ad gentes*. The four Franciscan branches of our Order are collaborating in this Programme: the Order of Friars Minor (O.F.M.), the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (O.F.M. Conv.), the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (O.F.M. Cap.) and the Third Order Regular of St. Francis (T.O.R.).¹

I will first present the origin of the Programme (1), then the Formation Programme (2), and, at the end, some benefits (3) and challenges (4).

1. The Origin of the Programme

In 1982, for the occasion of the Eighth Centenary of the birth of St Francis of Assisi (1182-1982), the Order of Friars Minor² invited the Brothers from all parts of the world to go to Africa in order to implant our charism, our gift of Franciscan Spirituality, in the African Church. Responding to that initiative, the first 29 friars volunteered and left for Africa early in 1983, after a month of preparation in Rome. Six years later, in 1988, the Order of Friars Minor evaluated *the Africa Project* and decided to embrace within it all the friars and entities that operate or will operate in Africa.³

During the last two decades, the Lord has blessed us with local vocations and new African Provinces have been started in South, Central, Eastern and Western Africa. Similar growth happened in Asia and Latin America as well. Because of international and intercultural dynamics, we have been facing many challenges. One of these has been the instability of our personnel. The friars continued going to the new continents without any missionary preparation. Most of them left after a certain time, for various reasons (e.g. health, age, culture shock, language, etc.). Some of them experienced frustration because they were more attached to their own projects rather than those of the Order.

In order to prepare missionary friars better, with the same spirit and vision, our former General Minister Bro. Giacomo Bini created an international fraternity in Brussels during the Jubilee Year of 2000, appointing friars experienced in mission and formation as mentors. The aim of this fraternity was to renew missionary formation that would privilege inculturation, fraternal team work, support for international missionary projects and provide a place for missionary sabbatical renewal. The specific goals of the Programme are: to help the missionaries to live international and intercultural fraternity, to discern the missionary motivation and to offer them the Franciscan vision of the mission today.

After having prepared three missionary groups of our Order, we began to collaborate with the Conventual, the Capuchin and the TOR friars in 2005.

2. A Formation Programme

Our Programme consists of a three month period which includes reflective sessions, formative experiences, cultural interaction, fraternal accompaniment and vocational discernment.⁴ We have two programmes each year, one in French, the other in English. Before being accepted into the Programme, the young missionaries are given a year to study one of these languages. After finishing their language course, when it is possible, they are sent for a few months to the country where they are going to serve as missionaries for their first missionary experience. This missionary experience is essential for their realistic missionary vocation

discernment as well as for their workshops on the culture shock.

After this experience, they come to Brussels with what we consider are the essential requirements for multicultural formation. At the very beginning, they are welcomed and accommodated by a hosting international and inter-congregational fraternity composed of seven⁵ friars from four continents. They are bilingual, integrated in the local Church, who live out the values of hospitality with Franciscan simplicity and joy. Three of them are formation coordinators from three Orders who accompany the missionaries and carry out the Programme. They are helped by four other friars from the fraternity, by other facilitators from various formation centres worldwide: Franciscan brothers and sisters, lay people, and other experts.

When an international group of missionaries lives in a multicultural fraternity, all daily activities become a practical multicultural training. Through sharing prayer, studies, meals, services and recreation the missionaries are formed naturally in multiculturality. In order to facilitate intercultural dialogue, there is a session with reflection on conflict management within an international fraternity. Sharing through a weekly workshop on culture shock calms down inner tensions, fosters intercultural exchange and stimulates cultural interaction. The encounters with people from different cultures and religions open cultural and spiritual comfort zones which broaden the horizons of mind and spirit.

The accompaniment, the life of prayer and fraternal life give a concrete experience of what it means *to be a friar minor*: to accept to be evangelized oneself, before going on mission to evangelize others, not as an individual friar, but as a fraternity. By sharing the challenges of international fraternal life, such as difficulties of communication in foreign languages and of culture shock, the Brothers become aware of the dynamics of integration and inculturation in the new reality. Being exposed to various experiences, encounters, services, workshops, sessions and evaluations they clarify their vocational discernment and strengthen their missionary vocation.

3. The Benefits

The missionary friars unanimously appreciated, in their evaluations, the rich and unique experience of three Orders of Friars Minor living together in such a rich multicultural fraternal atmosphere. Together they were exposed to: communication in various languages, intercultural exchanges, creativity in common and personal prayer, the encounter with worshipers of different religions. All of these experiences deepened their reflection and widened their horizons for the future missions.

The sharing of personal testimonies by experienced missionaries and facilitators transformed the sessions into more experiential, rather than purely academic reflections. A monthly guided recollection day, as well as a week of the Franciscan Directed Retreat, animated by experienced friars and sisters, strengthened interiorization dynamics, integrating acquired information, reflections and experiences at the end of the Programme.

The real blessing for our Programme has been the cultural variety of the participants. The missionary friars from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America contributed enormously through reflection and discussion to our search for the identity of a Missionary who is a Friar Minor.

After having coordinated this Programme for three years, I personally feel enriched. Forming others has become my personal formation. Having been exposed to interaction in a multicultural setting, I myself have become more attentive to the needs of the people coming from different cultural backgrounds. This fostered in me a spirit of hospitality and openness, attentiveness to their state of health, care for their communication needs, food and drink habits, clothing adapted to different seasons, etc. All of these challenged me to take responsibility for the growth of the future generation and fostered in me a gift of fatherhood which increased meaning and joy in my religious life.

4. The Challenges

We had to face some challenges posed by those missionaries who came to our Programme unwillingly (they were ordered by their Provincial Ministers), with mixed motivation (they were running away from their difficulties), or with some psychological problems (e.g. addictions), because they could not fully integrate into the new international and multicultural fraternity. Through the accompaniment we tried to identify the areas of concern and to suggest some solutions so that they could be helped before going on mission.

We have realized that, if we would like the Missionary Preparation Programme to be more beneficial, we should care for the needs of our new missionaries during this Programme and have a follow-up programme as well. It is necessary to know them personally and to help them: in making missionary vocation discernment, to master a language, and to have a first missionary experience before they come to us.

After finishing this first step of Preparation in Brussels, we should ensure, at least for some years, a continuity of their accompaniment in the region where they are working together with their fraternity. But again there is a challenge. Since the majority of our missionaries have no experience of being accompanied in their initial formation, how will they accept it in ongoing formation? Up to now in our Brussels Programme, we have always allowed the Brothers to choose their mentors, but very few took advantage of this offer. So how can we expect them to accept permanent accompaniment in the mission itself?

Finally, we want to emphasize the importance of forming the mentors for missionary formation. We experienced real and handicapping difficulty with some of our Formators who did not share our missionary vision, our values of communication and dialogue, our accent on interculturality nor our insistence on being accompanied and on the need to accompany the missionaries spiritually.

How can we choose and form our missionary formation team? What kind of formation should they have? Where can they get this formation? These are the questions we are asking after having worked in our programme for the last three years. I thank you.

Brussels, 26 March 2007

Notes

¹ Up to this moment there are no TOR missionary candidates yet. The Programme is open to members of the Franciscan family: Sisters and Brothers.

² Bro. John Vaughn, *The Call of Africa: A New Presence of our Order in Africa*. Letter of the Minister General and of the General Definitorium to all the friars (Rome: 16 January 1982), 1-16.

³ Bro. John Vaughn, *Letter to Commemorate the First Six Years of the Africa Project* (Rome: 16 January 1988), 2.

⁴ See a sheet with the detailed Programme and the Leaflets.

⁵ The permanent Franciscan International OFM Fraternity in Brussels is composed of five friars. Three of them are engaged in missionary formation, while two serve in the parish. They all collaborate in the missionary preparation and help in the pastoral work. The presence of friars from Africa and Asia in the friary is a blessing to the new missionary friars. They represent the people among whom the missionaries will be working and they can answer many of their questions concerning their future missionary ministry. During the three month Formation Programme the fraternity is strengthened through the presence of a Conventual and a Capuchin formation coordinator.

Panel Responses

- Antonio Flores Osuna, SX -

Hemos escuchado dos experiencias de alto relieve que nos ofrecen la oportunidad de considerar algunos elementos de capital importancia para la formación en ámbito multicultural o intercultural. Una con la formalidad de un curso expresamente organizado para una preparación inmediata a la misión 'ad gentes', y otra con la modalidad de la formación permanente vivida en el día a día de la misión.

Ambas me parecen como un entrenamiento práctico para la multiculturalidad.

Ambas se proponen como objetivo: formar de manera natural en la multiculturalidad, es decir, realizar el "milagro cotidiano" de la vivencia intercultural en vistas de la misión universal.

Por el hecho de que son experiencias que no se contraponen entre sí, quisiera evidenciar algunos elementos comunes que emergen como presupuestos imprescindibles para capacitar a la vivencia intercultural. Subrayo en particular: el encuentro, el diálogo y las estructuras en general.

El encuentro

De lo que hemos escuchado, emerge como un dato bastante obvio que la formación *en y para* la interculturalidad requiere de una explícita "*formación o iniciación para el encuentro*", entendiéndolo éste como el entreveramiento de realidades de vida a partir de un ofrecimiento de las propias posibilidades. Y esto no se puede dar por supuesto ni siquiera en aquellas culturas caracterizadas por un alto grado de hospitalidad y apertura. De hecho, aun si todo hombre y mujer es un "ser para el encuentro", el encuentro no es algo fácil. Ofrecer las propias posibilidades o potencialidades a otra persona, implica apertura de espíritu, generosidad, deseo de compartir, voluntad de crear algo en común (como nos han recordado Pero y Maria Cristiana). Recibir las posibilidades que el otro me ofrece implica, por mi parte, capacidad de estar a la escucha, sencillez para admitir que soy menesteroso y necesitado de colaboración.

Sólo de esta forma el encuentro constituye una forma muy alta de unidad y se convierte en vehículo privilegiado para comunicar, compartir, asumir o apropiarse valores e ideales, pues posibilita los grandes campos del diálogo y de la creatividad.

Una formación que prepara para encuentro de este tipo, equivale indiscutiblemente a una "formación para el amor" (cuestión que no se puede dejar al azar de las simpatías o antipatías personales, o de los juegos emocionales de grupo, o darla por supuesta o ya solucionada a cierta edad, nivel de estudios, proveniencia familiar o cultural...

El diálogo

Valorar la sugerencia de la formación para el encuentro, es plantearse el día a día de nuestras comunidades como un *vivir en diálogo*. El diálogo, en efecto, es el *modo de ser del encuentro*, es su alma. El diálogo es entendido aquí como actitud de fondo, ideal y ejercicio que funda cercanía, intimidad, y hace entrar en una dinámica de generosidad, apertura de espíritu y capacidad de escucha para ofrecer y recibir valores.

El diálogo es abierto, espontáneo, por propia iniciativa; es sin límites y sin cálculos, no se limita a quienes lo merecen ni sólo a quienes dan buenos resultados; se ofrece sin discriminación alguna (es potencialmente universal, capaz de establecerse con todas las razas, pueblos y culturas), procede gradualmente, pone en evidencia primero todo lo que es común, cada día debe volver a empezar, y de parte nuestra antes que de a quienes nos dirigimos... (cfr. Pablo VI). El diálogo, es en definitiva, un arte de comunicación espiritual... En un diálogo de este espesor, las palabras y el lenguaje tienen un peso especial.

Estructuras

Me parece muy sugerente que ambas experiencias hacen notar que las estructuras cuentan en la

formación y vivencia de la interculturalidad.

Pedro nos presentó una estructura específica al servicio de la formación multicultural: un centro que desarrolla en un período de tres meses un programa específico con sesiones de reflexión, experiencias formativas, interacción cultural, acompañamiento fraternal, discernimiento vocacional...

Centros de este tipo pueden ser útiles, pero no todas las congregaciones pueden crear el propio.

Los dos, Pedro y la Hna. María Cristina ponen de relieve el ámbito de la comunidad como el campo privilegiado para una formación permanente que nutre el crecimiento y la consolidación de la interculturalidad. Es en la comunidad donde el encuentro y el diálogo pueden favorecer relaciones interpersonales fundadas no sólo en la simpatía o en la empatía, sino en la *interpatía*. Categoría que involucra pensamiento (*pensar con*) y afecto (*sentir con*). En efecto, la interpatía es la actitud que capacita a una persona a entrar en una segunda cultura con sensibilidad e imaginación, con conocimiento y afecto, respetando sus fuerzas y debilidades, percibiéndola como igualmente válida con referencia a la propia.

Hablando de estructuras desde una mentalidad internacional abierta, creo que es importante repensar en cada Congregación, no sólo los programas formativos, equipos formativos o casas de formación, sino

también las estructuras de gobierno (central y regional o provincial), de animación interna, de promoción vocacional, de formación de formadores...

Retos: ambas intervenciones han puesto de relieve algunos desafíos urgentes hoy en la formación a la interculturalidad. Un elemento no presente entre estos retos es el “prejuicio racial” que, en general, es un problema educativo de primera magnitud.

- Elisa Kidané, SMC -

Mi trovo qui non per sbaglio, ma perché P. Carlo mi ha gentilmente ‘obbligata’ a sostituire Sr Irini. E lo faccio con piacere.

Parlo in Italiano per dovere d’ospitalità, ma anche perché lo faccio molto volentieri.

Quando mi è stato chiesto di fare una sintesi di queste due conferenze, ho pensato subito a quello che succede quando esce qualche libro-documento dal Vaticano: subito vengono scritti decine di opuscoli, o veri e propri libri per spiegarlo meglio ... succede anche con i nostri documenti di Congregazione (a volte).

Per questo, per non correre il rischio di dare una terza conferenza (ieri si parlava di una terza cultura) cercherò di essere breve e concisa, tentando di mettere in risalto alcuni aspetti, ed evidenziandone altri che non sono stati detti.

Le relazioni sono state il racconto di due esperienze ben concrete, considerate positive dai relatori. L’esperienza raccontata da Sr Marie-Christine ha, alle spalle, anni di vita vissuta e consolidata, mentre quella di P. Pero è una nuova esperienza: nata da un’urgenza.

Spesso l’entusiasmo di partire ha fatto dimenticare l’importanza di una preparazione seria: i risultati (partenze o rientri in patria) hanno fatto comprendere che non basta decidere di andare...

Questa esperienza mette allo scoperto un nostro limite: spesso sprechiamo energie, tempo, soldi perché ci affidiamo troppo alla buona volontà. Nessuna organizzazione laica, che si rispetti, mette a rischio il suo personale: noi invece con la scusa che siamo “volontari di Dio” ci permettiamo di fare esperienze ... poi, come dice un proverbio italiano, “chiudiamo la stalla quando i buoi sono già scappati... Comunque dall’esperienza di P. Pero si evince che, da questa lezione di vita, è nato il Programma di Formazione Multiculturale per Missionari Francescani.

Uno dei tanti aspetti positivi delle relazioni, emerso in entrambe, è il fatto di aver creato delle possibilità di formazione inter-congregazionali legate da carismi simili.

Questa è forse una nuova alternativa che ci aiuterà ad abbattere muri tra le congregazioni (alcune lo fanno per forza di cose), a risparmiare energie, e ad unificare le forze. E', sotto ogni aspetto, un segnale profetico in un'epoca in cui sembrano risorgere, con violenza, nazionalismi, muri e divisioni etniche.

Entrambe le esperienze mettono in evidenza l'importanza delle relazioni interpersonali, il dialogo, la preghiera, l'accettazione dell'altro/altra. Tutto questo pare ovvio, ma se viene continuamente ribadito è segno che bisogna assolutamente recuperare questi valori.

Una cosa, però, dobbiamo tenerla ben presente: che le nostre comunità non sono fine a sè stesse, ma sono dei laboratori nei quali ci esercitiamo per poi essere credibili nella nostra ministerialità, (*ad inter* per andare *ad extra*)....

Dico questo perché ho notato come, nelle due relazioni, si faccia riferimento allo **shock culturale** del missionario/a che arriva in un contesto nuovo. Si è parlato di difficoltà linguistica, di problemi inerenti alla salute, ma poco o niente si dice sull'impatto che la presenza di missionari o missionarie stranieri ha sul tessuto sociale nel quale si inseriscono.

La formazione interculturale deve puntare a guardare oltre, a creare dei testimoni credibili, capaci di dare ragione della propria speranza al mondo.

Nelle regole del nostro Istituto si dice che la comunità internazionale è già annuncio, segno visibile del Regno (*Vivere insieme nella diversità e nella carità di Cristo è già annuncio e segno del Regno e permette uno scambio di ricchezze e di valori che giovano ad uno efficace servizio missionario*).

Ho notato che queste esperienze vissute, i tentativi, le strategie messe in atto per vivere insieme in un ambiente d'internazionalità, non sono per sè stesse, ma perché il sogno di Dio di costruire, qui e ora, il suo Regno, possa divenire ogni giorno una realtà, grazie alla vita profetica dei nostri Istituti di vita consacrata.



Elisa Kidané giving her summary
of the previous talks



Working Groups

English

26th and 27th April 2007

1. Experiences on the challenges of 'multicultural membership' – the mess!

The following points were gathered:

- Historical Roots are hard to untangle. We have inherited them and Government policies can and do affect our attitudes, e.g. Conflict 'wars' that many have experience have and do affect many members.
- "The Mess" comes from not taking the time or making the effort to understand that cultural nuances can push minorities into a defensive position.
- Dominant culture is the unspoken norm – it could be the majority or the minority. It could be local or it could be foreign.
- Sub-cultures of Power Structures within: Provinces/Formation/Congregation.
- Culture can be used as an excuse for inappropriate behaviour.
- Clashes between 'group togetherness' of some cultures and individualism of other cultures.
- Age differences ... Language differences ... Food differences ...
- Contentious issues: money, world views, theology, family and death – grieving, direct and indirect ways of communication e.g. jokes – inappropriate, racist ...
- Dealing with the socio and psychological aspects of 'humanness' with all of our strengths and weaknesses, fragility, vulnerability, personalities, etc.

2. What common meanings and values can help resolve the tensions or conflicts?

The following points were gathered:

- A value, priority beyond cultural differences is our own personal relationship with God that enables us to say our 'yes' to mission and living interculturally. Therefore our vows and spiritually is the deepest value at the very core of our Being.
- The importance of 'Being' as a presence invited to be inserted into a new language and culture entering into the learning and experience of the new environment. This demands valuable time over work or achievement.
- Value of 'humanity' which has a language of its own.
- The Gospel value of 'forgiveness' essential when experiencing new cultures and mission.
- The value of 'Listening': to understanding a new culture/environment as a source of self-awareness and self-knowledge as a value that will require Time and Space for reflection.
- The Value of Authentic Dialogue, especially in group discernment when issues affect All.

- The importance of Communication, especially when expectations and diverse meanings can be implied: e.g. Gestures ... use of titles ... expectations re the extended family, etc.
- Value of Hospitality and Sharing (can cause their own tensions)
Re: various expectations, the meaning of 'Mine/Ours and Sharing', e.g.: the need always to cook extra for someone who may pass by, or cooking just for the Community **at least for some years at least for some years present**, those who wanted to come should have let us know....
- We need to critic our culture against the Gospel in our prayer, community life and personal living of life.
- Try to live each culture according to the Gospel and not compare culture to culture.
- A healthy inner freedom is a necessary value.
- Example of the Rainbow Image was given: to allow people to identify with a colour then, speak on an issue from that place in the rainbow of which I still remain a part. In this it is easier to express the tension and conflict whilst accepting differences.
- Multi-cultural can be counter cultural: e.g. a Belgium sister and Congolese sister living together and witnessing to this.
- When there are difficulties within communities of different cultures, let the local culture in which they are living become the norm – this reduces much tension.

Discussion about the multicultural “mess”

In the history of our community candidates are given a **name**. Now the challenge is to use names from home (Zimbabwe).

A Korean sister returned home to Korea from mission work expecting to enjoy Korean **food** and found the dominant group (majority in this case) ruling the kitchen so she missed the Korean food she'd been looking forward to. There are similar **language** problems when the dominant language takes over.

A Ghanaian begins eating foreign food at the postulancy. There is unconscious exclusion of others in the spontaneous use of language. An oversensitive person can feel excluded.

In Sri Lanka one must be sensitive about preferences for spicy food. There is conflict over using local over against general language.

Ethnocentric **attitudes** are prevalent with regard to language. The “Our country is better” attitude is the source of tension. A bridge is needed so that a person can experience love for the host culture. The challenge is to focus on what unites.

Basic inequalities, especially **financial**, contribute to the “mess”. Judgements are made that Western cultures are organized and do not waste money and that causes tension.

Minorities can also dominate a group. There is prevailing encouragement to speak the language of the place. Sometimes a decision about language is made and then not followed. Some “**go native**” in language and then do not provide the local members with the

opportunity to learn the language of the whole congregation. The same group resists leadership structures. Others who are with them are then cut off from the whole community.

There is a *mess* when the Formator is not at home with the host culture. The Formator sometimes cannot see the good in a host culture.

One group in the congregation feels superior and dominates when it comes to food and language. The formation “teams” were international but one group could not work as a team. Jokes are funny to some and offensive to others, especially when from the formator himself. Formators are divided and do not plan together. The number of members from the home country of the congregation become a minority and are saddened that others dominate in their country. Some are not straightforward in their speech. A group of Filipinos split from the congregation. Differences about **world view** has been a critical factor together with attitudes about the consecrated life (vows). “The browning” of our congregation means the Philippinizing of it. Differences in **theology** (traditional dogma v. liberation theology) was a factor in the split.

Persons are sometimes **characterized** and called, not by name, but by nationality, e.g. “Indonesian”, “German”, etc.

The language of the **liturgy** and of **chapter documents** is a source of tension when multicultural experience is missing in a European community. Human development and social skills are missing and steps are being taken.

Differences in the **directness** of self-expression make for tension.

Age sometimes is a factor in tension more than culture. Culture adds coal to the fire when elders get/do not get the respect they expect.

Death and grieving are sensitive to manage when a novice wants to go home to be with family. Where do you draw the line to say which close relative is reason to leave the novitiate, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, infants, *et al?* The challenge is to draw the line and to find the resources to enable transport. Family ties and needs in this regard differ among cultures.

Discussion about multicultural success (what is going well)

In a multicultural community I can now appreciate MY culture better.

In a **workshop** for Formators we shared good practices.

An **outsider** helped us with workshops. We stopped making national references, and stereotyped less.

Each group **shared** something from their home culture. Ongoing formation for professed sisters helped prepare them to accept newcomers from another culture.

A **conscious effort** to work in “mixed” pairs helped us appreciate differences in “companions”.

The **parents of candidates** have been included in the formation process and have made a difference.

Some are enthused when they see “mixed” confrères living together successfully.

A **communications network** between Provinces has helped working together and getting together.

A pastoral **apostolate in common** (with multicultural religious) is a valuable sign to both people and the religious.

Input on spirituality and human development has been helpful.

Teambuilding with us has produced gratifying results.

An “**insertion experience**” for some was a source of valuable growth especially for those who received the inserted ones.

We’ve had results from taking time to **reflect, talk it out, and pray**.

Discussion on Values that help resolve conflicts

We are united in music and the arts. Non-verbal expressions of value are particularly effective.

Journeying together has been rich. Sharing a “life journey” stimulates all cultures and takes varying expressions. Using family pictures has been effective.

At chapter we set about “poverty proofing”. Much money was spent on it but that did not outweigh the value, e.g. of determining our “ecological footprint” and the expensive insertion of candidates into distant communities at suitable formation stages.

There was much travel in 2000 for intercultural exposure. The programme had an attractive name: “Into their Shoes”.

Music and art, decorating the house or church – all draw attention to the common mission of all religious sisters, each in a unique way.

Being at home with either music or silence at the liturgy is a sign of maturity.

Provinces who would ordinarily look at another Province with suspicion now face the prophetic counter-culture of some wanting union of the two Provinces.

When Belgians (who are often thought of as dominators) live with Congolese, the counter-culture is significant. The faithful would ordinarily expect them to fight.

The practice of *Lectio Divina* has been useful to help a men’s community to listen, a complement to their rational and argumentative style of living together. Eric Law’s exercises have been useful.

In Korea it is assumed that a Superior will direct the process. Practicing “shared leadership” is a counter-cultural step forward.

It is progress when we realize that “being multicultural is counter-cultural” in a certain context.

Celebrating birthdays and national independence days promotes multicultural harmony.

Discussing world news together unites us.

Sharing music, songs, playing cards are useful past-times.

Heightened appreciation for each other through prayer, work and play.

Asking “why” helps create understanding. E.g. why use the guitar in the liturgy.

Encouraging members to cross provinces for their retreats is a practical way of helping people to get used to one another and to establish friendships.

Mennonite Facilitators led “conflict resolution” workshops. They incorporated a “rainbow” exercise which helped air a range of feelings and anxieties on an issue, and in which all “colours” were a part of the whole. Expressing an opinion and being heard (even if not agreed upon) has been life-giving.

Sharing family pictures has helped build bridges in multicultural communities by identifying “who I am” and “who you are”.

We are learning to take responsibility when speaking (using “I” v. “you” language), rather than blaming. That means exploring where I contributed to the failure. There is one better age group who were trained to be critical. They are learning to appreciate this “art”.

“Appreciative inquiry” is an effective practice for us, whereby one inquires about and sees the positive aspect of another person first.

One student upon applying to the congregation supplied an e-mail attachment with a song from her culture.

Some very intentional steps have been taken in communication and convent life that have helped constitute harmony. For example:

- Sharing what happened since we last met,
- Touching base at tea time each day (15 minutes),
- Evening prayer together Wednesday evening,
- A movie together Friday night,
- Defining justice issues together.



One group is conversing around a table



The last day Mass celebrated by Fr Edouard Tsimba, CICM SEDOS President



Fr. Antonio Flores, SX is celebrating one of the daily Mass

Français

MERCREDI, LE 25 AVRIL

1^{ère} question : Ce que je n'ai pas encore compris ou ce avec quoi je suis en désaccord

- La mission *Ad gentes* et *Inter gentes* ne sont pas opposées car l'*Ad gentes* s'est fait dans l'*Inter gentes*.
- Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui les différentes cultures se rencontrent un peu partout et ainsi nous vivons l'*Inter gentes*.
- Ce qui est important ce ne sont pas les mots ou les définitions mais bien l'expérience de la rencontre de l'autre. L'important c'est ce que l'on vit ou veut vivre dans la pratique là où l'on vit.
- Nous ne pouvons nier ou effacer l'histoire ou le cadre historique. Même si l'histoire nous a fait comprendre la mission comme étant la mission *Ad gentes* avec tout ce qu'elle impliquait, dans le concret de leur vie les missionnaires ont vécu une véritable rencontre inter-culturelle.
- À propos de la théologie de la banane et de la théologie de la mangue, il est important de ne pas oublier que toute théologie se doit d'être contextuelle.
- Les femmes, par leur façon d'être, sont plus proches des réalités quotidiennes des gens.
- Bien que nous ayons des choses à apprendre des théologiens protestants, cela ne signifie pas que notre théologie de la mission ait été ou soit moins inspirée par l'Esprit et son action que la théologie de la mission protestante.
- Nous avons à apprendre à vivre la mission avec des moyens moins puissants, que ce soit au niveau financier ou au niveau du personnel. Nous devons bien discerner les besoins et agir selon nos capacités.

2^{ème} question : Ce qui nous interpelle. Les défis

- La communauté demeure un lieu d'écoute, de prière, de partage et d'action. Elle devient lieu de témoignage. Elle est un lieu de vie où notre vocation se ressource dans la vivre ensemble.
- Il faut se laisser transformer et interroger par la rencontre de l'autre.
- Il faut apprendre à développer une activité réflexive sur ce que l'on vit. Apprendre à relire notre vécu. Il faut intégrer et personnaliser les apprentissages faits durant notre formation.
- Il faut accepter d'être l'autre de l'autre.
- Le rôle du formateur comme artiste est intéressant. Il doit prendre le Christ comme modèle de formateur.
- Le formateur doit aider le candidat à devenir créateur, à croître et à grandir comme créateur.
- Il est important de garder l'équilibre entre un cadre de formation et une liberté créatrice.
- Chaque personne est unique et il n'y a pas de recette ou de moule qui puisse servir pour tous.
- Dans la mission il faut devenir ami, voisin....
- On ne peut opposer action et passion. L'être se manifeste dans l'action.

3^{ème} question : Les conséquences pour la formation

- À quel moment ou étape de la formation doit-on commencer l'inter-culturalité ?
- Il serait bon aussi de penser la question de la formation à la mixité (homme-femme).
- Comment faire pour que la motivation ou la préoccupation pour se former demeure après la formation initiale, avec le passage du temps.
- Quelle place ou espace donne-t-on à la formation continue ?

- Il nous faut apprendre à écouter et à bâtir ensemble avec les gens.
- Il nous faut savoir apprendre des autres cultures et religions.
- Il nous faut apprendre que les relations avec les autres religions sont toujours contextuelles.

JEUDI, LE 26 AVRIL

1) Les difficultés et les défis rencontrés :

Observation préliminaire : Le multiculturalisme est un fait dans nos Congrégations et Instituts

- Pour nous il ne fut pas question de parler de désastres mais plutôt des difficultés et des défis posés par un processus dans lequel il nous faut avancer et risquer dans la confiance en la grâce de Dieu.
- Nos Congrégations en sont à vivre un tournant dans leur histoire et leur évolution. Ce tournant implique un choc entre les membres qui accueillent et les nouveaux arrivants. C'est une marche irréversible que nous vivons et il faut préparer les esprits à vivre l'acceptation mutuelle. Une conversion est à vivre dans les deux sens. Conversion de ceux qui accueillent et conversion des nouveaux membres. C'est une interaction Congrégation/nouveau membre.
 - Défi de la préparation du personnel pour le gouvernement de nos Congrégations.
 - Défi des préjugés, de la tendance à étiqueter les personnes selon leurs origines.
 - Défi des conflits minorité/majorité où la majorité a tendance à assimiler la minorité. Défi de la domination de la culture dominante sur l'autre. Défi de l'acceptation du changement de la culture dominante jusqu'alors dans nos Congrégations.
 - Défi des conflits causés par la question des valeurs et des ressources financières.
 - Défi des conflits au niveau des idéologies.
 - Défi de la connaissance mutuelle, de la connaissance de l'autre, de la connaissance de son histoire. Défi de laisser à chacun un espace où chacun(e) puisse s'exprimer, raconter son histoire et être accepté par la communauté. Défi de la connaissance de l'autre dans ses références et ses codes culturels afin de le comprendre.
 - Défi des langues et défi du respect du temps nécessaire à leur apprentissage.

2) Les succès, les réussites et chemins pour la continuité et l'évolution :

- Reconnaître que la question de la majorité/minorité est un fait et accepter d'en parler de façon positive.
 - Des expériences de partages culturels au niveau des repas, de la prière et de la liturgie ou encore de la signification de moments importants pour chaque culture (rites de naissance, de funérailles) se vivent dans nos communautés. Il faut toujours chercher à créer des espaces où chacun(e) puisse s'exprimer, raconter son histoire et être accepté par la communauté.
 - Dans nos maisons de formation des espaces de liberté doivent être créés afin que les jeunes puissent se rencontrer, se confronter et se réconcilier...
 - Il nous faut faire des évaluations et des relectures de nos expériences et de nos découvertes.
 - Nous devons toujours retourner à la source de ce qui nous unit au-delà de nos différences culturelles : le Christ et l'Évangile.
 - Nous devons faire l'expérience de l'humilité. Chacun, dans la rencontre interculturelle doit faire un bout de chemin sur le terrain de l'autre en prenant soin d'enlever ses souliers. Il nous faut humblement accepter que nous allons parfois nous tromper.
 - Nous croyons qu'il ne faut pas trop attendre dans la formation avant de vivre l'expérience de l'interculturalité car le processus de connaissance mutuelle est long. Il nous faut risquer dans la confiance en la grâce du Seigneur.

VENDREDI, LE 27 AVRIL

1^{ère} question : Sur les tensions et les conflits interculturels et l'inculturation de l'Évangile. Sur la contre-culture. Sur les valeurs et normes non négociables. Sur ce qui nous aide à surmonter ces tensions et ces conflits...

- Les gens qui nous accueillent nous aident à nous acculturer, à nous convertir et à nous rendre compte du message que nous sommes supposés leur apporter. Ils sont notre école.
- Nous devons faire preuve de prudence évangélique. Les cultures changent et il nous arrive de faire face à des gens qui ne cherchent que leur intérêt individuel.
- Il nous faut vivre la valeur de l'amour en tant que communauté témoin. Nous devenons ainsi un témoignage contre-culturel. Nous faisons tomber les préjugés.
- Les gens du milieu qui nous accueillent sont ceux qui peuvent vraiment inculturer l'Évangile. Ce sont eux qui peuvent mettre en pratique l'Évangile dans leur propre contexte culturel.
- Il existe des tensions réelles entre la communauté-témoin et le milieu d'accueil. Pour surmonter les difficultés il faut une spiritualité profonde et vraie.
- Il est important de faire confiance à ce monde qui évolue.
- Il faut savoir travailler non seulement entre nous mais aussi avec les gens du milieu d'accueil. Il est important de trouver des conseillers parmi les gens de la culture d'accueil.
- Nous devons trouver des moyens afin que les vœux religieux parlent pour aujourd'hui. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire être religieux pour notre temps et pour le milieu où nous vivons ? Découvrir ce qui est essentiel et non-négociable, ce qui est le cœur de la vie religieuse.

2^{ème} question : comment la prière, le jeu et le travail enrichissent notre vie interculturelle?

- Ils permettent de dépasser les conflits et de nous resituer par rapport à nos valeurs communes.
- La prière et le travail doivent entrer dans un projet missionnaire commun. Il faut savoir faire des choses ensemble. Le jeu est particulièrement important en ce sens. Des jeux de société ou du sport en commun aident beaucoup.
- Il faut avoir de l'ouverture afin de pouvoir échanger sur ce que l'on fait. Dans nos milieux de formation il faut que nos candidats apprennent à faire ensemble, à prier ensemble...
- Il faut veiller à ce que la langue ou la culture ne deviennent pas un outil de séparation mais d'union. C'est pourquoi la langue de la culture d'accueil doit devenir la langue d'usage des membres du groupe.
- Nous devons développer de la sensibilité les uns envers les autres. Il faut savoir se remercier, se valoriser et se féliciter entre nous. D'un autre côté il ne faut pas avoir peur de relever les erreurs et ce qui ne fonctionne pas bien.
- Il faut savoir développer le sens de l'humour.
- Il faut apprendre à connaître les membres de la communauté et s'intéresser à leurs familles. Il faut aussi rendre la famille participante du processus de formation.
- Comme le Christ, il faut savoir mettre la personne au centre car avant d'être une rencontre avec une autre culture, c'est une rencontre avec une autre personne que l'on vit.
- Il faut vivre tout cela dans l'humilité, savoir dialoguer, pardonner et recommencer. Il ne faut pas tout mettre sur le dos de la culture.

P. Martin Laliberté, p.m.é.
Société des Missions-Étrangères de la Province de Québec, Canada
Pour les deux groupes de langue française

Italiano

SFIDE:

- Se il cambiamento di modello è una crescita di sensibilità, esso significa riconoscere che la missione appartiene a tutti. Partecipiamo alla “*missio Dei*”, siamo tutti coinvolti in essa. Le “genti” non sono gli altri, ma siamo tutti insieme per la “*missio Dei*”.
- Coscienza del bisogno di vivere il *kerigma* con uno stile evangelico. Lasciarci convertire noi dall’intercultura delle nostre comunità. Arrivare a “togliere le scarpe” coscienti di essere su una “terra santa”.
- Missione come INCONTRO di persone appassionate, aperte all’accoglienza, coscienti che lo Spirito è già all’opera, anche fuori dai nostri schemi.
- Siamo insieme per il Regno: accogliere e lasciarci accogliere.
- Valorizzare lo spazio della preghiera e della riflessione: essere di più, e fare di meno.
- Ci interpellano la dimensione della missione in contesto islamico, la dimensione di martirio e la dimensione della donna.

ATTESE – CONSEGUENZE:

- Oggi la missione *ad gentes* esige una formazione particolare sempre più identificata per vivere “in mezzo” alle altre fedi e culture. Formare alla capacità di acculturarsi, di aprirsi e di disporsi verso le varie forme della missione di oggi.
- Aiutare i nostri Capitoli a rivedere il modo di vivere la missione.
- La multiculturalità è una dimensione del Regno, la viviamo a tutti i livelli – quindi è una sfida per la formazione e per la vita, da accogliere positivamente.
- Vivere il passaggio da una visione un po’ ‘trionfalistica’ a quella di ‘*kenosis*’, per far crescere con la gente i valori del Regno. Contare di più sulla forza della fede e meno su quella propria.
- Approfondire l’idea di “creazione artistica” nella formazione, senza “ricette”, che crei con amore, con gli altri....

FORMAZIONE PER LA MISSIONE IN CONTESTO MULTICULTURALE:

Difficoltà:

- La divisione della comunità in gruppi linguistici.
- La concezione diversa della vita religiosa e delle sue esigenze, di punti di riferimento diversi, rende le relazioni superficiali e poco profonde.
- La gestione di conflitti di ordine interculturale.

Punti importanti:

- L’internazionalità è costitutiva per molte delle nostre congregazioni missionarie: la sfida di mantenerla, di preparare le persone a viverla come dono, con apertura, accompagnandone i processi di relazione. E’ una sfida per la missione. Evangelizziamo come comunità interculturale.
- Il carisma, la stessa missione, sono una forza che unisce e dà energia.
- La globalizzazione facilita l’incontro con le culture. Coltivare la capacità di stupirsi.
- La persona al centro della formazione: privilegiare i processi di crescita personali, accompagnare nel discernimento e nella crescita della libertà e della responsabilità, nel lasciarci cambiare dall’altro/a. Consolidare la propria identità a confronto con l’alterità.
- Formazione del cuore: delle attitudini evangeliche che devono esserne la base. Promuovere l’interesse, il desiderio di raggiungere l’altro/a....

- I poveri sono parte integrante della formazione per la missione: promuovere case di formazione inserite in ambienti popolari. Lasciarsi interpellare dai volti 'sfigurati' di Cristo.
 - Offrire spazi quotidiani di espressione perché ciascuna/o sia conosciuta/a e riconosciuta/a, perché cresca il senso di appartenenza.
-

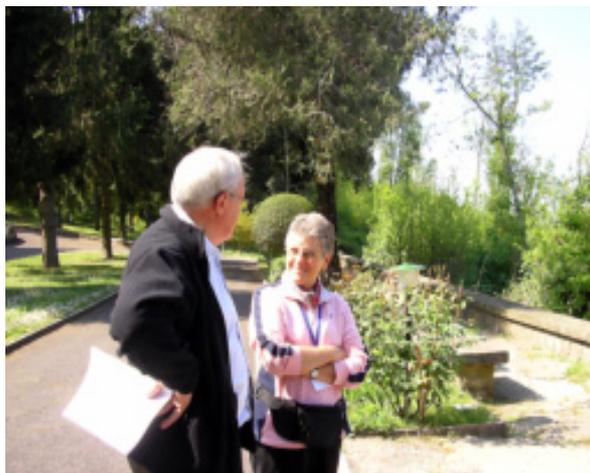
27 Aprile 2007

1.

- Vivere insieme la centralità di Cristo e i valori evangelici (perdono e riconciliazione), ci converte e trasforma le nostre relazioni.
- La forza evangelica del carisma è un valore di coesione e di creatività.
- Coltivare la volontà di aprirsi all'altro, di fare lo sforzo di imparare la lingua e di conoscere la cultura.

2.

- Elaborare un progetto comune di vita comunitaria e apostolica: determinare i tempi di lavoro, preghiera, *relax* impegnandosi insieme a viverli e a verificarli.
 - Educarci a coltivare gli atteggiamenti di fondo: dialogo, rispetto, sensibilità, ascolto ... questa formazione degli atteggiamenti del cuore non finisce mai...
 - Coltivare spazi comunitari per un'approfondita riflessione sui valori, di confronto su ciò che riteniamo importante. L'ascolto e la condivisione fa cambiare i pregiudizi e può far maturare visioni comuni.
 - Lavoro, preghiera, *relax*, esprimono i nostri bisogni vitali. Possiamo dire che ogni cultura è la risposta diversa a questi bisogni. Valorizzando il contributo di ogni persona, nel dare risposta ai bisogni della comunità e della gente, si valorizza la cultura di ciascuno/a e si possono dare risposte adeguate alla realtà.
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Two participants at the Seminar

Español

Miércoles 25 de abril

Lo que no entendemos/no estamos de acuerdo

1. No nos quedó claro si ‘pasar de *ad gentes* a *intragentes*’ significa un cambio de paradigma o si los términos se complementan. No lo vemos como un cambio de paradigma sino como un ir más allá, es decir que no se trata de ir a otro país para convertir paganos, sino de compartir el mensaje del Evangelio con los que nos rodean dondequiera que estemos.

La misión *ad gentes* sigue siendo hoy importante, especialmente para las congregaciones que fueron fundadas con este propósito. En cambio en países donde llegan masas de inmigrantes de distintas culturas tiene mucha relevancia hablar de *inter-gentes*

2. La gran tarea de todos es contar la historia de Jesús en términos de la cultura y el contexto de las personas a quienes va dirigido el anuncio. No se trata de ir a enseñar como quien lo sabe todo, sino de anunciar con nuestra vida.

Lo que nos anima/nos desafía

1. La reflexión teológica sobre la misión nos anima a comprometernos en la búsqueda de un nuevo sentido, de nuevas formas de evangelizar que aviven nuestra pasión por el Evangelio.
2. La nueva eclesialidad de Vaticano II lleva a que cada diócesis asuma la responsabilidad de la evangelización, y esto nos anima como Institutos a plantearnos el cómo colaborar en la tarea evangelizadora, con nuestros Carismas particulares. Cómo hacernos disponibles para ser enviados a la misión.
3. Un desafío para nosotros es la reflexión intercultural sobre la misión, para no volver a imponer nuestra visión occidental de la misión. Nos preguntamos cómo hacer este proceso de transformación profunda, para ser misioneros allí donde estamos; y estar abiertos a lo que pueden aportarnos otras culturas para enriquecer nuestra propia cultura occidental que se va empobreciendo.
4. El viejo paradigma “ir a salvar almas” proporcionaba una fuerte motivación para anunciar el Evangelio. Hoy nos preguntamos cómo encender en nosotros esa misma pasión por la misión, cuáles serán las motivaciones que nos impulsen.

Las consecuencias de todo esto para la formación

1. Nos preguntamos, ¿formación para qué misión?
2. Evitar las formas/métodos de una Iglesia patriarcal/occidental para que nuestros formandos no hagan lo mismo que hemos hecho nosotros. Recuperar el espíritu de los primeros cristianos, que anunciaban lo que ellos habían visto y oído. Formar personas que sepan encontrarse con la gente, compartir su experiencia de Jesús.
3. Fomentar nuevas formas de presencia entre la gente, nuevas maneras de hacer el anuncio sin perder el carisma original de nuestra congregación.
4. Lo central en la formación debe ser la pasión por Jesús -anunciarlo con la propia vida.
5. La formación debe estar arraigada en la propia cultura. Es importante conocer y reconciliarse con su propia cultura para poder insertarse en la de los demás. Debe permitir que el formando forje su propio camino, que pueda encontrarse así mismo y expresar su vocación a través de su identidad personal.

Jueves 26 y viernes 27 de abril

Dificultades en la convivencia de la interculturalidad

1. El lenguaje: la dificultad para expresarse lleva a los miembros de la comunidad a separarse en grupos por idiomas. Pero esto a veces va más allá del idioma: se buscan también espacios de intercambio entre personas con afinidad cultural, y puede ser también un mecanismo de defensa para sobrevivir.
2. La diversidad en la manera de concebir la vida consagrada y la vivencia de los votos. Las distintas visiones de la misión y la forma de enfocarla llevan a conflictos en los que nos vemos obligados a transigir para hacerla viable.
3. Conflictos que surgen a raíz de la forma de expresarse y comportarse en las distintas culturas. El desconocimiento de la cultura del otro lleva a la falta de comprensión y los prejuicios con respecto a la forma de actuar.
4. La imposición de la cultura dominante por un lado y por el otro una reacción a la cultura dominante que lleva a un énfasis exagerado de la cultura local, en detrimento de las distintas culturas propias de los miembros de la comunidad.

Qué se está haciendo en las comunidades para facilitar la interculturalidad

1. Crear herramientas/medios para un análisis profundo de los problemas que generan los conflictos.
2. La profundización/estudio de temas comunes en toda la Congregación, por ejemplo *la no violencia, la reconciliación, la paz*.
3. la sistematización de la espiritualidad de la congregación como recurso que proporciona un marco de referencia o núcleo común que puede dar sentido de cuerpo y fortalecer la identidad
4. Establecer un lenguaje común para toda la congregación.
5. Hermanas jóvenes (de hasta 10 años de profesión) de distintos países viven juntas durante tres meses y luego analizan las dificultades y los logros de la experiencia vivida.
6. La valoración de la internacionalidad por medio de encuentros internacionales, por ejemplo, sesiones en preparación para los votos perpetuos; visitas a los lugares de la fundación etc.
7. Cambios en las estructuras de gobierno a nivel general, por ejemplo, en algunas congregaciones las Consejeras Generales ya no asumen la responsabilidad de áreas geográficas sino que son responsables de la animación de temas específicos en toda la congregación.
8. Establecimiento de un centro internacional de estudios teológicos en el que los jóvenes viven un ambiente intercultural.

Significados y valores que pueden ayudar a resolver las tensiones o conflictos

1. Priorizar la misión. La centralidad del servicio en la pastoral implica relativizar las dificultades de la interculturalidad, incluso morir a los propios valores culturales por un bien mayor, en cierto modo es entrar en el misterio de muerte y resurrección. Es esencial tener un proyecto comunitario para aunar nuestros esfuerzos y unificar nuestra visión.
2. El esfuerzo por entender al otro y el empeño en superar los conflictos de la convivencia es un testimonio profético para el mundo que vive las mismas contradicciones.
3. Favorecer la concientización y promoción de la identidad y los valores de la cultura local donde estamos insertos.

La oración común diaria, el trabajo y la recreación son espacios en los que nos enriquecemos para la comunión intercultural

1. Abrirnos a lo diferente para conocer y valorar las culturas presentes en la comunidad local. Se trata de dar espacios a las distintas expresiones culturales: formas de oración,

- celebraciones, costumbres.
2. Interesarnos por profundizar y dar a conocer el sentido de los rituales, gestos y formas que constituyen las celebraciones de las distintas culturas. Es importante conocer y entender una cultura para poder aceptarla.
 3. Los momentos de expansión vividos a la manera de cada país son espacios de contemplación que pueden enriquecernos.
 4. En la oración buscar formas sencillas que permitan a todos penetrar el misterio de la presencia de Dios y la revelación de la Palabra, respetando siempre la tradición que nos pone en relación con nuestras raíces. No cargar la oración con palabras y estructuras pesadas, sino reducirse a lo esencial. Importancia del silencio en la oración
 5. En el trabajo, el hecho de discernir juntos nuestro servicio a la congregación nos da un marco común y nos permite centrarnos en lo esencial y relativizar las diferencias.
 6. El lenguaje espiritual es otro elemento que nos lleva a encontrarnos, a unirnos por encima de todo lo demás.
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The Assembly during a daily Conference



Summary of the Seminar

Congregational Renewal Through Intercultural Formation

- An Interpretive Summary -

- Pio Estepa, SVD -

What follows does not at all claim to present an ‘overall synthesis’ of the rich sharing of experiences and insights that happened during this year’s SEDOS Seminar. Its aim is more modest: using the Seminar’s key question as a sieve, I select and highlight only what can directly respond to it. And that question is: *what vital role can intercultural formation – initial and ongoing – play in renewing (or perhaps ‘refounding’) religious missionary congregations?*

A joke has it that in a railroad station a train was setting off. Just at that moment three men rushed in, each one dragging a heavy piece of baggage. They waved their arms, hoping for the train to slow down if not stop. Luckily, a ticket inspector was standing on the steps of the last wagon. He grabbed the arm of the nearest man and helped him climb aboard. He also succeeded with the second. Too bad, as he reached out to the third, the train had already gained speed. The station master, who saw the whole scene, approached the man left behind and said: “I’m very sorry that you missed the last trip and lost the company of your two friends...”. The latter just wagged his head sadly, responding: “I’m sorrier for my two friends. You see, they came here to the train station just to see me off!”.

During travel, it is traumatic to lose any of these three – luggage, company, and transport. Baggage is a *support behind*: they contain precious items from where we originate. Travel mates are a *support beside*: their company turns the boring solitude of a long trip into interactive fun. Finally, a means of transport symbolizes a *support ahead*: it takes us where we want to go.

Certain biblical images compare the People of God to a traveller through human history towards the Reign of God. In this missionary journey, we – as a community of believers – also need a triple support. The major aspects of a congregational culture may be summed up in three concepts: *grid*, *group* and *guide*. How they interact to form a dynamic unity may be summed up graphically in this way: the *grid* as a founding congregational vision serves as a support behind; the *group* as sustained corporate commitment serves as a support beside; and the *guide* as pioneering leadership functions as a support ahead. Let us now proceed to reflect on the renewal that interculturality demands from congregational cultures in all three aspects.

A. GRID RENEWAL THROUGH INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

A1. Missio Ad ET Inter Gentes

In his keynote address Bill Burrows points out a historic change that reached its peak in the 20th century: from being a ‘Western religion’, Christianity has now become a ‘world religion’. Christians worldwide have learned to express their faith in their own cultural ways. Furthermore, they are making their faith experience bear on current social issues gravely impacting their local situations. Thus, the understanding of the Church’s mission in non-Western zones of the globe has gone through a ‘paradigm shift’ complementing that of Western Christianity. Burrows sums it up as *missio ad et* (and) *inter gentes*.

One may ask: what is our mission as Church among any people, of any culture, at any

period of history? None has so far outdone the answer of classic theology that sums it up in just three Greek words: *kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia*. *Kerygma* means to share – out of faith – the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ ‘in season and out of season’ (II Tm 4:2). *Koinonia* means to gather – out of hope – as believers in ways that our fellowship preview the Peace of God’s Reign. *Diakonia* means to help – out of love – all who suffer, preferentially the poorest at the margins of society.

Though these three ideals refer to the perennial aspects of our ecclesial mission, they are variably interpreted in diverse cultural settings or historical periods out of creative fidelity. ‘A picture paints a thousand words’, so goes a common saying. So just by way of images and key phrases, let me sum up how Burrows envisions the distinction and relation between the *ad* and *inter* paradigms in ‘translating’ the triple mission of the Church (see figure 1).



A2. Intercultural Competence

What does this paradigm change entail for religious formation? Speakers and discussion groups concurred most on the need for every missionary to grow in *intercultural competence*. Among the spiritual books written by Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P. (father of liberation theology), one is entitled *We Drink from Our Own Wells*. With due apologies to him, rephrasing it graphically defines what *intercultural competence* is all about: it is the capacity to drink from the spiritual wells of other cultures. One discussion group points to Jesus as the best model for learning such a mission skill. After all, he spent most of his public ministry not in Jerusalem, which then was the monocultural religious centre of Judaism – but in Galilee, where marginal Jews lived with pagan neighbours. Another group points to St Paul, the greatest Christian missionary, whose bicultural upbringing (Jewish and Hellenist) had best prepared him for his later call as ‘Apostle to the Gentiles’.

Monocultural grids are inner wells that nurture biases – of which one extreme is what Sr Chinyeaka explained and exemplified as *ethnocentrism* ... that subtly violent attitude resulting in other-directed racism or self-directed ‘culture shock’. On the other hand, Fr Domingues exemplifies the other extreme which may be termed as *ethno-marginalism*. It seems to happen more often to those religious formands or members from developing countries coming to communities in developed ones. They are so amazed by their newly-gained freedom and material affluence ... that they ‘go native’ in the host culture. Such is *en-culturation*, but surely not *in-culturation*. Sooner or later many leave the Seminary or religious life, settle in the so-called ‘First World’, and prefer not to return to their home countries.

Both extremes are symptomatic of weak personal and cultural identities (which go as a pair). In this context a discussion group then raised the question: when is the optimal time for initiating formands or members into multicultural community? The question focuses on the vital need for formation programmes to be gradated. Forcing human “jumps” in the formation process is not only asking for the impossible but can even gravely stunt personal growth. In

view of this, a discussion group offered two counsels: [1] that the early phase of formation take place in one's home culture, and [2] that the schooling for intercultural living begin only at a later phase – preferably still before perpetual vows.

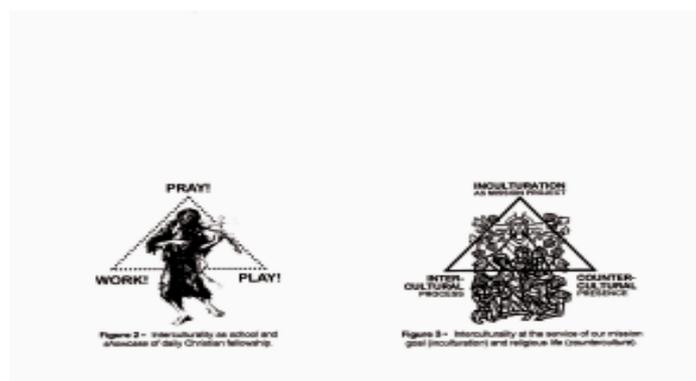
B. GROUP RENEWAL THROUGH INTERCULTURAL FELLOWSHIP

B1. Fellowship as Hospitality

On the following workdays the speakers and respondents shared their experiential wealth as veteran formators in their respective congregations. The value of their talks consisted in priming further exchanges of experiences among the participants ... which led to a humbling recognition: that interculturality can be faked – when multicultural membership remains just a *façade* behind which little intercultural fellowship is truly taking place. One way of intercultural faking is forming *pluricultural ghettos* under a single roof. Fr Domingues described it as making members live through the same schedule and calendar serving as 'basic common denominators'; for the rest, birds of the same cultural feather exclusively flock together. At the other extreme is what Sr Chinyeaka described as forming all members into a *corporate 'melting pot'*, so that they learn to think and behave in some congregationally uniform way.

The only way out of that whole range of monocultural conduct, as Sr Bérenger points out, is sincere hospitality. On the one hand, it means *welcoming* the other as s/he is and giving that other an ample space of personal freedom. On the other hand, it also means *challenging* one another to keep on growing together in creative fidelity to what we profess as our common calling in life. Multicultural welcome without intercultural challenge is what a cultural *ghetto* offers. Challenge without welcome is what a corporate *melting pot* does against enriching personal and cultural differences. Neither way can ever promote human growth ... much less lead to congregational refounding.

A still noteworthy point that Sr Bérenger makes is that the drama of mutual welcoming and challenging takes place in the daily spheres of common work, play and prayer (see figure 2). In the discussion group reports, it is surprising to note hardly any mention of tension or conflict in the realm of work! It may be construed as good news – an affirming sign that in general we are efficient labourers in the Lord's vineyard. But what is frankly recognized by several discussion groups is that our work-oriented communities often fail to offer space for relaxing *otium* (leisure) of supportive interpersonal ties and nourishing *oratio* (prayer) in varying cultural expressions.



B2. Interculturality: Means or End?

In at least two discussion groups, the question arose: is inter-culturality a means or an end? One said, 'it's just a means' ... whereas the other said, 'it's a worthwhile end in itself'. Both views do not really cancel each other out, but are equally meaningful if seen in the light of further questions: means *to what?* end *as what?*

In the inter-Franciscan ongoing formation programme presented by Fr Pero Vrebac, O.F.M., the intercultural process figures as an essential means put at the service of two complementary

goals: a *missionary* project – *inculturation* of the Gospel, and *religious* presence – consecrated life as *countercultural* witness to God's Reign (see figure 3). When all have agreed in goals and means, it is surprising how pious fights can still arise 'only because' of disagreement on priority of goals or sequence of means. An honest examination of conscience may reveal how differences of cultural values are stubbornly at play. At such tense stalemates, three counsels from the discussion groups may prove helpful: [1] all conflict must first be resolved in the light of the non-negotiable spirit and values of the Gospel; [2] after the evangelical come those of the consecrated life as envisioned by one's congregational constitutions in light of a mission charism; [3] lastly, the respect for the host culture should precede regard for those of foreign members – whether they be numerically greater or congregationally dominant.

Yet it also makes sense to speak of intercultural fellowship as a (proximate) goal in itself ... midway to God's Reign. Sr Bérenger explains it cogently in narrative form. Her community in Madagascar, says she, consisted of a handful of racially multi-coloured sisters. Impressed at seeing them living together, local people often asked: 'Don't you ever fight among yourselves?'. After some time their answer had become a refrain: 'Of course, but we keep on forgiving one another and carry on affably from day to day'. Surely, those Franciscan sisters' multicultural community was a daily school of Christian fellowship. And their progressive (not perfect) efforts toward harmony were enough to serve as a hope-inspiring preview of God's full Reign of Peace.

'If eyes were made for seeing', so goes the oft-quoted lines of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'then beauty is its own excuse for being'. Perhaps with less poetry yet with equal passion, we may also say: if the heart is made for loving, then intercultural communion is its own excuse for being.

C. GUIDE RENEWAL

C1. *Management versus Prophecy*

In her well-known essay on generation gaps (*Culture and Commitment*), the anthropologist Margaret Mead once proposed a triple typology of cultures: *postfigurative*, *cofigurative*, and *prefigurative*. (*Premodern*, *modern*, and *postmodern* may be used as parallel labels for them). In *postfigurative* cultures, the elders act as guides of the youth, and the traditional past serves as the transcendence model for the present. The modern era gave rise to *cofigurative* cultures, wherein the descendant generation looks for role models no longer in their parents – but in their peers. With the myth of *progress* acting as modern light, the future now shines as the transcendence model of the present. Then, already since the 1970's, Mead believed that a new age was dawning, whose emergent culture she named as *prefigurative*. Since elders and youth equally find themselves lost in it, guidance is no longer sought from either parents or peers – but from pioneers. The latter are creative persons who 'prefigure' new lifestyles and relationships. This time, the transcendence model has shifted from expecting a better tomorrow to enjoying the passing present.

Mead's typology of cultures can also apply to the Church. In pre-Conciliar times, believers looked up to the guardians of 'sacred tradition' (hierarchy or superiors) for post-figurative light. The Second Vatican Council marked a radical shift to cofigurative guidance – giving rise to new eclesial jargons such as *collegiality*, *principle of subsidiarity*, *communal discernment*, etc. Meanwhile, even religious congregations who have put cofigurative leadership into practice are now finding it slack. General Chapters have been organized, whose agenda rose upward from grass-roots consultation, and whose results were echoed back downward to provinces and districts. Yet despite these efforts, the malaise is growing among congregations that much input in terms of extensive communal reflection is yielding little output in terms of productive missionary action.

The post-modern times then call for prefigurative guidance. In the history of God's People, such leadership was offered by the prophets – living radars whose deep faith keenly perceived God's creative presence at work in current sociocultural changes. But the hazard remains the

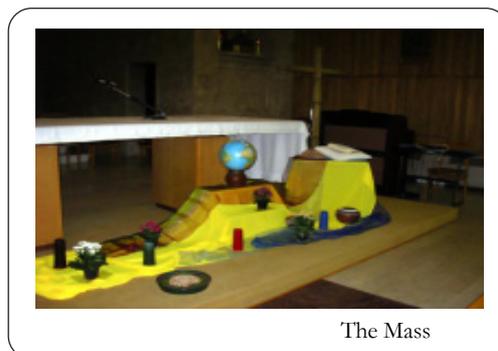
same since in the Old Testament: rulers tended to mortally silence prophets, while the latter tended to violently subvert the former. Yet creative conflict is what catalyzes social reform or cultural rebirth. Rulers are efficient managers who lead by a rational map, whereas prophets are effective pathfinders who go by intuitive compass. Kings or queens may know *how* to do things right, but it is prophets who explore *what* right things to do.

C2. Call for Prophetic Leadership

Three comments during the last plenary session are worth recalling. The first came as a comic retort: ‘Many prophets in the past have indeed been irksome and vexing for their leaders and communities. But surely not any loudmouth or pain-in-the-neck is a prophet!’. I fully agree ... yet precisely it is often only by a backward gaze into the past that we come to clearly sort out false from true prophets. In the confusing present, during verbal crossfire between superiors and subjects, it is more helpful to ascribe prophecy not to *persons* but to the *processes* of dialogue stirred by loyal dissent and leading to inventive assent.

The jester’s remarks were followed by a sage’s query: ‘In our congregations premodern, modern and postmodern members live together ... with differing *guide* expectations! What credible leaders can then unify us?’. The wisdom of the question is that it situates the ruler-prophet interaction within its too often overlooked context – the intergenerational ‘us’, with a unique corporate culture, in search of meaningful unity. I believe that congregations have done well in heeding the Second Vatican Council’s call for more widely participative leadership. By flattening our respective hierarchies, we have allowed more prophetic rulers to emerge, and more leaderly prophets to take part in congregational rule. Allow me here to insert a professional ad – the important role that social scientists can play to help the dialogue between rulers and prophets stand on firm socio-cultural ground. A request from one discussion group supports this idea: the need for scientific tools to help congregations become more critically aware of their respective corporate cultures and communal structures.

The sage’s query was followed by a realist’s request: ‘Will you kindly give an example of concrete interaction taking place between kings/queens and prophets?’. For an answer I made the quick mistake of looking into my congregation for an instance. So I ended up hazily explaining how the SVD General Council functioned with the help of path-finding appointees to make sure that mission concerns at the grassroots would find prompt advocates before the highest seats of our hierarchy. Had I not been a slow thinker, I would have just pointed to the rich intercongregational fellowship that we have been enjoying till that fifth and last day. Among us were Major Superiors and experienced formators, laity, religious and clergy ... men and women of diverse cultural back-grounds humbly and openly learning from one another in earnest discernment of the pioneering will of God in the here-and-now.



Acknowledgement

- Mot de clôture du Séminaire Résidentiel de SEDOS 2007 -

Come tutte le belle cose, come tutte le cose divertenti, anche il nostro Seminario sta volgendo al termine. Spero che tutti, o almeno la maggior parte di noi, possano avere sempre dei buoni ricordi di questi giorni trascorsi insieme. Dispiaciuti qualora i vostri sogni o le vostre aspettative non siano stati soddisfatti da questo Seminario, ci auguriamo che, dopo tutto, tenendo conto che non esistono soluzioni a qualsiasi problema, siano state fatte almeno le domande giuste.

E' arrivato il momento di dire grazie.

A nome di tutti noi, vorrei ringraziare i membri del Comitato Esecutivo di SEDOS. Ringrazio tutti quelli che hanno parlato: i relatori, il nostro facilitatore e i nostri moderatori.

Vorrei ringraziare in modo particolare Sr. Lita che ha lavorato molto per la Liturgia. Ricordate cosa abbiamo detto durante il Seminario, cioè quanto sia importante la Liturgia per costruire?

Un ringraziamento speciale al gruppo di preparazione che ha molto contribuito alla parte organizzativa del Seminario (non tutti sono qui con noi).

Un ringraziamento speciale alle segretarie: Ilaria, Sr. Celine e ancora Sr. Lita.

Certamente, un ringraziamento speciale va rivolto ai Fratelli e Padri Paolini, qui ad Ariccia. Loro hanno fatto veramente un grande sforzo per venire incontro alle nostre esigenze, dovute al gran numero di persone che hanno preso parte al Seminario.

Sono sicuro che sapessero quali "sagge" persone (religiosi, religiose) fossimo e che non avremmo dato problemi per la sicurezza della casa.

Ringraziamo le signore della cucina. Ringraziamo tutto il personale della casa. Penso che tutti noi abbiamo apprezzato il cibo. E' veramente un bel posto dove stare.

Ai nostri traduttori, molte grazie per il vostro lavoro.

Now, there are people that I want to thank in a very special way: our Secretaries (all of them). You all know how hard they have been working. May I ask them to come personally to receive a card we have prepared for them in the name of all of us here? I think I have no words to say but THANK YOU VERY MUCH. MERCI BEAUCOUP. MUCHAS GRACIAS. GRAZIE DI CUORE. Sorry if we have, from time to time, put you under pressure. You did wonderful work

All of us we can say 'Thank you' very very much to our Executive Director: Padre Carlos. Merci beaucoup and muchas gracias.

I want to remind you that MISSIO Aachen, MISSIO Munich and MISEREOR made a substantial financial contribution to this Seminar. We thank them. As you know, your fee only covered food and lodging, and not the other expenses (over 10.000 Euros).

My dear sisters and brothers, I would like all of us to realize and appreciate all the many things that are going very well in our Congregations. For all those wonderful things happening in our respective Congregations, let us be grateful to God, to each member of our communities, especially to those in charge of initial and ongoing formation. It's very important to appreciate and value the ministry of the many Formators in our Congregations. Furthermore, I also think that not only the Formators are responsible

for the spiritual and human development of our young members, but also each and every member of a given Congregation. Therefore, all are called, in different capacities, to take part in the process of accompanying our young members in initial formation.

Many of us have been called to a religious missionary vocation. I am sure that our vocation to religious life impacts our way of being missionaries. I am equally certain that our being men and women religious enables us to be more open to the joys and challenges of multicultural and intercultural living.

Today's world is already as multicultural as many of our Congregations. It is my strong belief that despite the challenges and the demands of our vocation in an increasingly complex world, the One who has called us to become religious missionaries, Jesus Christ, will always accompany us and bring to fulfillment the mission He has entrusted to each one of us.

As men and women Religious, we are called to follow the example of Christ's self-sacrificing life of service and nurture our vocation with his Gospel. Our religious profession or vows, the community life we share and its witness to a divided and polarized world, and our prayer life are the primary means that help us live our religious and missionary vocation in today's world, with its multicultural and intercultural characteristics.

Multiculturality and interculturality is possible when we allow ourselves to be guided by the example of Christ. Let's not forget as I said the very first day of this Seminar that all does not depend on us. We do our best knowing that "God is with us. Let us put our trust in Him".

L'amour est très important dans tout cela. Avec l'Amour, tout devient possible. Nous avons chanté il y a deux jours « Love changes everything. Love will never let us be the same » et je pense qu'on peut ajouter "Love will never let them be the same", ici je pense aux autres qui entrent dans nos congrégations peu importe leur origine. Si nous aimons vraiment comme nous aimerions nous mêmes être aimés, alors nous pouvons être certains que les choses vont commencer à changer dans nos communautés et je suis certain aussi que notre témoignage de vie sera déjà cette Bonne Nouvelle que nous voulons annoncer. A ce moment là aussi, nous serons sur le bon chemin pour une vraie transformation, pour une vraie conversion de chacun et de chacune d'entre nous comme le veut Jésus ressuscité et pas comme certains membres le voudraient. En effet, notre Règle suprême à tous et à toutes est la suite du Christ dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, dans un lieu bien déterminé. C'est pour cela que la Formation est et restera un processus de conversion de toute la personne et qui dure toute la vie.

Ne pas trop vite penser que nous savons ou que nous ne savons pas. En effet, nous changeons chaque jour et le monde autour de nous change. Beaucoup de patience les uns envers les autres. Ce n'est pas pour rien que l'on a toujours dit que les trois vertus du missionnaire sont : Patience, patience et patience. Beaucoup d'humilité dans ce que nous sommes et dans ce que nous faisons. Beaucoup de confiance les uns envers les autres et cela pour construire la communauté.

Quand nous acceptons d'accueillir des jeunes dans nos Congrégations, nous acceptons aussi de changer comme nous leur demandons de changer. Autrement

vaut mieux peut-être ne pas accepter d'autres.

Formation initiale et formation permanente doivent toujours aller ensemble. On a jamais fini.

Nous avons vécu ensemble et nous avons partagé ensemble. Nous avons vécu en

grande communauté multiculturelle et nous avons essayé de vivre des relations interculturelles. Je pense que ça a marché. Ça doit donc être possible et quand nous retournons chez nous, encourageons tous les efforts qui se font déjà.

Nous avons besoin tous et toutes d'une spiritualité forte, centrée sur Jésus et son Evangile. Nous avons besoin de beaucoup de sens d'humour pour éviter de nous décourager trop facilement. En français, on dit, il n'y a pas de roses sans épines. Même quand il y a des zones ou des moments de turbulences, ne pensons pas facilement que c'est la fin ou que ce n'est pas possible.

Frères et sœurs, n'ayons pas peur. Comme Marie, Mère de Jésus et notre Mère, comme Marie, apprenons ou continuons à dire OUI, chaque jour à notre vocation missionnaire dans la vie consacrée, même quand c'est dur, même quand nous ne comprenons pas tout.

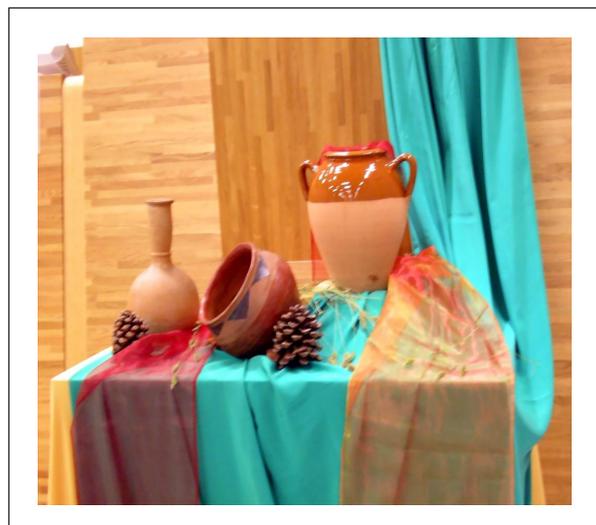
Mais évitons de sacrifier nos confrères et nos consœurs pour la bonne raison qu'il y a du travail, qu'il y a la mission, qu'il y a des oeuvres et des structures à sauver.

Prenons le temps qu'il faut pour leur offrir une bonne formation initiale et aussi leur assurer une bonne formation permanente. Veillons toujours à leur santé physique et spirituelle. C'est cela qui nous est demandé. Faisons confiance que l'Esprit de Dieu fera le reste.

John 6:67-69 : "Lord to whom would we go? You have the words that that give eternal life. And now we believe and know that you are the Holy One who has come from God".

Bonne mission à toutes et à tous.

*Edouard Tsimba, CICM
Président de SEDOS*

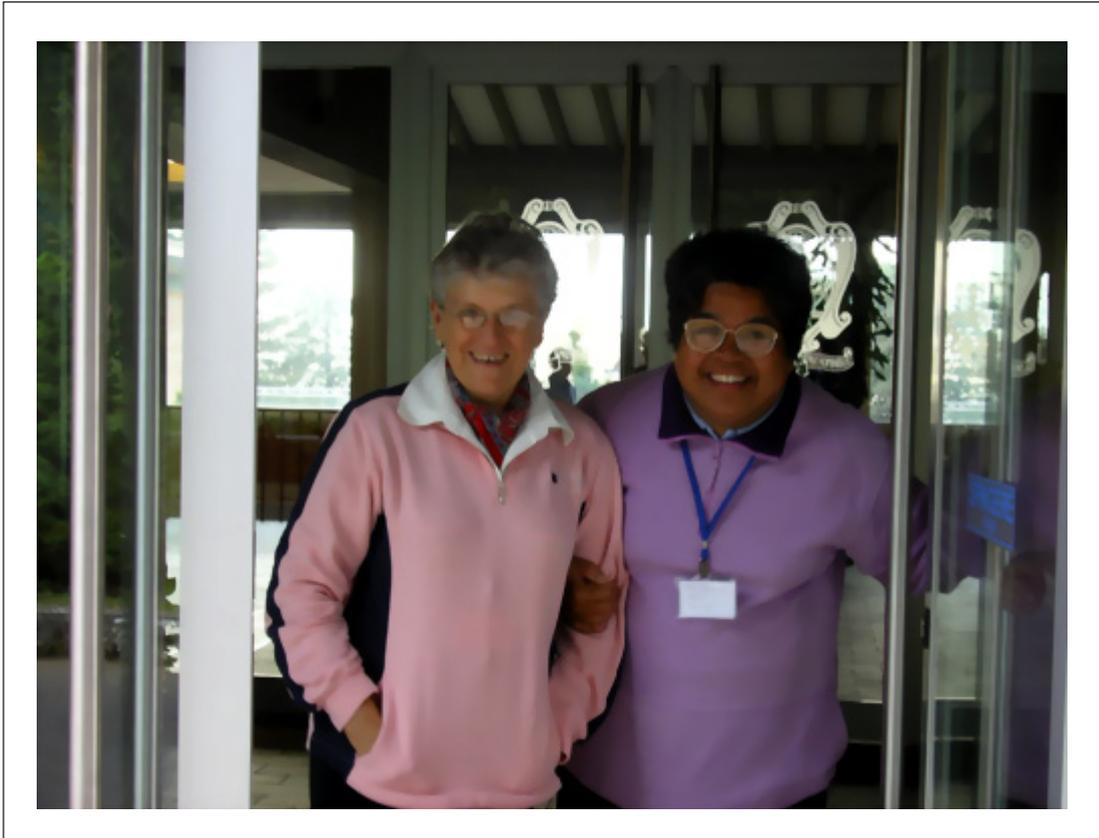


***.... Just a picture to tempt you
to be with us next time ...***



A panoramic view from "Casa Divin Maestro"
in front of the lake

Hoping to see you ...



... next year !!!

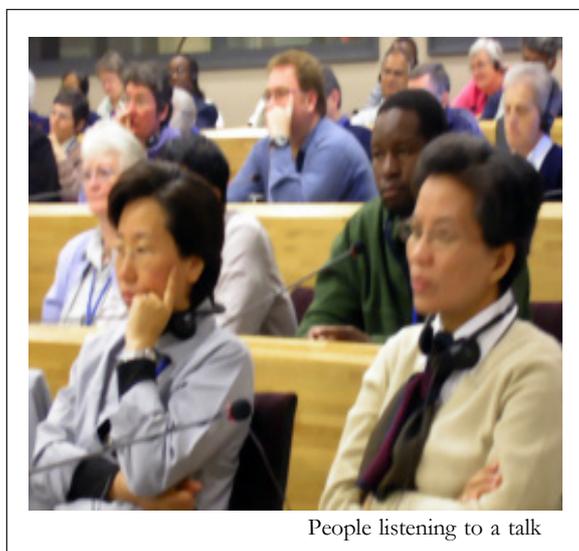
Some photos more ...



People talking near the lake



Participants to the Seminar. The second on the left is Sr Judith Moore, SMSM, a member of the SEDOS Executive Committee



People listening to a talk

NEXT
SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR

20-24 May 2008



***Missionary Church
in a Globalising World***

- ***Missionary Church***
- ***New Mission Presence***
- ***Being Missioner vs. Doing Mission***
- ***Role of the Religious***