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Editorial

Integrity of Creation as a Guiding Light for Globalization

The year 2008 has begun amid so much talk and discussion about the health of our planet and the social situation of so many millions of people in their daily struggle to survive. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) considers this to be an integral part our Christian mission. The whole of Creation is in pain and demands that humanity go back to being part of it. The World seems to be in a state of mutation and the challenge to the Church to be the “light of the earth” demands that we reappraise the role of the Mission of the Church.

Can we find in the Gospel the answers to the troubles of today’s sick World? Should we learn from our past missionary experience and use it to ‘re-evangelize’ the West? **Hugh MacMahon, SSC**, in *“Has Missionary Experience Anything to Offer?”* presents the essentials of the Gospel as an answer to rekindle our missionary spirit.

José Cristo Rey García Paredes, CMF, in *“Mission ... in a Mutating World and in Front of a New Planetary Consciousness”* invites us to reflect on this new role of the committed Christian to be the guiding light of the mutating planet.

Andrew G. Reception, of *Globalization on Integral* on the new form of dignity and personal steps to understand the context people must take place.



S.T.H.D., analyses *“The Impact Evangelization”*, shedding light evangelization where human conversion become the first in which communion with the

Gearóid Francisco *“Mission and Ecology: Christian Environment Under Threat”* from which to look at our

under threat’ and the mission of Christ *who came so “that they may have life, and have it abundantly”*.

O’Conaire, OFM, in *Mission in the Light of an* offers us a new perspective mission: ‘an environment

Lucas Cerviño analyses the impact of globalization from the perspective of ‘discovering the other’. In *“Mission as Life Irrupting From Diversity”* he presents our mission as discovering ‘that life is reached and matures to the extent that one gives one’s life for the other’. Therefore, promoting a constant search for a relational identity should be of primary concern for mission.

Nguyên Tân Khoa presents *“Sous le nouveau régime, le catholicisme vietnamien a progressé en nombre et en qualité”*. This short essay offers a historical view of the evangelization taking place in Vietnam today and the difficulties it has to surmount.

Endy M. Bayuni’s report on the reality in Malaysia and Indonesia confronted with the politization of Islam highlights the debate on *“Islam et démocratie: Le modèle malaisien face au modèle indonésien”*.

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director

Has Missionary Experience Anything to Offer?

- Hugh MacMahon, S.S.C. -

I wonder would Members of any Western Missionary Society be surprised if asked how many of their confrères are still convinced of the need for ‘*ad gentes*’ mission? And by ‘*ad gentes*’ I mean going to countries where the culture and thinking of the people were still untouched by the message of the Gospel?

It is not so long ago that missionaries from the West were journeying eagerly to the East, confident they had something valuable to offer. In the early days, when they went by sailing ship, half of those who set out never got there because of shipwreck or disease. Those who got there had no expectation of ever returning home. Yet their commitment never faltered.

Today it is different. The excitement of mission is gone from the West. Christianity is less important in people’s lives. Young people are willing to travel the globe to offer their services in humanitarian causes but most do not regard any one faith as superior to another.

There are a number of reasons for this. One is disillusionment with the sad state of the Church in the West where it seems to have little to offer modern life or other cultures. Perhaps because of that, it had been stressed that every generation has to be re-evangelized and the situation is as urgent, if not more so, in the West as in the East or elsewhere. Others go further and, based on the observation that religious practices have a great similarity throughout the world, claim that looking on Christianity as being special is just the relic of a Western superiority complex.

Similarities and Differences

This last point is a good example of the confused thinking about mission today.

There is no doubt that religious similarities and parallels do exist around the world. Anyone who has read Mircea Eliade’s works on sacred symbols will

have been struck by the fact that rocks, trees, wells, fire and New Year festivals have been treated in an almost identical religious manner in traditional cultures all around the globe.

A similar phenomenon can be found in the ways people seek divine intervention or help in urgent financial, health or personal needs. I have witnessed this in places as disparate as Taoist and Buddhist temples in Korea and China, a cathedral in Cebu and the shrine of a holy man in Lahore. In each, the devotees performed basically the same devotions: humbly approaching or circling a sacred image, sometimes on their knees, offering candles or incense and repeating a prayer or sacred phrase.

In their private life those believers were probably aware of precepts, similar to the Ten Commandments, which they knew they should be observing and felt guilty when they failed to keep them. They were good people, trying to do their best as their traditions guided them. Only the identity of the deity differed. If one of those religious acts was to be judged superior to any other it would be in terms of which deity was more powerful or successful in providing the desired help.

Here I do not want to make too strong a distinction between people with a ‘favour seeking faith’ and a ‘spiritual search faith’. The reality is that the two are intermixed but at times, in individuals and in cultures, one dominates the other. To spell this out would take a book in itself, here I do not have the space and hope my point is not misunderstood.

Answering Questions

In many parts of the world today, most pressing material needs can now be solved with human resources. In the 1980s and 1990s when tens of thousands of young Koreans were drawn to the Church it was not in the

hope of divine assistance in economic or other physical necessities but in a search to satisfy their deeper and inner yearnings. The Church's stand for democracy and human rights on the national level had given them grounds for thinking it might have the answers.

What they were looking for was inspiration in their lives, a source of encouragement and strength, a guide for moral conduct and a gateway to the transcendent they could vaguely sense around them. Young people in present day China show the same need for a view of the world that includes the timeless and profound in human nature.

In my experience, Christianity, and no other religion today, has the answers to the questions emerging in minds both in East and West. This is not to belittle the role of other faiths and the important contribution they have made in the human search for fulfilment. It was my involvement with oriental religions over a number of decades that led me to question what was of universal value in my own Christian tradition. In the process I also benefited personally from many of the insights and practices I found in the great religions of the East.

It was my search that led me to discover what is unique in the message of the Gospels. I had been warned by those closely aligned to modern thinking that it is not possible to isolate a core Christian message because of the bias of cultural interpretations. Theoretically that might be true, and indeed such considerations may have persuaded many to give up the effort. However practice shows a different reality. I have found that if the Gospels are taken in their entirety they do give a clear and coherent message that is valid for any culture.

What I found in the human figure of Christ was his image of a compassionate Father, of the Spirit alive in the individual, the call to be part of a new creation, an answer to evil in the world, a spirituality that seeks the transcendent in ordinary life and a reaffirmation of the individual which challenges him or her in either Western or Eastern cultures.

Fortunately there are enough credible mainstream theologians in the Church today to reassure missionaries that what people in other cultures are seeking can indeed be found in the heart of the Scriptures.

Disappointment

Unfortunately, many of the young Koreans in the 1980s and 90s did not find what they were looking for in the Church there at that time. Despite its public stand on political and social issues, on closer inspection the Church proved to be less democratic, individual-orientated, supportive and Korean than they had expected. While Korean society was becoming more liberal and forward-looking, the Church continued to draw on the nation's Confucian past with its emphasis on formality, doctrine and hierarchy.

Because of this, many of the young people left unsatisfied. That does not prove that Christianity is deficient, it just shows that in many churches practice has still to catch up on teaching. As one Church leader recently put it, after the Reformation the Church moved from evangelizing to catechizing and has to return to Scripture if it is to engage modern society.

A Further Role for Missionaries?

If Western Churches are to recover their vitality and missionary spirit, they could benefit from a reminder of how fresh and inspiring the Christian message can be when freed from the weight of history and presented in narrative form, relating to the life concerns of ordinary people.

This is the challenge that missionaries faced when they tried to bring the Gospel to people who could not appreciate the message when it was presented to them in terms, formulations and practices borrowed from another culture and age. Many discovered that they had not been adequately prepared for the task of identifying the essentials of the Gospel and introducing them to another culture. As a result some took more time than others in making progress.

For over four hundred years missionaries took a confident faith from the West to the East, knowing they were providing the greatest service by doing so. Now it may be the time for modern missionaries to take that faith, refined and renewed, back to their home churches and help rekindle enthusiasm there.

Ref.: Text sent by the author in 2007.

The Impact of Globalization on Integral Evangelization

- Fr Andrew G. Reception, S. TH. D. -

Introduction

The topic involves two fundamental themes of Catholic social teaching and the Church's mission. Given the breadth of the themes it is impossible to discuss all the aspects of human dignity and the new evangelization very extensively. However, it is my wish to indicate essential points that could be useful in ecclesial life.

The context has always opened a new horizon and given meaning to the value of human dignity and the urgency of a new evangelization. The waves of renewal initiated by the Second Vatican Council have been seen both as a point of arrival and a point of departure. Contrary to the traditional and progressive interpretations of Vatican II, with the former rejecting its teaching and the latter breaking away from anything not included in its documents, there is a new thrust towards *ressourcement* that locates authentic interpretation from a process of doctrinal continuity with the Church's tradition. Thus, developing human dignity through new evangelization has to find a new contextual mould without in any way disrupting the continuity with the tradition of the Church.

The process of globalization has changed the contours of our human landscape in contemporary society. In other words, the context, though always particular and specific, would have to account for the globalizing processes that influence the mission of the Church today and its involvement in the different worlds of culture, politics, economy, the arts and entertainment, sports and education. The question of developing human dignity through the new evangelization cannot be

dissociated from the context in which there is the constant interplay between the local and the global. Amidst the changing context, however, it is once again opportune to reiterate what *Redemptor Hominis* says: "the way of the human person is the primary and fundamental way of the Church" (n. 14). Thus, the human person remains in a way a "constant in context" that transcends history because God himself has made humanity a bearer of divine life through Jesus Christ. Similarly, we can also say that the way of the human person is the way of the new evangelization. Central to the new evangelization is the affirmation of redeemed humanity.

In this presentation my task is to affirm the centrality of the human person within the living Tradition of the Church and in the perspective of the present context to point out how the evangelizing mission of the Church can help in the integral development of the human person.

Understanding the new evangelization as integral evangelization

The new evangelization is actually integral evangelization according to Paul VI and John Paul II: "The sharing of our faith with others, needs to be holistic in approach so as to bring about a genuine transformation of individuals and society. This is the new or integral evangelization that each Christian is called to actively practice".¹ What is described as 'new' is actually not the evangelization process itself but the emphasis on what is integral. In the history of the Church evangelization has always been crucial to the proclamation of faith in Word, Sacrament and life. The novelty of integral evangelization is not in the content of the proclamation but the manner in which

the Gospel brings about personal conversion and effects a “total process of human development”.²

The process of transformation brought about by integral evangelization is an on-going commitment that does not stop in the personal realm of faith experience: “An authentic evangelization does not stop at the moment of conversion but allows the conversion experience to inspire one to an ever greater activity enabling one to respond more generously to the call of the Spirit ... for this (conversion) experience to be life-giving, it must be an on-going one, a continuing response to the Spirit in one’s life. This personal experience of the Lord should lead to an active involvement in the life of the Church and in the fostering of the human”.³ It is important to point out that personal conversion as the first step in the process of the integral or new evangelization leads to the full development of what is truly human not only individually but also communally.

Respecting the Context in Integral Evangelization

In doing theology today the context has been in the limelight. Proponents of contextual theologies have indicated quite extensively the need to take the context seriously into account in theologizing. The gamut of human experience in all circumstances needs to be present in any attempt to explain the faith meaningfully and forcefully.

The parable of the monkey and the fish can provide an important insight to understand the pivotal role the context plays in integral evangelization:

A monkey and a small fish lived in the farthest corner of a virgin forest known for its beauty, lush vegetation and animal life. The monkey was very good and was always ready to help other animals. No day was spent without the monkey’s search for the neediest animals in the forest. The monkey found himself near a river. Since it was not possible for him to swim, he decided to spend some time on the riverbank and observe the flowing river. He looked at

the river and saw a small fish swimming upstream. Wanting to help, he thought that the small fish might be feeling very cold and could drown in the long river.

The monkey decided to help the fish. He hopped onto a piece of floating wood and grabbed the fish as he floated by. As he held the cold fish in his hand, he felt sad at the thought that nobody had ever come by to help the fish get warm. He was happy that he, at last, had discovered the plight of this poor fish and been of some assistance. But the monkey was not content with simply rescuing the small cold fish. He decided he could help it even more, and decided to take it home and hold it close as he slept, warming the small fish with his own body.

The next morning, the monkey discovered that the small fish had died. He grew sad at the sight of its lifeless body, but felt somewhat better knowing he had done his best to help his friend. He concluded that the fish must have died of a cold, which he no doubt caught during the time he had been in the river, when no one else had stopped to help him.⁴

The monkey’s desire to help the fish killed it because he failed to know the very nature of the fish as well as the actual condition and needs of a fish. A genuine integral evangelization embraces the whole person in all its dimensions. In other words, not only the spiritual dimension is important to evangelization but also all aspects of life. Thus, integral evangelization is contextual because it embraces the human person holistically within the present condition of history.

Personal Conversion and Integral Evangelization

Conversion is first of all God’s initiative. From the standpoint of humanity, conversion is becoming more human in the sense that becoming human is being born anew from God. At the outset, we need to clarify that conversion is not just a matter of turning away from sin and all forms of selfishness but is the first step towards becoming fully alive in God.

In a recent theological colloquium at

the Catholic University of Paris, I was drawn to the idea of humanization proposed by Adrien Demoustier.⁵ The word-pairs used to describe the journey towards human fullness could indicate the dynamics of conversion as growth and transformation in integral evangelization:

1. Exteriority - Interiority

Authentic conversion is a journey from exteriority to interiority. The great challenge of conversion is how to enter more deeply into one's life and see it from God's point of view. In other words, the process of conversion as becoming more human entails a passage from a life governed by the senses and the desires of the flesh to a life rooted in the Spirit; a passage from a restless search for material goods to the serenity of the heart that abandons itself in God.

Integral evangelization renews humanity from within. Conversion as a journey towards interiority highlights that evangelization prioritizes *being* before *doing*; gives precedence to a way of life before structures.

2. Superficiality – Depth

It is not possible to quantify conversion. Nevertheless, it could be described qualitatively as a movement from superficiality to depth. Superficiality is not simply about useless chatter or a mere familiarity but it is the absence of a meaningful relationship. In the language of conversion, we can say that superficiality is the absence of God in one's personal experience, that is, God remains abstract, academic and distant from one's present life.

Depth is the personal presence of God in one's life that changes the very meaning of existence and relationships. Conversion is the intimate and personal experience of God that transforms existence from a succession of days to a progressive movement towards the fullness of freedom and love.

Integral evangelization transforms humanity from a mere biological existence into an experience of God as the centre of life and community. Conversion as a movement from superficiality to depth

emphasizes that human transformation is first of all an affirmation of God's presence in the humanization process. God's presence, however, brings out the real meaning of what is human and makes humanity capable of receiving God.

3. Communication – Communion

Communication is indispensable to human growth and transformation. There has been a breakthrough in communication due to the impact of globalization. In spite of advancement in communication technology, many people have remained isolated and incapable of intimacy. In fact, people have been slowly experiencing de-personalization because communication technologies have slowly taken over the more basic forms of human interaction. It is enough to cite as an example the impact of the cellular phone on contemporary men and women in order to illustrate how people prefer to send a text message than to speak to the nearest person even if the message was meant for that person. Communication has been contributing to human progress but then there is the danger of making men totally homeless even in his very life.

Wendell Berry illustrates the homelessness of men and women today in spite of modern means of communication:

The modern house is not a response to its place, but rather to the affluence and social status of its owner. It is the first means by which the modern *conquistador*, seated in his living room in the evening in front of his TV set, many miles from his work, can easily forget where he is and what he has done. He is everywhere and nowhere. Everything around him, everything on TV, tells him of his success.... Geography is defined for him by the virtual time and space of his computer – which is to say his geography is artificial; he could be anywhere, and he usually is.⁶

Communication, in spite of its merits and important contribution to contemporary society has contributed to many people's experience of homelessness, dis-integration, desolation and individualism. Homelessness "consists in

an abstract and mechanistic pattern of being, acting, and producing that makes human beings rootless, in a world stripped of its intrinsic creaturely order”.⁷

Communication has to pave the way for communion if conversion is to be experienced as coming home. Communion rooted in the Trinitarian life brings about a transformation of the human person from dis-integration to integration, from desolation to hope, from individualism to community. Thus, communion becomes an experience of being at home with God and with others in the sense that home is not just a place but it is our very own humanity becoming God’s dwelling place and the very space of our life with others. Integral evangelization provides the way to a fecund experience of communion that brings back to humanity its very identity as a being that is always longing for home in God and in others.

Fundamental Aspects of Integral Evangelization for Developing Human Dignity

Integral evangelization embraces the whole person, the whole of that person in society, in community and in relationship with other people and with society’s institutions. In other words, integral evangelization always seeks to promote the full development of the human person in different contexts and relationships.

In contrast to the traditional approach that focuses on the individual but is lacking in a social transformative dimension; and to the secular approach that is more concerned with improving the life of the person and society, than with that person’s relationship with God, the integral approach to evangelization is holistic: its impact is spiritual as well as social, transforming the individual as well as the society around him.⁸

Allow me to indicate three fundamental aspects of integral evangelization and to draw from these aspects some insights for developing human dignity.

1. Evangelizing Presence

The need to give witness to God is urgent

in our world today. Nevertheless, the need for witnessing cannot be dissociated from a life that has been totally renewed and transformed, that is, converted. The first aspect of integral evangelization is its evangelizing presence, which consists of radiating the presence of Christ to people around us by a lifestyle in keeping with the Gospel. Proclamation is done quietly but truly through the witness of life.

The story of a Bangwa Tribe in the heart of the forest in Cameroon, Africa, is worth narrating. The *Fon* or King of the tribe, approached the bishop of the nearest place to the forest to beg him to pray for all the children of the tribe who had been dying of the sleeping sickness. He explained to the bishop how his magicians had complied with all the rituals but had still failed to prevent the children from dying. He told the Bishop after offering him some gifts, that he was taking a chance in asking him to pray to the Christian God to stop the death of the children in his tribe. In so happened, that the bishop was going to Rome. Aside from simply praying for the children, he asked assistance from a group of lay people to go to the tribe and find out what could be done to help the king. Two nurses and three medical doctors volunteered to go to Fontem, Africa, and assist the tribe. In spite of the very difficult situation at the beginning of their humanitarian work, the nurses and doctors who were all Catholics pursued their work with dedication and commitment. The death toll of the children decreased. Twenty years later, a hospital has been built in the heart of the forest and a school for the children of the tribe. Roads were constructed. Water and electrical systems were set up in the whole village. One day, the king asked the volunteers why they chose to suffer with his people and help his tribe without asking for anything in return. The Catholic volunteers finally found the moment to speak about Jesus Christ after twenty years. The king asked to be baptized as a Christian. Soon after all the members of the tribe were also baptized.

The evangelizing presence is not simply an occasional show of kindness and goodness to people who do not believe in Christ or to people who have lost their faith

in Christ but it is a “convincing testimony of a consistent Christian life, wherever the Lord calls us to be his witnesses”.⁹

Developing the dignity of people does not begin with a blueprint of action and project proposals but with a convincing witness of Christian life that enkindles the desire for God and in turn effects authentic personal and social transformation. Human dignity is not a question of *having* but a question of being *capax Dei*, that is, being capable of participating in the very life of God.

2. Building a Community of Dialogue

Creating ripples and building bridges captures the very image of a community of dialogue. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has pointed out that dialogue is at the heart of the Asian Church that lives amidst the world's major religious traditions. The three dialogues that the Asian Church is called to live are: dialogue with the poor, dialogue with culture and dialogue with religions. The second aspect of integral evangelization is building a community of dialogue, which consists of entering into a respectful and nourishing relationship with the partner in dialogue, be it with the poor, with the faithful of other religions, or with people of other cultures.

A Buddhist monk from Thailand went to stay for six months with a group of priests in Northern Italy. It was winter and the cold winter made the community of priests worry about the monk who did not have thick robes since he came from tropical Asia. The priests made a point of turning up the thermostat so that the monk once inside the house would not feel very cold. They also gave the monk more blankets. Every morning the monk would find that his robe had been washed and pressed. They also tried to eat the food that would make the monk feel at home. After six months, when the monk was about to return to Thailand, he wanted to share his experience with the community of priests. He surprised everybody when he stated that he finally understood the Cross (Buddhists cannot understand why a Christian God has to suffer and die on a

cross) and he revealed that the love shown to him by the community of priests made him think that only a loving God could actually die on the Cross.

What a powerful experience of dialogue! More than an exchange of doctrinal explanations, dialogue involves the very lives of the people in dialogue. Integral evangelization builds a community of dialogue not primarily through activities but through life-giving experiences that deepen reciprocal appreciation of values and traditions.

Developing the dignity of the person entails an appreciation of one's personal and religious identity *vis-à-vis* the diversity of social status, religion, and culture. Dialogue is built through life-nourishing relationships that give priority to the value of the human person more than anything else. Friendship goes beyond preferences because it goes straight to the very worth of the person independent of the conditions imposed by culture, religion and poverty. Reciprocity is experienced not as a fruit of dialogue but as its very foundation.

3. Authentic Efforts for Human Development and Liberation

“If the Church preaches without significant action, she preaches an empty word”.¹⁰ The credibility of the Church's proclamation needs to be supported by action that addresses issues of social justice. The third aspect of integral evangelization is authentic efforts for human development and liberation. It has been reiterated that it is not the competence of the Church to provide for the needs of the poor due to Government inaction but it is within the mission of the Church to safeguard and uphold human dignity.

As a seminarian in Tagaytay City, the Philippines, in the 1990s, I saw how the scenic and quiet city overlooking Taal Volcano was being transformed into a getaway city for busy people in Manila and the neighbouring areas. An international resort was being built on the other side of the ridge just below the highest peak of Tagaytay and the developers wanted the people living near the area to leave the place

because they would be eyesores to the guests of the resort. The people were helpless because they did not have land titles but they had stayed in the place since the 1950s. When we were approached to help them, we did not know what to do and we were afraid that we would lose our benefit of going to the resort free. But the situation challenged us to work for the cause of the poor people. We fought for them and negotiated with the developers for a better scheme to help the people not to be displaced. We prayed with the people for God's help. We thought that nothing would happen. But our advocacy made the owners of the international resort build concrete houses for the people near the resort and give them job opportunities as golf caddies, janitors and waiters. We did not know what changed the heart of the resort developers. But we felt that our concerted effort to safeguard and uphold the human dignity of poor people in Tagaytay made us appreciate even more the real meaning of the preferential love for the poor.

Authentic efforts for human development and liberation do not require changing the plight of the poor in a grand way. We have to start with the poor nearest to us. Realistic Solidarity with the poor would have to confront the context of the poor and see that context from the world of the poor, from somebody who is poor.

Developing the dignity of the person must avoid any paternalistic concept of solidarity and a top-down charity. What is crucial is to give the poor a chance to see their situation, to detest their misery, and to search for solutions and to work with others in bringing about change. The poor should never be instrumentalized in our evangelization work. We cannot use the poor to justify our mission. The poor are partners and not dependents. Much of the efforts for human liberation and development are focused on the emancipation of the material poor in our society. Nevertheless, we should never promote the culture of dependence in our efforts for social transformation. Instead we need to involve the poor in their process of liberation by highlighting their strengths and by tapping their potentials.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by telling you a story from Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. A strange disease of a contagious amnesia afflicted a village. The adults in the village were the first to get sick, and then the disease that caused the loss of memory of everything including the names of common objects infected almost all the villagers. Fortunately, there was one woman who was immune to the disease and she tried to help cure the disease by giving labels to objects: "This is a table"; "this is a window", "this is a cow". At the entrance to the village by the main road, there were two sign boards. The first signboard read: "This village is called *Macondo*"; the second signboard which was much bigger and read: "God exists".

The story makes us realize that we could actually forget everything that we have known so far but this would not constitute a great loss. If we forget that God exists we would lose everything that is profoundly human.

Developing the dignity of the person through integral evangelization involves discovering what is profoundly human from our experience of who God is.

Footnotes

¹ Nancy R. Catan, "Integral Evangelization: Creating Ripples and Building Bridges", *Evangelizing Presence: The Challenge of Social Transformation* (Makati City: Set Graphics, 2004), 7.

² *Evangelizing Presence*, 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ Adapted from Rogerion Santos de Aguiar, "Are WE Monkeys?", *Together Magazine* (April-June 1996), 22.

⁵ Adrien Demoustier, "Devenir Homme, C'est Achever de Naître de Dieu", International Theological Colloquium, Catholic Institute of Paris, 27 February 2007.

⁶ Wendell Berry, "Living in the Future: The Modern Agricultural Ideal", in *The Unsettling of America* (New York: Avon, 1977), 53.

⁷ David Schindler, "Homelessness and the Modern Condition", *Communio: International Catholic Review* 27 (Fall 2000): 415.

⁸ *Evangelizing Presence*, 46.

⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 85.

¹⁰ *Evangelizing Presence*, 17.

Ref.: Text from the author. November 2007.

Mission ... In a Mutating World and in Front of a New Planetary Consciousness

- José Cristo Rey García Paredes, CMF -

INTRODUCTION

Mission never settles and is always restless before new challenges, especially during the times of epochal change. There are some people who believe that an authentic mutation in the human being¹ is taking place today and a new consciousness is taking place.²

Times of change or of mutation?

All of us know what “a time of change” is.³ In one way or another we can imagine what a change of an epoch is. It is much more difficult to imagine what “a time of mutation” is.⁴

In any case, the changes that are taking place today in humanity are much more serious than we could imagine and they affect the mission entrusted to us. Today, we need a vision that will enable us to carry out the mission with clear foresight, because without “vision” we could become blind guides.

I am grateful to SEDOS for extending to me an invitation to participate in this forum whose objective is to enhance and revitalize our missionary answers to the challenges of the times and places. I hope that my intervention can contribute to this objective. Thank you very much.

Objectives of my reflection

The Church has desired, in recent times, to be a vigilant sentinel of everything happening around us, paying constant attention to the new needs of human beings. The Church recognizes that the new

challenges imply new “opportunities” and lead towards new answers. However, we have to add that we can also detect in the Church a notable “confusion” with regard to the mission she has to fulfill in this hour of history. We commit ourselves to the mission without a “vision” set in advance. We commit ourselves to a work that, at times, appears blind and without meaning. In the churches and communities or congregations there is much movement; but the question is: “What is our direction?”. It could be a journey towards nowhere, a meaningless movement. We work a lot, but do we have vision?

In our world there are people with the gift of vision, to whom we must listen. These people do not always belong to our environment. However, through them the Spirit illumines our vocation. What these

We Have a Dream: Structuring the World for Planetary Creativity, Humanity, Compassion, Freedom, Enlightened Education, Liberation, Joy, and Prosperity for All.

people propose should motivate us to reflect and change our programmes and practice. We are in the time of the “mission of the Spirit”: sent by the Father and the Son, acting in our world, taking care of Creation, carrying Redemption to its fulfillment, and making the bonds of the Covenant stronger. If this is the case, should we not follow its signs, obey its inspiration, and re-configure our participation in the mission which comes from God? Would not this be to exercise “oboedientia fidei” or missionary obedience demanded of us at this moment?

The focus of this conference is on one datum (fact): that is, the growing consciousness of the “human species” that imposes itself and brings about an increasing planetary consciousness about our humanity.

Next, I would like to look at what kind of implications this could have for our missionary consciousness and its configuration.

I.

CHANGE, MUTATION? TOWARDS THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE "SPECIES"

One of the most striking phenomena of our time, at the beginning of the twenty first century, is the attention given to the human person and to our planet. There is a great interest in scientific data on genes, genomes, the manifestations and development of life as well as on human thought, consciousness, artificial intelligence, and human and genetic engineering.

1. Who are we today, in the 21st century? Two opposed movements

It is not easy to define what we are living today. Dynamisms, apparently opposed, are moving us outwardly and inwardly. I call them "movements towards the correlation", "movements towards the difference".

Ø There is in humanity a *movement towards correlation*, proximity, and solidarity: this movement tries to overcome the confrontations of the past – with its violence, imperialism and destructive capacity. Humanity today wants to be more hospitable, more intercultural and interreligious. It favours, dialogue, negotiation, mutual understanding. It establishes agreements. This movement responds to the phenomenon of mondialization or globalization, planetization, and the new consciousness of the 'species'. However, this movement is unable to counterbalance the negative changes caused by so many confrontations and the zones of the 'culture of death' are still manifest among us.

Ø Simultaneously there is in our humanity a *movement towards difference*: groups and people defend their identity; they reject being absorbed into the globalizing movements which disregard or eliminate it. Thanks to this movement, an admirable biodiversity is maintained in humanity: more than 2,000 different cultures, multiple languages, different religions and lifestyles.

This movement responds to the phenomenon of the protection of the local or national space, the environment, religion, cultural minorities, language. However, this phenomenon risks creating strong fragmentation and preventing the construction of that "common house" which everybody would like our planet to be transformed into.

To achieve the dream of a humanity plural and at peace and reconciled and just, is the utopia we carry in our blood, but that is constantly blocked and threatened by human egoism and the ancestral practice of confrontation and violence, from which we do not know how to break free.

2. The dreams of science and technology

The *technological-instrumental apparatus* we have at our disposal nowadays is so powerful that it modifies even the very human being utilizing it.⁵ The technological apparatus changes our notion of space, time, our way of reasoning, expressing ourselves, of interrelating among us.

The scientific discoveries are helping us to discover the laws which preside over and govern the world's structure: from the universe to the atom! Quantum physics and the theory of relativity, help to convert us from nocturnal births into diurnal ones. The light of science is gradually guiding us more securely on our journey. We are already in possession of an immense knowledge, but it is not yet popularly utilized, and often it is underutilized by shortsighted people, unable to take advantage of it and draw wisdom from it. It is absolutely necessary to popularize science and technology so that the consciousness of our species, of humanity will grow.

3. Are we not in times of mutation?

"Mutation" is a technical term taken from biology. It designates the transformation – without the possibility of returning – of a being or species. It is, then, a more radical phenomenon than a revolution. Revolution is a word designating a circular movement whose effects could be deleted by another revolution. When, on the other hand, a mutation takes place in a society, it could be

said that “destiny forks and what follows the mutation is either a new effort towards other horizons, or its decline and death”.

From a genetic perspective, it seems that the human race did not experiment mutations in the last 100 thousand years.⁶ Nonetheless, the human race has experienced mutations in its evolution from the technological and cultural perspective. The most advanced genetic researchers maintain that the human species will be replaced by another one, created by the same human race, and that it will be the product of scientific developments, such as cloning, space journeys, nanotechnology, internet and the race against contamination, infection and birth control. The future human species will bring perfection not only to the cultural and environment medium, but also to its own organism through genetics and biotechnology.

History shows that for ten thousand years mankind has been through wars and massacres and that the great religions – in spite of the moral principles of their sacred books – never were an obstacle to the unleashing of violence. The terrible experience of the last century: two World Wars resulted in the death of millions of people! For this reason, the longing for a humanity without confrontation, war, massacres is growing stronger and deeper. We are convinced that violence will never be a necessary factor for evolution.

Is not the prevalence in the human spirit of a change of perspective a real mutation in the vision of our world and of a serious change in the conditions of life on earth? Do we realize that these mutations are irreversible?

4. The four expansions of consciousness

There is much talk today about the progressive expansion of human consciousness throughout the journey of its immense evolving itinerary:

Ø The *first expansion* took place when individuals were united with other individuals in the *tribe*;

Ø The *second expansion* was when the individuals were united with abstract groups of individuals in a *nation-state*;

Ø The *third expansion* was when people were united among themselves – different groups, peoples and nations;

Ø The *fourth expansion* will take place when we achieve planetary consciousness.

It is obvious that the consciousness of identity, belonging, covenant of the human being is different in each one of the stages: we have been going from a tribal identity and belonging, through a national-state identity and belonging, to a transnational or continental one, to arrive at a planetary one.

We shall then arrive at the *fourth expansion* of the consciousness: a new vision in which human beings, animals and environment are integrated, that is, the total ecology of our planet. This fourth expansion of consciousness becomes possible, thanks to new virtues such as: hospitality towards other people and things, compassion towards any manifestation of life, humanity *versus* any type of wild behaviour, the consciousness of equality *versus* any form of despotism, shared prosperity, and mutual respect for the dignity of the person and of life.

This fourth expansion of consciousness reveals to us that there is no reason for a human being to be the enemy of another human being: we are not “national” beings, with frontiers, wars and weapons. We have been given an artificial identity, which is not real; and this artificial identity has been given to us by those organizing the world for their self-enhancement, to feed their avarice, their ambition and personal profit. These powerful people have become insensible to the cries of the earth and of the human beings living on it. The emperors, intoxicated with power, play the hap while the earth is burning. Our identity is planetary and global. We are citizens of the world. The Creator has given to each one of us a global citizenship. We are human beings endowed with hospitality, compassion, cordial reason, wisdom, humanity and with unlimited possibilities which up to now have not been manifested.

The fourth expansion of our consciousness leads us to planetization, to that system in which everything is balanced and integrated. Likewise, it leads us to exclude from our planet weapons, their fabrication, and the arms race. It leads us to put an end to a World Bank at the service of particular

benefits and usury, and to replace it with another institution with concern for the basic needs of all the human beings on our planet. The actual model of globalization “does not spread wealth; it channels it to the wealthy, making millionaires into billionaires” (Joel Hirschhorn). The consequences continue to be inequality, poverty, war, destruction (violation, pillage, exploitation of the natural resources of our planet) and desperation.

The fourth expansion of consciousness brings together the integration of everything, not the homogenization. Planetization tries to articulate what is diverse and build up a solidarity and a dynamically balanced humanity.⁷ Against the single, uniform way of thinking, it proposes an alternative, integrating way of thinking. Planetization demands that we learn how to critically integrate diversity. Only in that way will we be able to put an end to the violence of the species.

5. *The future*

How to build a more humane and less hominid future? The permanent struggle between ethnology and culture characterizes our evolutionary process. Is it possible to cease to be primates?

How to complete the humanization? The diversity generated throughout the 2.5 million years of human evolution, with the concurrence of all the components of the genre, has to be harvested by us, by *Homo sapiens*. All the information that the different societies, races and cultures have accumulated during years of experience, which has enabled them to survive, has to be placed at the service of the whole of society in order to critically journey towards planetization.

The attempt being made at the present moment to establish a unique way of thinking is an adventure with a very uncertain end which leads us to misery; the elimination of peoples and of different forms of adaptation without having integrated their knowledge. The destruction of everything that is different is an act of self-destruction of our own creative diversity.

The socialization of science and technological achievements helps us to have a vision of ourselves that is very different.

6. *It is the time of ... the praxis of the species and of an ethical revision*

It is time to put into action the praxis of the species. We need a new social praxis. Never before was the human being in possession of such potential or power, as it is today, for transformation or destruction in a full scientific or technical revolution.

It is not enough to talk or to write. It is necessary to build. This has to be done with the hands and with the head, with experience, by trial and error, with patience and perseverance and, above all, with belief in the project.

The 21st century offers great possibilities for planetary transformation. The development of knowledge and its application open unprecedented horizons of bio-cultural transformation.

Not long ago, we thought that ethics was limited purely to the human realm, in its individual and social dimensions. But, nowadays, scientific advances demand that the human being take into consideration, within *its ethical duties* many other aspects which up to now were not taken into account, among them, the realm of the biosphere.

There are three areas which demand special attention and ethical reflection: a) *In the social sphere*, the phenomenon of globalization or mondialization which imposes on us the duty to project a new global ethics capable of regulating and establishing a dialogue between cultures and religions; b) *In the sphere of biology and genetics* (to decipher the human genome, artificial or assisted fecundation, genetic engineering), there is a demand for a new way of confronting ethical matters (bioethics), a field fraught with difficulties and dangerous consequences, as well as of splendid achievements and promise; c) *In the ecological sphere*, phenomena such as overpopulation, the advances of the techno-industry, and the progressive deterioration of the environment have helped us to discover that the strong and progressive impact of our human species over the planet in which we live, could lead to fatal consequences, even to the disappearance of our own species and of the whole planet. This demands a new level of

responsibility which we were not aware of a few decades ago; responsibility which extends not only to the contemporary human generation, but, above all, to the future generations.

We could say we arriving at a trans-anthropocentric humanism.

II. THE MISSION IN THIS CONTEXT: TO EDUCATE FOR A GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

How to understand the mission today?

How to carry it out in the middle of such a changing reality and for which we are without proper preparation? Where can we find the necessary “vision” to plan consistent and wise missionary projects?

1. *The mission understood in a “holistic” way*

From the start, I was convinced that God maintains his Covenant with this humanity and with our planet earth. I do believe that the Holy Spirit is present in our world, carrying out the mission that the *Abbá* and His Risen Son entrusted to Him/Her. We are in times of Covenant and of *Missio Spiritus*. God the Creator and Redeemer wants to bring his work to its consummation and fulfilment. This is the meaning of the “mystery of his will”, of his benevolence or good will.

The affirmation of the divine protagonist of missions is fundamental to the understanding of the mission. For this reason, in the Church, there cannot be an acceptance of a Pelagian understanding of the mission. Before the divine protagonist of mission and of his Spirit we must confess: “we are useless servants, have we done what we were supposed to do?”.

Our God, however, is the first but not the only one. Through the Creation he wanted to share his mission with us. God the Creator created creators. The Creation became a moment of missionary sending, a task entrusted to all human beings without exception. But not only to humanity; in a certain measure, we must confess that there is a whole process of evolution which functions because there is a creative and

missionary mandate. In that way, the different stages of a mission, written within the cosmos, are being fulfilled. In relation to the human being, this mission becomes conscious, cordial and responsible.

All human beings are responsible for the mission received from the Creator, such as responsibility for the propagation of the species, for the education of the new generations, of the organization and structuration of societies. For this reason, God sends humanity the gift of fathers and mothers, of educators and politicians, without discrimination based on belief, religion or culture. The process of evolution of nature and the human species responds to the mission received from the Creator. To understand and to promote it, is to collaborate in the mission.

Mission also has its “redeeming” and “liberating” aspect. The mysterious presence of evil has broken the covenants, has deformed and destroyed life, has impoverished the planet. However, there are in nature and in history redemptive, therapeutic and liberating movements. The great liberation arrived when the Son of God took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He introduced in our humanity a redemptive principle which connects it once again with the sources of Life and the Creator. The powers of Evil have no future. Redemption is gradually taking over the most ailing and dying areas of humanity in order to heal, restore, and give it a future. This missionary force coming from God finds collaboration in those who are concerned with the liberation of human beings in the political, psychological, spiritual, physical or biological spheres and exorcises evil wherever it is found.

A particular aspect of the mission of redemption is the apocalyptic mission, spearheaded by those who are apocalyptic sentinels, by those who in the middle of the most desperate, threatened and poor situations of the world, announce the consolation of God and reveal the new heaven and the new earth. They exercise the prophecy of resistance. They decidedly oppose the Beast and its lackeys. They are decidedly in favour of the New Jerusalem. They are prophets of hope.

The mission of the Spirit is incarnated in each one of the charismatic tasks carried out by different groups and people in the world, in the Church. In those activities is manifested the creativity of the Spirit and how he/she carries out the whole reality towards its culmination in the Kingdom of God. Especially sensible to this mission are the religious communities which are able to discover day after day, new missionary challenges which they are ready to confront.

2. *The “Christian” and “charismatic” dimension of mission*

The reference to the common and shared aspects of mission, will never allow us to forget the importance of the Christian or ministerial dimension within the context of the great shared mission of humanity. This Christian ministerial mission originates in the fact that we have been given the gift of knowing the “mysteries of God”:

And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve, asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God”, but for those outside everything is in parables (Mk 4:10-11; Mt 13:10-11).

The gift of revelation makes blessed the disciples of Jesus, because this gift allows them to interpret reality from a much more complete perspective, because they were given the capacity of opening the book of the seven seals, of the interpretation of everything which is happening:

Then turning to the Disciples he said privately: “Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Lk 10:23-24; Mt 13:16-17).

To Christians, it has been revealed that the mission is not ours, but shared with our God. It has been revealed to us that everything has been created in Christ Jesus, that the Spirit of God fills the earth, and that we have nothing which we did not receive (I Cor 4:7). This revelation does not invalidate the mission carried out by millions of people even without knowing it, because at the Last Judgment the King will also call them blessed and will tell them:

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink”. Surprised, the people would ask him; “When did we see you hungry and gave you food, thirsty and gave you drink?”. The king will answer, “When you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”.

At that time, human beings will truly understand the meaning of their service. To Christians, the knowledge about this has been given already during their lifetime. From this fact arises the urgency to transmit and propagate the revelation, to which every human being has a right. This is the “good news” that the whole earth is waiting for. To evangelize is, then, to proclaim to the world the meaning of everything we are, we live for and we do. To evangelize is, then, the primary duty of the Church. The Church exists to evangelize.⁸

Each group in the Church participates in the mission of the world and of the Church in a particular way. The Holy Spirit acts through a Congregation and its communities in an amazing way. For this reason it is of vital importance that the Institutes try to discover where the Spirit is leading them, in order to be authentic collaborators and instruments of the Spirit, more than just to plan and programme their own mission.

III.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE FUTURE

1. *The Apocalyptic icon of the two cities*

The Book of Revelation concludes with the vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, sent by God, as a bride ready to celebrate her wedding feast and the Covenant. This image is in intentional contraposition with the other city, the criminal Babylon, the great Prostitute who seduces the whole world. In its last chapters, the Book of Revelation narrates how Babylon is destroyed and how the New Jerusalem is established for ever.

Both cities have been built upon a cornerstone: Babylon upon the cornerstone of hatred, violence, unjust business, the immoral search for power, the permanent inspiration of the Beast. Jerusalem is built upon the cornerstone rejected by the

builders, the paschal immolated Lamb, the non-violent, Jesus, who offers humanity a new and eternal Covenant, and the One giving up his life for the forgiveness of sins.

We cannot hide the fact that our evangelizing project, as followers of Jesus, consists in preparing and accompanying the citizens of the New Jerusalem. This is our Utopia, the dream we share with Jesus, Christ our Lord. We, not only want to prepare the others for this mondial (global) and definitive citizenship, but also want to be co-citizens with them.

From this assumption and given the reflection I have made up to now, I want to concretize my thoughts in some practical guidelines for the future of the mission.

2. Mission: the difficult task of educating in times of change and mutation

To speak about planetization is also to speak about mondial (global) citizenship. It is to recognize that our planet is gradually becoming an urban and inhabited reality. The idea of a “global village” and “common house” could become a reality. At the same time, we are increasingly using terms which remind us of this reality: ecology, economy, ecumenism and also city, politics, civilization or civilizations.

The *educative mission* is one of the most serious dimensions or fields of the evangelizing mission of the Church. At play in this mission are: the social relevance, our capacity to influence the processes of transformation and improvement of the local and global structures, and our contribution to the emergence of a new society, more just, peaceful, sympathetic and ecological. The Church has to invest in the educative mission a great deal of its wisdom, of its prophetic inheritance, and of its spiritual and human resources.

The global field of education is a great laboratory of the mission, where the Church experiments and verifies the validity of its proposals for all the spheres and dimensions of her mission; in this field, the Church also discovers what kind of models are effective for today's society and which are obsolete and irrelevant.

To plan the educative mission in a context

of respect for the local institutions and in dialogue with them helps us to purify (sift) our ideas and proposals and to renounce fundamental, dogmatic, imposing and presumptuous attitudes.

The educative mission becomes more passionate and creative when significant changes are taking place in human society. This is what is now happening to humanity! For this reason, the educative task is especially passionate and complex today. It demands a lot of lucidity and wisdom.

It is easy to exercise the task of educating in a world in mutation for which society is not yet ready.

To educate is neither to teach nor to clone. It is something different: it is to grow in relationships and to confront together the challenges of the collective life.⁹ José Luis Corzo continues questioning himself: with what verbs do we educate? With the intransitive! To live, grow, increase, go out, emerge, flourish, fructify, and relate... answer. And continues saying that we grow in education together. No one educates another. In this new intransitive action the possibility of an alien intervention remains intact. For this reason it is so necessary to care for the environment, the people, the circumstances, and even the educative methods. The leading role of the educator has come to an end. This intransitive action is not direct action (cause-effect) of transplanting from the one already educated to the other to be educated. It is the ecological relation.¹⁰

Some parents give up their responsibilities because they do not know what to do: it is so difficult to educate when everything is changing so fast! However, not only the parents but the whole of humanity is in a stage of mutation and it is not yet prepared for that. We do not feel prepared for it either.

Education wants to contribute to the emergence of generations of free men and women able to understand by themselves the surrounding universe and its meaning¹¹ and able to commit themselves according to “the spirit of the times”. Education is an art, not a science. No other social topic is as important as education.

The teachers and educators are guides able to introduce into this new phase of humanity and able to help in the birthing

of the “new human being” that every one of us carries within him/herself.

3. The educative mission of the Church at a crossroad

The Church recognizes that to participate in this educative process of humanity belongs to its deepest identity: it feels called to that. The Second Vatican Council introduced a new mentality among us: mission as dialogue, as insertion in the processes which are taking place, as incarnation in the reality, as accompaniment, illumination, proximity.

Consecrated life, because of its international and intercontinental communities, carries in its deepest womb, a much more catholic and global vision than the one of the local, provincial or national Churches. Its wisdom could be of great help to the ecclesial communities in order to discover their role in the world and to open themselves without fear to new perspectives.

It is necessary to recuperate a model of mission which does not pay too much attention to helping others, which is perceived today as an arrogant and presumptuous attitude, but rather to be together with the others, to empower them, and collaborate in the birth of a new human being. From the *missio ad gentes* or *contra gentes*, to the *missio inter gentes*.

There are some important questions that the different religious institutes should answer:

Ø What is the motivation leading us to integrate ourselves and become responsible for this educative sector of humanity?

Ø Why are our educative institutions important in the context of society?

We may answer with a certain ingenuity by saying that our primary concern is to evangelize, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, to insert the Christian values in society as they bring the human

person to fulfilment. It is also very possible that the local society will answer that education is not, in principle, the space for religious indoctrination.

The Church, at this moment, recognizes her educative mission as a new *Areaopagus*, as an ecumenical and dialogical space, as a space of encounter with science and technology and where she can contribute

with her lights, her experience of revelation and her wisdom.

4. The education for world (global) citizenship

The education required by our planet, at this historical moment, cannot forget the great conflicts which have taken place during the past one hundred years and that continue to take place: two dreadful World Wars with their consequences, as well as many other wars, situations of hatred and confrontation. Neither can the phenomenon of immigration be forgotten which is giving a new configuration to our planet earth, as the space of mobility and the encounter of races, cultures and religions.

To educate for a world citizenship is connected with education for peace, dialogue, for inter-culturality and for inter-religious dialogue; this is also connected with the ethics of hospitality, with the Kingdom of God – according to our revelation.

The educative task of the Church, and of the consecrated life within the Church, should be geared towards the preparation of human beings for world citizenship. This will imply:

Ø To educate for development, peace and sympathetic solidarity.¹²

Ø To educate for the prevention of social risks.¹³

Ø To educate for democratic life.¹⁴

The education for world citizenship demands also a new kind of educator, or of missionaries, authentic specialists and guides for a new citizenship, and that they themselves be models of what they are trying to achieve. This brings us to a style of education quite different from the classic one and a new awareness of the educative network that the whole of society has to start weaving, from the family, the local community to the whole of society.

Consecrated Life itself should exercise the citizenship of the New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven to earth. The peculiar traits of our lifestyle, such as the evangelical charisms, should be interpreted and lived out from the perspective of the new citizenship, marked by the common interests of the species.

The educative space is like a *micro-climate* which makes possible the learning and the

exercise of this citizenship. Today, as we can see, the educative mission becomes an almost unpublished great project, incarnated in the sources of the new society which is emerging.

5. Some missionary attitudes for a world in mutation or change

Ø *To recuperate the enthusiasm and the creative and innovative capacity:* instead of complaining about the complexity and problematic dimensions of our mission today we should drink from the sources of enthusiasm in order to discover and taste the beauty and innovative force of such a decisive task in times of mutation and openness towards a new form of citizenship. The spaces of mission should transform themselves – in the words of the philosopher E. Bloch – in “laboratorium possibilis salutis mundi”. In these spaces we have the possibility of testing the kind of citizenship we dream of for the whole of society. We need to fall in love with the mission and to recover the missionary passion. Only in that way the difficulties will not become bigger; the challenges will become new motivations; it is necessary to intensify our enthusiastic attitude and to use the spaces and resources offered by society. Even if the task of mission is not an easy one, we should never forget that the first great One responsible for the educative mission is God himself and that we are in the time of the Mission of the Spirit. He/she is the one making the will of the Father be done on earth.

Ø *Evangelica testificatio:* our task is to make visible the “mission Dei”; to show how the leading role in the mission, in the evolution is in the Holy Spirit and in the Risen Lord. *Evangelica testificatio* means that we want to be the transparency of the Lord in the middle of this passionate task of birthing a new city, the New Jerusalem. The witness transmits, even without realizing it, what he has seen, heard, touched and experienced about the Word of Life, because Life has manifested itself. It is where human life ferments in such an exuberant way – infant, adolescent, juvenile life – that the witness of life should be placed. They also, as Jesus himself did, can invite the young people to enter into the

Life. Obviously, we do not refer to the “religious”, “ordained ministry”, not even to “Christian” life. Jesus referred to the experience of life and of life in abundance, life that never ends and has in itself the promise of resurrection.

Ø *Small minority in “shared mission”:* We should never forget that, within the Church, the People of God, we religious are only 0.12%, and within the whole of humanity the Catholic Church is also a minority. We are not supposed to assume all the global or ecclesial responsibilities. It is in the laity, that composes 99.88% of the Church, where a much greater responsibility for the Church and for humanity lies. Being increasingly aware of their vocation and mission. The laity are offering a new and innovative face to the mission of the Church and of humanity.

Ø *“Vision” to rediscover the Mission:* In an epoch characterized by a change of paradigm, because it is perhaps a time of anthropological mutation, to have vision is a decisive matter. To have vision is not the same as to have ideals or to propose wonderful objectives. It is proper to vision to sense and detect where things should go, to visualize the future which has to be built, and to discover how the dream could become reality. Not everybody is capable of vision, but only the visionaries, those who have been given the gift of foreseeing the future. This is very important in the sphere of missionary projects. Only vision will be able to give a foundation, meaning and reason to being for the mission. The blind guides lead only to the abyss and chaos, or they just start a journey which leads nowhere. The dimensions of the great practical and institutional question are:

1) Who are the people that are graced with vision and how do they describe and transmit it? 2) How are we to concretize the vision in systematized values able to serve as a basis for the missionary project? 3) How are we to transform the vision into some deep and fundamental convictions, assumed by each and every one of the members who share the mission? The word “vision” should never become only a rhetorical resource. It is only from vision that we could adequately derive the values and important elements of the missionary process.

CONCLUSION

The consciousness of the human species is growing in our world. We contemplate ourselves not only as history, but also as prehistory. We wonder what is happening to the species. We discover among us a new expansion of consciousness. A new consciousness is emerging. The laws of the atom and of the universe allow us to understand ourselves in a different way. We are gradually approaching the consciousness of world citizenship. In this context, we want to “see” how the mission is going to be in this time. In this situation, the words of Ephesians 2:19-22 are very relevant:

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”.

This holy temple, this household of God in the Spirit, is not only the Church. The Church is the “sacramentum mundi”, the new conscience of the world, revelation. This holy temple, the household of God is humanity, is the new city which is being built. There is a new citizenship, that in this time of change of epoch, of mutation, comes as a gift from heaven. It is the city of Justice, of Peace and of the care for Creation. It is the city of interrelationships, of communion between different peoples, of dialogue and reconciliation. It is the city of Love, where the hearts learn the art of loving and where our species develops the expansion of its new consciousness.

Footnotes

¹ Cf. GEROIGES CHARPAK and ROLAND OMNÉS, *Sed sabios. Convertíos en profetas*, Anagrama, Barcelona 2005.

² Cf. Eudald Carbonell, *El nacimiento de una nueva conciencia*. Ara Llibres, Badalona, 2007; Louann Brizendine, *El cerebro femenino*, RBA Libros, Barcelona, 2006.

^{3/4} The definition given by De Vries Vries (1901) about mutation could be applied to any hereditary change which could not be explained through

segregation or recombination. Mutation is the primary source of the genetic variability among the different peoples, while the recombination, which creates new combinations from those generated by mutation, is the secondary source of genetic variability.

⁵ The Italian philosopher Emmanuele Severino has specially studied this topic: E. SEVERINO, *La filosofía futura*, Rizzoli, Milamno, 1989, pp. 57-180; E. SEVERINO, *Destino de la técnica*, 1998.

⁶ The differences between the man of Cromagnon and the one of the 21st century are very small in relation to the classic biological evolution. In the last 100 thousand years, only small genetic mutations have been detected, responding to resistance to determined illnesses: “We, able to build and use computers, are not intrinsically more intelligent than those in the glazier period who watched and perhaps took note of the lunar phases. There is nothing in our genes which will order the brain to utilize computer diskets instead of chisels and stone tablets”: cf. MARVIN HARRIS, *Nuestra especie*, Alianza Editorial, Barcelona, 1997.

⁷ Cf. CARBONELL, 70,71.

⁸ Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 14-15.

⁹ Cf. JOSÉ LUIS CORZO, *Educación en otra cosa. Manual alternativo*, ed. Popular, Madrid, 2007.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-120.

¹¹ GEORGES CHARPAK AND ROLAND OMNÉS, *Sed sabios, transform yourselves into prophets*, Anagrama, Barcelona 2005, p. 12.

¹² Human rights, foreign debt, globalization, one way of thinking, voluntary help, ecology, sustainable development, just trade, pacifism, just models, respect and improvement of the environment, etc.

¹³ Prevention of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs abuse, of HIV, sexual education, children abuse, emotional failure, academic failure, violence, discrimination, racism, anorexia, bulimia, gender equality, etc.

¹⁴ Organizational foundation and constitutional values, commitment to human rights, to take part of social groups, active participation in democratic processes, etc.



Mission and Ecology

Christian Mission in the Light of an Environment Under Threat

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1. Introduction

The Vatican has become the first State to agree to offset its carbon footprint this year. It accepted an offer from a Hungarian based firm who offered to reforest a large area of the Bukk National Park in Hungary.¹ This is one incident in a series of increasingly more common pronouncements of concern and involvements by the Vatican in environmental issues. In April of this year the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace organized a two-day seminar of consultation on climate change. On 2 September 2007, on the Plain of Montorso near Loreto, Italy, Pope Benedict XVI preaching to half a million young people, told them that world leaders needed to take “courageous decisions” to save the planet “before it is too late”. A month before he said that the human race must ‘listen to the voice of the Earth’ or risk destroying its very existence.² The indications are that humanity is facing the most serious collective challenge in its short existence and, as a result of human activity, other creatures are disappearing at rates not seen since the last major extinction phase 65 million years ago.

In an article by Mark Lynas, of the Guardian newspaper in the U.K. earlier this year, quotes Rupert Murdoch, referring to a 34-page strategy document by News Corps, his media organization, promising to offset their carbon footprint. He commits his organization to ‘mobilize an otherwise apathetic general public on the climate issue’.³ Lynas thinks that for environmentalists seeing Murdoch befriending renewable energy companies is akin to seeing Martin Mc Guinness sharing a joke with Ian Paisley.

A Report published by the World Wild Life Fund (2006) believes that the Earth’s resources

are being used faster than they can be replaced. The Report compiles two indicators of the Earth’s well-being. It claims that the impact by humanity on the planet has more than tripled since 1961 and that the “ecological footprint”⁴ – the demand people place on the natural world – exceeds the world’s ability to regenerate by 25 per cent.⁵ In other words, ‘humanity is living off its ecological credit card’.⁶ The carbon dioxide footprint, from the use of fossil fuels, is the fastest growing component of the global footprint, increasing more than nine fold from 1961 to 2003.⁷ Growing pressure on ecosystems ‘is threatening biodiversity and human well-being’.⁸

George Monbiot, in his book, *Heat: How Can We Stop the Planet Burning?*,⁹ points out the complexities involved in encouraging people to assume a more frugal lifestyle, concomitant on saving the planet. Many of us realize the need to change. Instead of changing we make appropriate noises about the need for change and even demand that our politicians enact legislation to encourage change, but secretly we hope that they will fail! What is even more serious is that the politicians know what our secret hopes are. To be honest, unless the messenger lives the message about the facts concerning environmental destruction it will have little impact on others. So, I make this presentation, as ‘an aspiring seeker’ who would like to discover the ingredients to bring about a new way of relating to the world.

1.1 Scripture

Few would argue that the central tenet of Christian Mission is synopsized in John 10:10. Jesus came ... so “that they may have life, and have it abundantly”. Since Vatican II, the emphasis on what ‘life’ signifies for the Church

has been greatly clarified to include a dignified life for every human person on the planet. The challenge of the 21st century is to expand this concept of a dignified life to encompass the whole of Creation.

1.2 Growing awareness by Local Churches

The Church in Latin America and the Caribbean have recently concluded the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences in Aparecida, Brazil. In the Final Document they confirm the Church's commitment to an 'option for the poor' (#128, 391, 399). There is a noticeable increase in references to the environment (#470-475), which is considered to be one of the 'new aeropogi' (#491), an issue singled out as having 'particular relevance' (#431) for the missionary impulse of the Church in the coming years. The Bishops are concerned by the destructive capacity of the 'present economic model' of development (#473), which, they say, is responsible, to a large extent, for an 'irrational exploitation' (#473) of natural resources and the endangerment of millions of people and their habitats. They reiterate Pope John Paul II's call for an 'alternative model of development'. (#474, c.)

There is a sense that the Bishops are calling Christians to new missionary terrain without neglecting traditional ones. Religious life has an additional responsibility to give appropriate witness. Religious are called to be prophetic in the way they live and in how they respond to the 'signs of the times'. Some religious think that the environment is just one among many issues, but in the context of the struggle for life and the protection of ecosystems on which all life forms depend. In my opinion, it is THE ISSUE and a priority for Christian Mission.

1.3 A Paradigm Shift

It is my contention, in the light of very serious environmental threats, mostly caused by human impact, such as: climate change, extinction of species, fossil fuel addiction, etc., the Church needs to re-examine the implications of the Gospel mission of Jesus, to bring life to the world. Without healthy and sustainable ecosystems, the quality of life will continue to deteriorate for all creatures. It makes logical sense for us to promote the dignity of the human person by promoting healthy ecosystems.

I would also contend that our focus needs to change from a 'human-centred' one, to one that will continue to value the dignity of every human person in the context of Creation. Greater knowledge of the evolutionary process and how God has been involved might help human beings realize we are 'part of' the creation process and not 'apart from it'.

1.4 Aid Agencies and the environmental question

I am struck that many important Aid Agencies, such as Cafod,¹⁰ Tearfund¹¹ and Caritas,¹² who traditionally have worked for integral salvation through a variety of programmes, are now realizing, in the light of so much data from Climate Change Scientists (IPCC Reports),¹³ that, unless they include the environment as an essential issue within their strategic plans, their work for and with the poor will be counter-productive.

1.5 Outline of Talk

I propose to follow the 'See, Judge, Act' Method in this presentation. I will talk about the threat to biodiversity and species extinction in order to illustrate a growing threat to humanity and to life processes in general.¹⁴ How aware are Missionary Disciples of this threat? What significance has this threat to the way mission will be conducted in the future?

I will briefly refer to some fundamental ethical principles that can be gleaned from the Church's Social Teaching on the Environment. I will then show that St Francis of Assisi, the Patron of the Environment, demonstrates by his life and relationships, particularly as expressed in his famous poem, the "*Canticle of the Creatures*", how to make this shift from a 'human-centred' perspective to one where the absolute value of the human person is respected, but, within the context a new understanding of humanity's place in the Universe and a deep reverential respect for the integral value of each creature, recognized by Francis to be his 'brothers and sisters'. Finally, I will give some orientations to be considered by Missionary Congregations and Missionary Disciples in general.

2. Biodiversity and the Extinction of Species

The fact that species disappear is a fact of

history, but the fact that they are disappearing at the fastest rate in sixty-five million years, due to human activity, is both shocking and reprehensible.

Edward O. Wilson, a renowned biologist, laments that ‘biodiversity is our most valuable but least appreciated resource’.¹⁵ The Millennium Ecosystems Assessment (MA), presented by a team of over 1,300 experts working in 95 countries, confirmed the enormous contributions made by natural ecosystems to human life and well being. Yet, genes, species and habitats are rapidly being lost.¹⁶ The Millennium Ecosystems Assessment states that: ‘over half the world’s biomes (vegetation types) have experienced about 20-50% conversion to human use. Some 35% of mangroves and about 20% of corals have gone’.¹⁷

Solutions exist to reverse the effects of climate change, but none, so far, to resurrect an extinct species. Thomas Berry, who describes himself as a ‘geologist’ – an historian of the earth and its evolutionary processes, puts it succinctly when he says that extinction is ‘an absolute and final act for which there is no remedy on earth or in heaven’.¹⁸ To highlight this tragedy, it seems likely that the Yangtze dolphin, which dates back 20 million years and is revered by the Chinese as a “goddess” of the river, has been pushed to extinction by the severe degradation of its habitat.¹⁹

2.1 Historical Background

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the leaders of the world agreed on a strategy to orientate the international community towards “sustainable development”.²⁰ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)²¹ is an important international initiative to integrate the principles of ethics and equity in the use of biodiversity.²²

Again, at the world Summit in 2002 in Johannesburg, Governments agreed to significantly cut by 2010 the rate at which rare animals and plants are becoming extinct.²³

2.2 Biodiversity

The word “biodiversity” is a combination of two words: biological and diversity.²⁴ It reflects the number, variety and variability of living organisms. It includes diversity within species (genetic), between species, and among

ecosystems.²⁵ Biodiversity encompasses all living things at every level, from microscopic bacteria to plants and animals.²⁶

2.3 The Importance of Biodiversity

2.3.1 Services Provided by Nature

The natural environment is the source of all raw materials for life. At least 40 percent of the world’s economy and 80 percent of the needs of the poor come from biological resources.²⁷ Environmental processes, particularly biotic ones (inorganic, inanimate, physical etc.), largely unseen, provide an incredible amount of services to the living world. For example, over the course of three billion years of natural selection, fish could not have evolved without water, birds without air, or trees without soil.

2.3.2 Value of Nature’s Services

Complex ecosystems²⁸ with a wide variety of plants and animals tend to be more stable. Greater diversity leads to greater productivity. Halving the number of plant species in a plot of land leads to 10-20 per cent loss of productivity.²⁹ There are also several “selfish reasons” why it is vital for humanity to reconsider wanton destruction of biodiversity so essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems. A myriad of organisms produce food, fuel, fiber and medicines. They recycle wastes, create drinking water, drive the cycles that maintain an aerobic atmosphere, regulate global climate, generate soil fertility and provide other ecosystem goods and services.³⁰ Eighty per cent of the world’s crop plants depend on pollination. Pollinators, almost all of which are insects, are indispensable partners for an estimated one out of every three mouthfuls of food we eat, and for what we drink. Insect pollinators, including honey bees, pollinate products amounting to \$20 billion annually in the U.S. alone, and possibly \$50 billion worldwide.³¹ In Europe the honeybee has declined by 80 per cent in the past 25 years.³² Wildflowers that rely on bees have also declined, suggesting a vicious cycle. The broader consequences are worrying. A decline in some species may trigger a decline in many other related species.

Just three crops – corn, rice and wheat – provide about 60 per cent of food for

humanity. The viability of these crops depends on genetic diversity, which allows them to develop resistance to disease and pests. Food stability will need new crops, from what are now wild plants, to supplement current crops increasingly more prone to disease.³³ Today about 80 per cent of the world's population relies predominantly on plants and plant extracts for healthcare. Fewer species will mean fewer potential medicines. In addition, of the top 150 proprietary drugs used in the U.S., 57 per cent contain at least one major active compound currently, or, once derived from plants.³⁴ In the mid-1990's the estimated value of Nature's services was U.S. \$33 trillion per year, in contrast to the worth of the global economy at that time, U.S. \$29 trillion per year.³⁵ This is why the "gross nature product" is more important than the "gross domestic product".³⁶

2.4 Extinction Processes

2.4.1 Historical Extinctions

The Earth may be on the brink of the sixth mass extinction. The other extinctions took place about 65, 205, 250, 375³⁷ and 440 million years ago. The difference with the present extinction phase is that it appears *Homo Sapiens* is causing it.³⁸

2.4.2 Evidence for a Sixth Mass Extinction Phase

Species extinction is a natural part of Earth history. The present rate of extinction is much higher than the 'background rate', that is, the rate that has averaged out over a considerable time period. Based on fossil records, the estimated rate of extinction was one species every 500 – 1000 years.³⁹ The present rate is at least one hundred times higher.⁴⁰ In 2006, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) claimed that of the 40,000 species surveyed, nearly 40 percent are under threat.⁴¹ It is hard to calculate the extent of biological diversity on our planet. There are possibly as many as 10 to 100 million different species on earth.⁴² Ten million is the most frequently cited number, with only 5 per cent catalogued.

2.4.3 The Principal Reasons for Extinction

2.4.3.1 Direct Causes

The Global Diversity Outlook Report states that the most critical factor affecting biodiversity is loss and degradation of habitat, arising from

a variety of types of land use change, including: agricultural development, logging, dam construction, mining and urban development.⁴³ Internationally about 1.2 million km² of land has been converted to cropland in the last 30 years.

2.4.3.2 Indirect Causes

Human activity is driving biodiversity loss. The two principal factors are population and consumption. The latter is intrinsically linked to the present economic model of development, using Nature as source and sink, refusing to accept the concept of "limits". The present world population is 6.67 billion and rising.⁴⁴ Human numbers are projected to rise for the next 50 years to reach 10-12 billion.⁴⁵ Overpopulation, however, is not determined purely numerically, but by the per capita consumption of natural resources.⁴⁶

The carrying capacity of the planet cannot afford a Western consumerist lifestyle for everyone. Lester Brown calls for a halt to 'the fetishism of economic growth'.⁴⁷ Rather than face the reality that a new model is needed, efforts are made to reform the existing one. The real cause of poverty and environmental degradation is the type of development practiced today. People are exploited and Nature is degraded.

2.5 Steps to Preserve Biodiversity

It is interesting that Wilson, in the final chapter of, *The Future of Life*, dedicated to looking at possible solutions to biodiversity destruction, begins, not with a technical fix, but with ethics. The biggest challenge is to disarm stereotypes⁴⁸ and to move towards a common ground where 'economic progress and conservation are treated as one and the same goal'.⁴⁹

Wilson is clear that 'the struggle to save biological diversity will be won or lost in the forests'.⁵⁰ Seventy per cent of the world's plants and animals are found in tropical forests – comprising just 2% of landmass. He claims that for just U.S. \$30 billion, the hotspots, or placers of greatest biodiversity, on land and in shallow marine habitats can be saved.⁵¹ Compare this to the U.S \$2 trillion annual subsidies given to agriculture, the fossil fuel and nuclear industries and water companies.⁵²

2.6 Conclusion

If the current rate of extinction, fuelled by

habitat loss, is allowed to continue, there will be serious consequences for all life forms, including human populations, who depend primarily on just three crops for sustenance. At the heart of this illogical short-sighted destructive tendency is an addiction to a growth model of development, made possible by cheap and easily available fossil fuels, that has ignored the fact that the “gross natural product” is more important than the “gross domestic product” for sustainability. A change of heart is needed before there can be a change of direction. For this reason the solution to the extinction crisis is a moral and religious one.

3. Catholic Social Teaching on the Environment and a Franciscan Vision

3.1. Catholic Social Teaching

It is beyond the scope of this presentation to reflect on Catholic Social Teaching concerning the environment. But it is unfortunate and a loss for everyone, according to Bernard Lonergan, S.J., that the Church has arrived a little late and a little breathless⁵³ to this debate and, as a result, according to many other commentators, ‘has not played a major role in formulating environmental policies’.⁵⁴

In an impressive study of references to the environment in Papal declarations from *Rerum Novarum* to statements made at the 2002 United Nations World Summit for Sustainable Development, Lucia A. Silecchia⁵⁵ highlights what she believes to be six ethical principles underpinning Catholic teachings on the environment. The same principles are reiterated in the recently published *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2 April 2004).

a) Human Life and dignity must remain

at the forefront of any consideration of environmental questions

b) Stewardship is the appropriate model for human care of the environment

c) Obligations to Future Generations must influence environmental decision-making

d) In the spirit of subsidiarity, environmental decision-making must be made at the appropriate level

e) The right to private property and mandate to use property for the common good must both be respected in environmental policies

f) Environmental concerns are also moral concerns which require radical rethinking of consumer culture.

3.1.1. The importance of environmental ethics

At recent UN Climate Change Conferences there is growing appreciation for the need to include an ethical dimension in the debate and not just, as seems to be the case until now, a focus on technological fixes. Pope John Paul II in the 1990 *World Day of Peace Message*, “*Peace With God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*”, a landmark document on the environment, recognizes that the ecological crisis is fundamentally spiritual and moral. Pope Benedict XVI has lamented what he perceives to be a lack of attention by modern theologians to the value of the created world. He notes that ‘paradoxically ... the creation account is noticeably and nearly completely absent from catechesis, preaching, and even theology’.⁵⁶ It is my hope that the Pope would write an Encyclical or an Apostolic Exhortation on the environment in the near future to rectify this tragic oversight.

3.2 St Francis of Assisi – Patron of the Environment

For the illuminatory part of this reflection

I would like to present a dimension of Franciscan creation theology as exemplified in the *Canticle of the Sun*, written by St Francis of Assisi shortly before he died. He was named patron of the environment by Pope John Paul II in 1979. Francis is reputed to have told his Brothers to preach with their lives and only in rare circumstances to use words.

I am convinced that ‘ecological conversion’ will not only come about as a result of more correct information concerning the level of threat to our planet, albeit essential, but principally as a result of a paradigm shift in our relationship to other creatures, who for Francis were clearly ‘brothers and sisters’ to him.⁵⁷ He felt deeply connected to the whole of Creation because he realized that he too was a creature created by the same loving God.

3.2.1 Francis’ Conversion

In a significant moment of Francis’s conversion process he was praying in an abandoned church, ‘San Damiano’, outside the

walls of Assisi. As he prayed before the Crucifix he heard a voice coming from the Cross, telling him: “Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling into ruin”. Francis was a literalist and he immediately began to rebuild the church, until he eventually realized it involved a more general call to rebuild the Body of the Church. The Greek word for house is *icos* which forms part of the world *ecology*.

Francis developed the ability to see the ‘footprints’ of God in the world. The whole of Creation sang to him of a loving Creator. Life on the planet in Francis’ time was not in danger from human activity as it is today. I am sure that Christ’s call to Francis to repair his house, perhaps understood today to be the house of creation, is directed in an urgent and new way to anyone willing to listen.

3.2.2 *Circumstances surrounding the composition of the Canticle of Creatures*

The *Canticle* was composed in 1225, a year before Francis died. He was suffering from a disease of the eyes and was practically blind, probably resulting from his visit to Egypt in 1219/20. He stayed in a tiny cell, with the shutters drawn due to a lack of tolerance to light and was tormented the whole night by a plague of mice.⁵⁸ In pain, alone, marginalized, no longer in charge of the Order he founded – seeing most of what he held dear rejected by many of his Brothers – unable to pray or sleep and facing near despair, he implored God for help. The next morning he told his companions he wished to “compose a new Praises of the Lord for His Creatures”. This is part of what he wrote:

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no man is worthy to mention your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Brother Sun, Who is the day and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which you give sustenance to your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,

through whom you light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned....

3.2.3 *The novelty of the Canticle*

The great novelty of the *Canticle* is the use of the terms ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ to refer to creatures – “Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire, our Sister Bodily Death, and our Sister Mother Earth”. This shows Francis’s special relationship with creatures. For Francis men and women are brothers and sisters to one another and this fraternal relationship is extended to all creatures. Francis is unique in that he uses the term *frater* to refer to his relationship with the whole earth community.⁵⁹ Even though Francis does not mention animals or plants in the *Canticle*, we know from other sources that he considered them to be his brothers and sisters too. He greets a cricket encouraging her to “sing, my Sister Cricket”.⁶⁰ He would ask the Brother who took care of the garden to leave a space for wild plants so that in the proper season they would produce “Brother Flowers”. As he grew into a deeper relationship with God, through his relationship with Christ as a brother, he became aware of his familial relationship with Creation. To be family is to feel responsibility for and with that member.

3.2.4 *The key to his insight*

There are several explanations why Francis felt such a deep kinship with creatures but the most convincing is that he saw, through the eyes of faith, cultivated by a deep mystical relationship with Christ, the presence of God in everything. Francis was so aware that he was a dependent creature, the ultimate basis for his radical poverty. He recognized that ‘dominion over’ others was the root cause of all evil and suffering in the world. For this reason he wanted his brothers and sisters to be subject to everyone, even to creatures. He did not treat creatures as if he owned them, but lived with them, respecting their independence.

3.2.5 *A counter cultural man*

Francis was a man of his time and counter

cultural in many respects. When the Church and society were trying to flee the world; to escape from the material, considered to be evil, Francis, through his relationship with Christ, who 'became flesh,' appreciated the value of the created world in itself and not just as a container for the spirit. He helped restore to Christian tradition love for the body and for the material Universe. Francis by his life and his loving relationship with creatures is a beacon of hope for an alternative way of relating to the whole of Creation and a sign of hope for a sustainable way of life. For one who holds all life to be sacred, wanton destruction is unthinkable. We do not generally damage or consciously endanger family members. Francis challenges us to treat other creatures as family. However, he was not a sentimentalist and recognized that not every creature had the same value. The survival of every species depends on the nourishment from others, often at the expense of their own existence.

4. Challenges for Missionary Disciples

In the light of the loss of Biodiversity, Climate Change, Peak Oil and other serious environmental challenges Christian Missionary activity must turn its focus towards preserving the environment for every creature, both present and future generations. As we have seen the quality of human existence is integrally linked to the quality of biodiversity. This year, following an unmistakable trend, the January/May period has been declared the hottest on record and tied with 1998.⁶¹

The central tenet of Christian Mission is to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the poor. The poor are being forced out of their homes and land, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, not just by traditional factors, such as war and violence, but increasingly by environmentally related issues, such as drought, flooding,⁶² species loss, etc. I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that, unless the Missionary Church plays her part in bringing about a re-think of the current growth dependent economic model and the consumer mentality driving the loss of biodiversity and habitat, it will have failed to read one of the most important 'signs of the times' today.

In light of environmental deterioration what

do members of Missionary Congregations need to be and to do today? Here are some suggestions:

4.1. Re-establish Creation theology to its rightful place in initial and ongoing formation programmes, in our seminaries and schools.

There is a need to value human dignity and freedom within the context of respect for and promotion of the integrity of Creation.

4.2. Question an exclusively human-centred mentality that ignores our dependency on other creatures and develop a vision that sees the human person as part of God's Creation, albeit the most important part.

4.3. Appreciate the ecological principle that what effects one eco-system, even thousands of miles away, eventually affects the eco-system in which I live. Everything is interconnected and interrelated.

4.4. Learn about the most pressing environmental issues, such as climate change, biodiversity, etc., and ensure that these themes are integrated into our initial and ongoing formation programmes, in our seminaries, as well as into formation programmes in parishes and education centres.

4.5. Educate the people with whom we work about care for and respect for all God's creatures, and indeed, learn from those who already realize these ecological truths better than we do, such as Indigenous peoples and farmers. Despite recent media exposure following the Fourth IPCC Report, a pole by Ipsos Mori in March 2007 in Britain found that, while most people understood the problem of climate change, the majority were not convinced it was as serious as scientists and politicians were claiming.⁶³

4.6. Begin to model the change we would like to see in our own personal lives, in our congregations and missionary institutes, especially by living more frugally. There is a wealth of literature outlining concrete actions. These issues need to be part of our community prayer, reflections and retreats.

4.7. Aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of carbon emissions.⁶⁴ Missionaries travel a lot and the leadership of international congregations travel even more. The challenge is to look for alternative ways of organizing interchange and debate between our members rather than bringing people physically together, unless we are prepared to spend more time travelling to our meetings. A return journey from London to Nairobi by plane gives rise to

about 1.92 tons of carbon per person. The average carbon emissions produced collectively per capita in the world is about 4 tons. So, in one transatlantic flight, based on the principle of equity, half of one's quota is used up for the year!⁶⁵

4.8. Alternative technology is available, so perhaps what we need is the 'political will' and financial investment to make this happen. Could not religious congregations in conjunction with National Episcopal Conferences and other interested parties use already existing, or establish communication, centres where meetings could be held via cyber space? Offsetting of the carbon footprint may be a good provisional solution while we investigate ways of truly reducing our carbon footprint.

4.9. The Fifth General Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean encourages a search for a new model of development⁶⁶ that is sustainable into the future. Religious could contribute to the reflection on what a new economic model, based on sustainability, needs to look like. Perhaps, this could be a question for the SEDOS Seminar on Globalization in Ariccia, May 2008.

4.10. Support and promote alternative initiatives, especially local, that are trying to lessen the Carbon footprint⁶⁷ of humanity; such as local food markets, alternative energy sources, simple lifestyles, especially in the developed world where most of the environmental damage originates.

4.11. Many Religious Congregations, through their Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), are working to establish legally binding frameworks to protect the environment. A few times a year the International Community meets, along with accredited environmental NGOs, to collectively search for solutions to the climate crisis.⁶⁸ This work needs to be intensified. At the heart of the discussion, is how to reduce damaging greenhouse gases. There is a growing awareness of the need for the developed nations to transfer appropriate energy producing technology to the developing world and to compensate them financially for any loss of revenue resulting from International Agreements that benefit everyone. Religious communities and the people we work with can encourage the use of alternative energy sources, such as photovoltaic panels, wind turbines, small hydro generators, etc. We can question some

of the proposed solutions in the light of our moral tradition. Wheat prices have broken all records on both sides of the Atlantic in September 2007.⁶⁹ Drought and export restrictions are a factor, but the growing use of arable land for bio-fuels is a worrying trend.

4.12. Financial support will be made available for renewable energy and environmental projects. Religious can help people access these funds. The Church has historically given leadership in health care and education, why can we not be innovators now in the light of this new and serious threat to ecosystems on our planet?

Collaborative Ministry

4.13. Much is spoken and written about the importance of collaborative ministry. The 'Southern Sudan project',⁷⁰ despite the enormous challenges facing several participating congregations in agreeing on a common vision and practical applications, is a beckon of light for future missionary projects. The pooling of personnel and financial resources is a witness to Christian stewardship in a world of dwindling essential resources.

4.14. Develop the contemplative dimension of Christian Mission.⁷¹ This can be done by a renewed appreciation of the revelatory value of God's Creation. Creation has the potential of leading many people back to God, and indeed, the healing power of pristine nature is well documented. By 2050 more than half the world's population will be living in cities. We already know the dehumanizing effect that urban life is having on the millions of poor who are forced from their land, by the present economic model of development. There is a need to revalue the power of creation, promoting urban gardens, retreat centres, etc., as ways to evangelize. What can the Church do in these circumstances to ensure that the people continue to be in touch with Creation?

4.15. **Proposal** : I propose that in Rome the USG/UISG leadership through their JPIC Commission, in conjunction with individual religious, SEDOS and AEFJN, establish a permanent commission or 'task force' to help inspire religious congregations and the people they work with towards a collective 'ecological conversion'. It would also be very desirable if National JPIC Commissions prioritized the environmental issue, working in collaboration with the local Church, other Churches, Religious

denominations and Civil Society groups towards more sustainable societies.

4.16. **A Hope:** The Church is playing a very significant role in the campaign to cancel the unjust debt of poor countries and was a protagonist in inviting representatives of all the major religions of the world to Assisi in 1986 and again in 2002 to promote dialogue and understanding to achieve authentic peace. It is my hope that, in the light of very significant threats to all life supporting systems on our planet, Pope Benedict XVI would invite the leadership of all major religions to an international gathering of prayer and fasting to highlight the need for a renewed reconciliation with the whole of Creation.

Conclusion

All the best scientific information seems to indicate that we have a window of opportunity of twenty years to act in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change and species loss. The operative word is 'urgency'. Traditionally, the Church and religious Orders react slowly and in a considered way to 'the signs of the times'. The emerging picture is that unless we 'think on our feet' and take urgent and decisive actions NOW, the pain of not acting will especially affect today's children and, in particular the poor of humanity and the poor of creation in general. As missionary disciples we continue the mission of Christ who came so that "... they may have life, and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10)".

Questions for reflection

1. What insight struck you most about the presentation?
2. How do you feel about what is happening to Creation?
3. How has your behaviour changed in the light of the alarming facts emerging in recent years about the state of the planet?
4. Is the integrity of Creation an integral part of your congregation's priorities in the coming years? If not, why not?
5. As Missionary Congregations how can we collectively support a paradigm shift in mentality, among ourselves and with the people we minister too, if the worst case suggested scenarios for the planet are to be avoided?

Notes

'Vatican signs up for carbon offset forest', Catholic News at: <http://www.cathnews.com/news/707/76.php>.

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From what I understand, many *Caritas* Agencies around the world are realizing the significance of climate change on their work. In the recent *Caritas Internationalis* (CI) General Assembly, climate change and environmental questions have significantly moved up the Agenda of priority issues to be dealt with in the coming years.

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An ecosystem is a geographical area of a variable size where plants, animals, the landscape and the climate all interact together. The whole earth's surface can be described by a series of interconnected ecosystems. All living beings form and are part of ecosystems. They are diverse and always changing within an ecosystem, all aspects of the environment (both living things and their non-living settings) interact and affect one another. Every species affects the lives of those around them. See, 'What is an Ecosystem?', Alberta Online encyclopedia, at: <http://www.abheritage.ca/abnature/Ecosystems/intro.htm>

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2007, #473. In this section the Bishops criticize the present economic model of development which 'privileges an exaggerated desire for riches over the life of individuals, peoples and a rational respect for nature'. It is responsible for 'An irrational exploitation' of natural resources, 'leaving behind 'death' and 'destruction' in its wake...'

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Note: The Kyoto protocol resulted from these negotiations. It became law in 2005 after years of wrangling over the level of legally binding greenhouse gas emissions. It seems to be clear that although this first international environmental was a significant beginning, it is grossly inadequate. The hope is that it will be strengthened in Bali in December 2007 in the light of the findings of the 4th IPCC report.

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A project supported by the USG/UISG that involves 40 congregations intending to establish a common mission in Southern Sudan in the near future.

Michael McCabe, 'Mission as Prophetic Dialogue at the Service of God's Reign', in *SMA 150th Anniversary Symposium on the Future of Mission Ad Gentes* (Rome: SMA Generalate Publication), Bulletin No. 124, June 2007, p. 87. In this article one of the challenges for Missionaries today is the need to develop a contemplative spirituality. Unless the apostolic activity is helped by a 'profound listening to the Spirit' it can lead to 'activism and arrogance' which has marred the modern missionary movement.

Note: As a result of sharing with others and on reflection, I have slightly modified this proposal since giving this talk.

Union of General Superiors of Men and Women's Congregations.

Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission at: <http://www.sedos.org/site/>

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Mission as Life Irrupting From Diversity **- A Bet Against Monocultural Globalization -**

- Lucas Cerviño -

Introduction

We live in a world characterized by diversity: there are diverse ways of being in the world, of perceiving the future, of viewing the past and of living the present. The interests that move us are diverse, as are the models of progress, the economic levels and the expressions to communicate with the Mystery, with others and with nature. Depending on how one lives this diversity at a personal, community, State, global and cosmic level, one generates life or death¹ in the world.

Immersed in this deep and vital fabric of reality, our primordial mission must be to defend, to generate and to promote life, discovering “another deep law of reality: i.e., that life is reached and matures to the extent that one gives one’s life for the ‘other’. This is the whole mission”.² In other words, to share the Good News of Jesus who came so that we “may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

The process in which I live and I try to accompany Bolivia’s profound and changing complex cultural situation, together with experiences in other contexts, inspires me to sketch an alternative missionary proposal to globalization which turns cultural and religious diversity, belonging and identity, into motives for conflict and death. A mission that, recovering the Trinitarian intuition, shows that precisely because there is diversity it is possible to experience an encounter and enter into life-giving dialogue.

1. Between fragmentation and fundamentalism, the relational identity

The reality of globalization is characterized

by two phenomena that act at different, interrelated levels but have a common matrix: the fragmentation-atomization which leads to relativism and the unification-mass phenomena that enslave and kill. They have a common task: the best way to live and manage cultural, religious, economic and social diversity. For globalization, with its neo-liberal capitalist economic model, diversity is a problem and a barrier. Globalization affirms that cultural and religious diversity generates socio-economic *inequalities*, threatening cultural *differences* and *disconnection* in the branches of knowledge.³ But at bottom it is a model that hides the truth: since diversity is not recognized as such it generates negative realities. In reality this diversity has miscarried because it demands that abundance (whether economic, of knowledge or cultural) be shared among the whole of humanity. “To communicate with those who are different, to correct the inequalities and to promote democratic access to intercultural patrimonies have become inalienable tasks in order to counter this prevalently narrow selfish view”.⁴

Faced by the globalization (the term literally means “to extend something worldwide”) that is being imposed, I feel that the great current challenge is to achieve the globalization of “the human aspect”⁵ and not “the diabolical one”⁶ that inhabits each one of us and the cosmos. If we tackle this challenge with the key of *globalization cultural-search for identity*, **missionary activity will consist of promoting the constant search for a relational identity** that avoids: on one hand, the path of isolation where self-sufficiency and ambition bring about indifference to all and everything, and on the other, the path of fundamentalism, mass culture and depersonalization.⁷ Because building “identity is a process of

constructing significant links in dynamic historical contexts, just as, one could say that identities are dynamic-cultural constructs “open” and ready to begin positive, sure, negotiated and projected dialogue, in dialectical terms”.⁸

In fact this dialectical dimension of identity invites us to **a mission from the key diversity-relationship approach**: where diversity is not synonymous with fragmentation and where relationship is not synonymous with unification, but just the opposite. Because where there is diversity there is relationship, and because there is relationship we experience “oneness:⁹ we become aware that we are at one with God, with ourselves, with others and with the whole of Creation. Here, to globalize “the human aspect” means to recover the awareness that this oneness links and interrelates us and makes us interdependent on God, on others and Creation.

This truth, somewhat forgotten in the West, is very well expressed in the stories of the Creation in the Bible (Gn Chapters 1-3): “let us make man in our image, to our likeness” that they may take care of the whole Creation; Yes, “this is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh”(2:23). But this vision of the interrelation is also vital in other cultures of the world. For example in the Andean world the *Jaqi* (individual) “is individual person, couple, family, community and humanity”. It is “a couple in unity and harmony with nature and the guardian spirits. Therefore the *Jaqi* is instituted by the community and for the community”.¹⁰ For the Aymara the person is complete in the measure that he/she generates, nourishes and deepens interdependent relationships, not only with the others but with the divinity (*guardian spirits*) and the cosmos (*nature*).

So, (personal, cultural, religious, national, etc.) diversity is not a barrier or a problem, rather it offers the occasion and possibility to create relationships and thus manifest our “image and likeness” (Gn 1:26) with God. Our identity is highly relational: we depend on relationships.

Therefore, every time relationship is ignored we head towards individualism and

fragmentation, transforming diversity into the occasion for socio-economic exploitation, cultural discrimination and exclusion from access to education and knowledge. This is because “man is a being, who, here and now, is determined by the quality of his *relationships* that are realities that he makes and undoes, fosters and changes, intensifies or dilutes, in the field of *history* that is fraught with symbolism, health, illness, good and evil, nearness to and estrangement from (neighbour)”.¹¹ From this anthropological-cosmic conception, **the mission**, challenged by mass globalization that unifies and fragments people at the same time, **must redouble its search for authentic relationships, for deep bonds: with God, with others and with the cosmos.**

2. Relationship with diversity can give mission new life

John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (cf. n. 37) opens the mission ‘ad gentes’ (to people), to new social and cultural environments by overcoming the old geographical concept of mission. The current Pope, opens the way ahead when he affirms that: “the true addressees of the missionary activity of the People of God are not only the non Christians and distant lands, but also the socio-cultural environments and, above all, hearts”.¹² This leads us to deepen a concept of mission framed in a warm “heart and heart” relationship, that is to say mission among the people. From this perspective, the mission would always be more an action that tries to generate and promote authentic, vital and complete relationships (with the divinity, with the ‘other’ and with the cosmos), than to attract and add people to the Church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 17). Relationships that enjoy and are enriched by diversity (cultural, religious, social, etc.) generate and manifest the Kingdom of Life that Jesus inaugurated.

From these presuppositions, **the mission is an alternative proposal to economic, techno-scientific and monocultural globalization.** A mission that has the Reign of God as its universal horizon (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 15) and its

particular context in the local Churches (*cf. Lumen Gentium*, nn. 23, 26-28). With this universal horizon and in the local context the mission seeks to **defend and to manifest** equitable, symmetrical and **intercultural relationships**¹³ that promote a dignified, fair and full life as much for human beings as for the cosmos.¹⁴

This gives rise to the following question:

“how can one’s relationship with people who are different be open and relational?; what must be the basic attitude for a sincere and real dialogue with one’s neighbour who is different? To respond I used a biblical text that I consider paradigmatic for the current mission, to discover how Jesus lived his cultural-religious identity at an encounter with a person who was different.

2.1 The mission means to learn how to live in harmony and make this diversity bear fruit

This text (Mk 7:24-30) deals with a radical diversity: Jesus meets a Syrophenician woman who is a pagan. Therefore this story gives us many hints about what to look for and how to start real, enriching and full relationships with people of other cultures and religions, recognizing that the mystery which dwells in others demands that we learn how to live side by side with them and so help them to bear fruit. Let us see how Jesus acted, feeling the actuality of the situation with its vibrant rhythm.

Jesus seeks tranquility, solitude and intimacy. Was he tired of evangelizing fruitlessly? Afraid his preaching might be rejected? Did he need to pause so as not to fall into activism? We do not know, but the story tells us that **Jesus perceived the Syrophenician woman’s cry for life**. It recounts the censurable behaviour of a woman who breaks away from the cultural and religious code of her time, in a desperate effort to obtain life (health) for her daughter. A pagan, foreign woman who dares to encroach upon Jesus.

She begged Him to exorcise the evil spirit from her daughter. The mother’s urgency to save a life, her struggle for life, enabled her to

overcome the cultural, national, religious, social and economic barriers. If the life of one’s dear siblings is threatened it must be defended, tooth and nail, for a worthier life. **The mission is to overcome the barriers in order to promote life** in all its spheres. To help all those that plead for and seek life, cry out and desire to give birth and to gestate, as Jesus on the Cross, new life. A person’s skin colour, social class, manner of praying, profession, etc., do not matter. Life is what matters.

Jesus welcomed the pagan, foreign woman’s cry for life, but His answer is negative: “*Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs*” (v. 27). If there is no fruitful transformation in the yearning for life of the foreign-other one, Jesus continues to be faithful to His cultural-religious context. He opens His heart, but not His mind and spirit. Faced by this, the woman must be transformed and vitalized by Jesus’ words, even if they were disparaging, comparing her to a ‘dog’. She must open up and learn how to dialogue with other life-styles and religious experiences. And the dialogue is sincere, true and fruitful if there is a **mutual transformation on the part of the other, diverse person**.

She hungers for food, life, bread, salvation not in the future, but now, in the present. In the anguish of the present moment he touches her with his mysterious Spirit, inspiring and vitalizing her thought:s: “*Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs from the children’s bread*” (v. 28). The Syrophenician’s words are vibrant, forceful, fervent with the Spirit, *breaking through* the ingrained, deep cultural and religious codes. These words revealed that something was there, but Jesus did not see or hear it. They beat within him, but he could not or was unable to recognize them. **Mission as relationship is based on intercultural dialogue** which in turn **demand intracultural dialogue** that each one must apply according to his/her belonging and identity.

Today the men and women missionaries, the believers, need to relate to people whose character, culture, religion, background

and age group, etc., are different, so that they may enrich us and even unconsciously reveal the face of the mystery of God. Our knowledge of God is always imperfect, but it is gratuitous love (a mission of gratuitousness and hope) that can make us touch the nucleus of God.

And when **mutual transformation** exists, **there are seeds of new life**. In this case it is the healing: “Jesus said to her, ‘*You may go your way; because of such a reply the demon has gone out of your daughter*’” (v. 29). Jesus no longer speaks to the woman with indirect symbolism, to “*throw it to the dogs*”, but as a person: *Go!* The mutual transformation, from the faith (yearning for a worthy and just life), has exorcised the evil, the illness, the sin, the self-justification. **Social transformation begins with the yearning to transfigure-transform the life of others**, with hope despite their resistance and courage, anguish at death that cries for hope; for the death-resurrection that dwells in each one of us, because “it is true that the inchoate reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live ‘Gospel values’ and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills (cf. Jn 3:8)” (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 20).

Finally, **transforming, life-giving diversity**, is the **source of the human-cosmic harmony**: *in her house she found that the girl was lying in bed and the demon had left* (Mk 7:30). Serenity, peace and tranquility that are far from indifference, intimacy and hedonism. *House*: day-to-dayness as she returns to her routine where God manifests himself. *Home*, intimacy with God. *Bed*, rest in the horizontality of life. *Demon*, dark areas, not well accepted diversity that flees when a harmonious life is present.

There will be encounters of this quality, intensity and authenticity for those that will allow “a major commitment in favour of the culture of life”. If we do not live diversity properly it generates inequality, exclusion, racism and discrimination, exclusion from education and knowledge. Then if we close our eyes to it “we are not defenders of the life of the

Kingdom and we locate ourselves on the way to death” (DA 358).

2.2 *Mission as relationship: mutual transformation generates sapiential circles*

Let us understand mission as relationship, within an intercultural framework, it must go on generating and promoting **sapiential circles that emanate an authentic and regenerating new evangelization and mission ‘ad gentes’** (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 30b). Circles that give *new ardour* to our spirit because we are able to discover and to listen to the Risen Christ present in ourselves, but also in other people, allowing us to be guided by the Spirit who “is the principal agent of mission” (n. 30a) and dwells in each human being. In this way we learn how to be “disciples of dialogue” that go into the world building bridges of peace, justice, solidarity so we can help to overcome cultural, religious and national barriers, in the pursuit of a dignified and full life.

Circles which, from interpersonal transfiguration-transformation, but also communitarian-cosmic transformation, go on generating *new expressions*, gestures and rites that help to communicate with the mystery of God. Expressions, gestures and rites that are born from respect and appreciation of the cultural and religious diversity “according to the mentality and culture of the listeners, according to the forms of communication and to the means that are in use”; that seek to express the seeds of new and full life that spring from these fertile interpersonal encounters.

Circles, where the exchange of wisdom and ideas creates *new methods* and ways “to account for the hope that is in you” (I Pt 3:15), for our defence and option “for another world that is possible”. New ways to live one’s identity: an identity that is measured by the capacity to establish and nourish relationships with diversity; that springs from the awareness of being interrelated with all human beings, with Creation and with God in a continuous search because life is in continuous transformation; that does not isolate us from the conflicts and dramas in our

context, but rather tries to bring about the transformation-transfiguration of reality.

Circles that are communities within communities, peoples within The People of God (*cf. Lumen Gentium*, nn. 9-17), where reconciliation is making headway, creating spaces where everyone can live in harmony, so that people of different cultures and sub-cultures, social strata, religious experiences and generations can be on good terms.

In short, circles that nourish and promote a new spiritual conscience that allows people to live a radical freedom like Jesus, and, from the deep and transforming encounter with God, everyone can relate with all and everything to transfigure-transform today's world.

Footnotes (in the original Spanish)

* Latin American Institute of 'Misionología', Bolivia

¹ Cuando no reconocemos y asumimos la diversidad en cada uno de nosotros, cuando creemos que la realización personal está en la autosuficiencia, cuando vamos perdiendo la capacidad de relacionarnos con lo diverso estamos generando sufrimiento y muerte.

² Documento Conclusivo Aparecida, V Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe, n° 360. De ahora en más DA.

³ ¿Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados? Plantear los modos de interculturalidad en clave negativa es adoptar lo que siempre ha sido perspectiva del pensamiento crítico: el lugar de carencia. Pero ponerse en la posición de los desposeídos (de integración, de recursos o de conexiones) no es aún saber quiénes somos" (Nestor García Canclini, *Diferentes, desiguales, desconectados. Mapa de la interculturalidad*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 2004, 25).

⁴ García Canclini, *Diferentes, desiguales, desconectados*, 214.

⁵ *Cf.* José Ignacio González Faus, *Calidad Cristiana. Identidad y crisis del cristianismo*, Sal Terrae, Bilbao 2006, 357.

⁶ Aquí considero lo "diabólico" como lo contrario a lo "simbólico" comprendido como un espacio donde hay relación y diversidad. Lo "diabólico" vendría a ser una vivencia negativa de la diversidad, donde la relación es choque, imposición de uno sobre otro.

⁷ "Hoy circulan varias concepciones de identidad que deben superarse: a) la concepción megárica o

atomista de multiplicidad de identidades culturales (postura relativista); b) la concepción esencialista y monista de identidades inmutables (postura integrista); c) la concepción liberal de pluralidad de identidades equivalentes (postura individualista); d) la concepción postmoderna que disuelve el sujeto en la fragmentación de la permanencia de ellas (postura postmodernista). Todas ellas apuntan hacia identidades cerradas ya sea por inconmensurabilidad; por incompreensión; por inmutabilidad; por singularidad; o por autodisolución". (Cristián Parker, "Identidades e interculturalidad en América Latina", en: *Identidades abiertas*, Universidad Arcis, Santiago de Chile, 2006, 97).

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ "Lo que aquí nos interesa es que ésta fue la experiencia por excelencia del propio Jesús. De un modo bastante extraordinario y misterioso, Jesús era consciente de ser uno con Dios, consigo mismo, con los demás y con toda la creación de Dios. El resultado para él y para nosotros, cuanto tratamos de movernos en esa dirección, es la libertad radical" (Albert Nolan, *Jesús hoy*, Sal Terrae, Santander, 2007, 181).

¹⁰ Calixto Quispe, Jaqi-Runa, *Verbo Divino*, Cochabamba, 2007, 38.

¹¹ Lluís Duch, *Estaciones del laberinto. Ensayos de antropología*, Herder, Barcelona, 2004, 86.

¹² *Cf.* Benedicto XVI, *Discurso a los miembros del Consejo Superior de las OMP*, 5 de mayo de 2007 (To the Superior Council of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Clementine Hall, 5 May 2007). *Sacramentum Caritatis*: "Mission ... is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life" (n. 84).

¹³ "... relaciones interculturales donde la diversidad no significa amenaza, no justifica jerarquías de poder de unos sobre otros, sino diálogo desde visiones culturales diferentes de celebración, de interrelación, de reavivamiento de la esperanza" (DA 97).

¹⁴ "Porque la propuesta de Jesucristo a nuestros pueblos, el contenido fundamental de esta misión, es la oferta de una vida plena para todos. Por eso la doctrina, las normas, las orientaciones éticas, y toda la actividad misionera de la Iglesia, debe dejar transparentar esta atractiva oferta de una vida más digna, en Cristo, para cada hombre y para cada mujer de América Latina y de El Caribe" (DA 361).

Ref.: Text from the author. November 2007.

“Sous le nouveau régime, le catholicisme vietnamien a progressé en nombre et en qualité”

- P. Nguyễn Tân Khoa -

[NDLR – Le texte ci-dessous, paru au mois de mai dans la revue Catholicisme et Nation (Công Giao Và Dân Tộc), est signé du P. Nguyễn Tân Khoa, président du Comité central du Front patriotique du Vietnam (ou Front de la Patrie vietnamienne), préside le Comité d’union du catholicisme. Ce dernier organisme, composé de catholiques, dépend directement du Front patriotique. L’intérêt de ce texte ne tient pas à l’histoire du catholicisme qu’il trace à grands traits et avec une grande liberté. Il est significatif du reflet d’une certaine vision de l’histoire de l’Église du Vietnam en accord avec les canons révolutionnaires en ce domaine].

Ces derniers temps, l’attention de l’opinion internationale s’est plus particulièrement portée sur la question de la liberté religieuse. Il s’agit là de l’un des droits fondamentaux de l’homme, reconnu par la Déclaration universelle des droits de l’homme adoptée en 1948. Ce droit à la liberté religieuse est reconnu par tous les pouvoirs du monde s’ils sont démocratiques et civilisés. Le président Hồ Chí Minh l’a proclamé avant même la publication de la déclaration des Nations Unies, dès le 3 septembre 1945, lorsqu’il a parlé de «liberté de croyance et union des religions». Voilà une prise de position correcte, mettant en pratique la priorité accordée au peuple (vi dân) par le nouveau pouvoir, récemment reconnu et soutenu par le peuple dans sa majorité. Cependant, à cause de la guerre de libération nationale, des faiblesses affectant l’économie et des capacités administratives de l’État, en certains moments et en certains lieux, il n’a pas été tenu compte d’une façon satisfaisante de ce droit de liberté religieuse. On peut pourtant affirmer que durant les 61 années de direction du parti du président Hồ Chí Minh, l’État vietnamien a réalisé de nombreuses choses, répondant chaque jour davantage aux exigences de la liberté de croyance et de religion du peuple, et plus particulièrement après que notre pays eut entamé la période de rénovation (dôi moi).

Ceci peut être prouvé par la progression du catholicisme au Vietnam, à tous les points de vue.

1) Le développement rapide des infrastructures matérielles ainsi que du nombre des fidèles et des membres du clergé.

Bien que le catholicisme ait été introduit au Vietnam il y a moins de cinq siècles et qu’il ait traversé de nombreux bouleversements historiques complexes, il n’a cessé de progresser en de nombreux domaines comme la création d’un clergé vietnamien, le nombre de fidèles, les infrastructures matérielles, l’organisation de l’Église. Nous avons été des témoins privilégiés de cette progression depuis que le Vietnam a débuté son œuvre de rénovation (dôi moi).

Au début de l’évangélisation, naturellement, les premiers ecclésiastiques furent des étrangers. Cette situation a duré trop longtemps et provoqué un certain mécontentement dans la masse des fidèles. Tant que les colonialistes et les impérialistes détenaient à la fois le pouvoir religieux et profane, il fut difficile de réaliser le vœu profond de la population, à savoir de bénéficier d’une hiérarchie composée de Vietnamiens. Il a fallu attendre près d’un siècle après l’introduction du christianisme

(de 1553 à 1668) pour que les quatre premiers prêtres vietnamiens soient ordonnés. En ce qui concerne l'épiscopat, il a fallu attendre 400 ans. C'est en 1933 que fut ordonné le premier évêque vietnamien, Mgr Nguyễn Ba Tông.

Or, pour une période allant de 1975 à aujourd'hui, le nombre des membres du clergé vietnamien a augmenté très rapidement. Depuis 1975, 54 évêques ont été ordonnés. À la fin de l'année 2004, le pays bénéficiait de 3,126 prêtres en exercice. Pour la seule année 2005, plus de 100 prêtres (sans compter les 57 nouveaux prêtres ordonnés par le cardinal Sepe, préfet de la Congrégation de l'évangélisation des peuples, le 29 novembre 2005, à Hanoi). Durant la colonisation française, de 1863 à 1945, le nombre de prêtres catholiques n'avait progressé que de 153 unités. C'est en 1937 que le nombre d'ordinations fut le plus élevé avec dix nouveaux prêtres ordonnés. Habituellement, on ne comptait que cinq à six nouveaux prêtres par an.

En ce qui concerne l'organisation de l'Église, en 1659, le Saint-Siège avait créé au Vietnam deux vicariats apostoliques. En 1960, il avait érigé trois provinces ecclésiastiques, Hanoi, Huê, Saïgon. Le nombre de diocèses et archidiocèses s'élève aujourd'hui à 26. Depuis que le Vietnam a été réuni en 1975, pour la première fois, un Vietnamien a été élevé au cardinalat, l'archevêque de Hanoi, Mgr Trinh Nhu Khuê (le 24 mai 1976). En 2003, l'archevêque de Hôchiminh Ville, Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Pham Minh Mân, a été lui aussi nommé cardinal. On compte aujourd'hui cinq Vietnamiens qui ont été nommés cardinaux, dont l'un fut président d'un conseil pontifical. Une telle ascension n'a pu se produire que parce que le Vietnam avait atteint un statut international.

Dans le domaine des infrastructures matérielles, il faut reconnaître que, sous le régime colonialiste, l'Église catholique possédait des biens considérables et de nombreuses églises de grande dimension ont été construites pendant cette époque. Mais il faut reconnaître aussi que c'était une période où l'Église, précisément à cause de

cela, était marquée par beaucoup d'obscurités. Après le 30 avril 1975, Mgr Nguyễn Van Binh prit la décision de permettre aux autorités civiles d'emprunter des établissements religieux et de les utiliser à des fins éducatives, médicales ou encore dans un but caritatif ou social. Beaucoup de personnes ont pensé alors que c'était là une bonne occasion pour que l'Église soit libérée de ses établissements et moyens matériels. Les prêtres et les religieux ainsi déchargés de la préoccupation des écoles et des établissements caritatifs et sociaux, pourraient désormais vivre en union avec le Seigneur dans la prière et se consacrer davantage à l'étude et à l'enseignement de la doctrine.

Au cours de la guerre, de nombreux établissements religieux ont été détruits par les bombes. La paix revenue, les besoins de construction et de restauration des lieux de culte furent davantage pris en compte. Les églises de villes comme Ninh Binh, Phu Ly, La Vang s'étaient effondrées sous l'effet des bombardements américains. Elles sont aujourd'hui reconstruites plus spacieuses, ou en train d'être reconstruites. Des milliers d'églises ont été édifiées ou réparées et cela étonne beaucoup les touristes étrangers. En de nombreux pays d'Europe ou d'Amérique, l'Église est obligée de vendre ou de fermer les églises par manque de personnel et de ressources. Au Vietnam, partout où l'on va, on aperçoit des églises nouvellement construites.

Le nombre des fidèles au Vietnam s'accroît régulièrement : en 1960, il y avait 2,094,450 fidèles, 5,789 religieux et religieuses, 1,914 prêtres. En 2000, on comptait 5,250,354 fidèles, 1,131 séminaristes, 9,986 religieux et religieuses, 2,422 prêtres. En 2004, le nombre des fidèles s'élevait à 5,776,972 (environ 7 % de la population totale), les séminaristes étaient au nombre de 1,249. Il y avait 14,413 religieux et religieuses, 3,126 prêtres, 53,887 catéchistes. C'est sur les hauts plateaux et le nord-ouest du Vietnam que le nombre des fidèles a augmenté le plus rapidement. Dans le diocèse de Kontum, en 1971, il n'y avait que 80,627 fidèles. En 2004, ce chiffre s'élevait à 203,723, soit 2.5 fois plus.

2) L'Église, autrefois étrangère, est devenue une Église liée à son peuple et collaborant avec lui

Parce qu'il avait été introduit à l'époque de l'expansion coloniale et qu'il portait avec lui une culture étrangère, le catholicisme, lors de ses débuts au Vietnam, suscita certaines réactions contre lui, car il était considéré comme un élément étranger à la culture nationale. Ainsi, au début, l'Église ne permettait pas à ses fidèles le culte des ancêtres. Les prêtres obligeaient les catéchumènes à se couper les cheveux, à abandonner le nom personnel donné par les parents, à ne plus porter le costume traditionnel. Alexandre de Rhodes, qui était un ecclésiastique ouvert à la culture orientale, n'approuvait pas ce genre de pratique. Il écrivait : «Je me demande pourquoi on exige des choses que notre Seigneur lui-même n'exige pas et qui les tiennent éloignés du baptême et du paradis. Pour ce qui me concerne, j'ai protesté vivement contre ceux qui obligent les catéchumènes à se couper les cheveux (ils ont pour coutume de porter les cheveux longs comme des femmes).... Je leur ai dit que l'Évangile les obligeait à chasser les erreurs de leurs esprits mais non pas à se faire couper les cheveux».

La liturgie du catholicisme, au début, ne paraissait pas familière aux Vietnamiens. Les cérémonies étaient célébrées en latin et les églises construites dans un style européen. Les images religieuses et la musique venaient elles aussi de l'étranger. En particulier, une partie des fidèles et du clergé fut utilisée pour s'opposer à la nation et favoriser l'invasion et la prise de pouvoir des forces colonialistes et impérialistes. Pourtant, nous devons nous réjouir en considérant que, dans son développement au Vietnam, le catholicisme a finalement opté pour une orientation convenable, à savoir l'adaptation à la culture nationale et la participation à la vie du peuple. C'est une évolution qui s'est faite de bonne heure dans les milieux catholiques patriotiques, encouragée par les militants révolutionnaires, légitimée par le Concile Vatican II. Une évolution qui s'est fortement amplifiée après l'unification du pays. Elle a été en effet préconisée par la première lettre commune

de la conférence épiscopale en 1980 et la lettre commune de 2001.

Ce mouvement d'adaptation culturelle du catholicisme a connu de nombreux succès. Autrefois, on ne pouvait citer qu'un exemple d'église édifiée dans l'architecture et le style du pays : la cathédrale de Phat Diêm. Aujourd'hui, il en existe de très nombreuses, comme par exemple l'église de Ba Chuong, de Cua Nam, du Cam Ly.... Beaucoup d'œuvres d'art, de cantiques composés par des Vietnamiens conformément au style traditionnel ont connu un grand succès non seulement dans le pays mais également à l'étranger. De nombreux éléments appartenant de la culture nationale ont été introduits dans la liturgie : la coutume consistant à se prosterner avec des bâtonnets d'encens devant la dépouille d'un défunt, l'utilisation des instruments de musique, des mélodies et les rythmes des chants populaires nationaux.... Les missels, les catéchismes de l'Église universelle ont été traduits en vietnamien.

Si l'on considère la solidarité de l'Église avec son peuple, on constate les mêmes changements. Autrefois, le patriotisme s'est surtout manifesté à travers les actions particulières de certains catholiques. Après la révolution d'août 1945, le patriotisme des catholiques est devenu un vaste mouvement entraînant dans son sillage de nombreux fidèles qui ont participé à la révolution et contribué à son succès. Après que le pays a été entièrement réuni (le 30 avril 1975), l'héroïsme de la résistance victorieuse de notre peuple a également animé les évêques vietnamiens qui ont rédigé un texte merveilleux : la lettre commune de 1980. Jamais l'Église n'avait eu d'affirmations aussi sublimes : «L'amour de la patrie et l'amour de ses compatriotes constituent, pour les catholiques, non seulement un sentiment naturel mais aussi une exigence de l'Évangile.... Notre patriotisme doit être concret, ce qui signifie que nous devons avoir conscience des problèmes actuels de notre patrie, comprendre la ligne politique et la législation de l'État et, positivement, avec nos compatriotes de tout le pays, contribuer à défendre et à édifier un Vietnam prospère, libre, et heureux» (§ 10). Grâce à cette

orientation, les catholiques ont été débarrassés de leurs inquiétudes et n'ont plus à choisir entre leur devoir de citoyen et leur devoir de fidèle.

En plus des directives énoncées ci-dessus, l'Église a proposé des orientations concrètes aux laïcs en divers domaines, préconisant des naissances responsables, le développement des activités caritatives, éducatives et médicales, ou encore la participation au mouvement : «Harmonie du religieux et du profane». Grâce à de telles orientations, certains catholiques ont été exemplaires et ont bénéficié des honneurs publics, comme, par exemple, la sœur Mai Thi Mâu qui, pendant quarante ans, s'est consacrée au service des lépreux de Di Linh et, pour cela, a été déclaré «héroïne du travail», ou encore Mme Nguyễn Thi Mai, qui, avec courage, s'est jetée à l'eau pour sauver une personne entraînée par le courant, sacrifiant sa vie et méritant ainsi d'être élevée au rang des «morts pour la patrie». Le Comité d'union du catholicisme vietnamien, une association patriotique des catholiques, a reçu la médaille de l'indépendance de première classe en 1983 et la médailles de Hôchiminh en 2000...

A l'heure actuelle, les milieux catholiques gèrent 96 dispensaires et hôpitaux, 128 centres de soins pour lépreux et malades du SIDA, près de 1,000 jardins d'enfants, écoles et centres culturels. Ils acquièrent ainsi un grand prestige et manifestent publiquement leur capacité à travailler dans le domaine social.

A Hôchiminh Ville, en 2004, les catholiques ont recueilli 15 milliards de dôngs (26,000 dollars) pour les programmes caritatifs et sociaux. Le Diocèse de Xuân Lộc a dépensé 30 milliards de dôngs en 2004 et 60 en 2005 pour ses œuvres caritatives et sociales. Si l'État et la société n'avaient pas créés des conditions favorables, l'Église n'aurait pu obtenir de tels résultats.

Pour garantir l'exercice des activités religieuses conformes à la loi et en accord avec le développement social, l'État vietnamien a publié de nombreux textes législatifs concernant la croyance et la religion,

comme le décret 234/SL de 1955, l'arrêté 297/CP de 1977, l'arrêté 69/HDBT de 1991, l'arrêté le 26/CP de 1999 et, plus récemment, l'ordonnance sur la croyance et la religion, en 2000. Au fil des années, ces textes ont été de plus en plus libéraux et ouverts, apportant des conditions favorables à l'exercice des activités religieuses des fidèles et des ecclésiastiques appartenant aux Églises des diverses religions. De nombreuses fêtes, comme, par exemple, le rassemblement annuel de Notre-Dame de La Vang qui attire des dizaines de milliers de participants, peuvent être organisées avec soin, dans la joie et la sécurité. Les voyages annuels de la délégation du Saint-Siège au Vietnam et, tout récemment encore, la visite pastorale du Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe sont autant de témoignages de la vie et de la liberté de l'Église catholique.

Manifestant leur esprit d'ouverture, dans un certain nombre de régions, les autorités locales ont considéré qu'il fallait rendre aux catholiques de nombreux établissements religieux qui avaient été empruntés auparavant, comme le centre culturel catholique, le centre Paul Nguyễn Van Binh, le centre Alexandre de Rhodes à Hô Chi Minh-Ville. Beaucoup d'évêchés, de paroisses ont collaboré positivement avec les autorités pour donner une solution aux besoins légitimes d'activités religieuses, ce qui a rempli de confiance et d'enthousiasme l'esprit des fidèles.

La question religieuse a toujours été un domaine sensible et complexe, mais nous sommes persuadés : si nous adoptons une conception correcte et conforme à l'ordonnance sur la croyance et la religion, les activités religieuses au Vietnam seront tous les jours plus riches, plus vivantes et se développeront toujours davantage. Il n'y aura pas de réponse plus éloquente aux accusations portées par des organismes privés, dépourvus de bonne volonté à l'égard du Vietnam en ce domaine.

(EDA, *Catholicisme et Nation*,
juin 2007)

Réf. : *Églises d'Asie*, n. 465, 16 juin 2007, document annexe n. 1 - Vietnam.

Islam et démocratie : **Le modèle malaisien face au modèle indonésien**

- Endy M. Bayuni -

[NDLR – L'article ci-dessous, publié le 8 décembre dernier dans le quotidien anglophone The Jakarta Post, est un compte-rendu rédigé par l'auteur, rédacteur en chef adjoint du dit journal, après le colloque « Islam et démocratisation de l'Asie », qui s'est tenu dans la capitale de l'Indonésie, fin 2005. La traduction est de la rédaction d'Églises d'Asie].

Du fait d'une population majoritairement composée de Malais qui sont de confession musulmane, l'Indonésie et la Malaisie se ressemblent à bien des égards, mais les voies de démocratisation qu'elles ont respectivement choisies ne pourraient être plus distinctes. Alors qu'il existe des limites et des imperfections dans chacun de ces deux systèmes, ils sont considérés comme deux modèles bien différents des autres pays majoritairement musulmans, particulièrement ceux du Moyen-Orient qui cherchent à s'engager vers plus de démocratie.

Au centre de cette problématique se trouve le rôle politique joué par l'islam. L'Indonésie et la Malaisie interprètent la religion et appliquent la *charia* (loi islamique) de manière sensiblement différente.

Les participants à un colloque, ayant pour thème «Islam et démocratisation de l'Asie», qui s'est tenu à Djakarta cette semaine, se sont poliment abstenus de s'interroger sur la question de savoir lequel de ces deux systèmes – indonésien ou malaisien – serait le plus souhaitable ou le plus 'islamique'.

Si le trait de culture malais caractérisé par sa discrétion peut, en partie, expliquer cette attitude, il est certain que la principale explication réside dans le fait que le processus de démocratisation est toujours en cours dans ces deux pays. Si la Malaisie peut vanter les mérites de sa bonne santé économique et des bienfaits apportés par celle-ci à sa population, l'Indonésie défend une approche plus globale qui prend en compte les intérêts des minorités non musulmanes.

Ces deux approches différentes rendent l'étude d'autant plus intéressante que

plusieurs années seront probablement nécessaires pour départager les deux systèmes, et déterminer lequel s'avèrera être le meilleur.

Cette table ronde qui a été organisée par l'*International Center for Islam and Pluralism* (ICIP), et le Bureau de l'*Asia Foundation*, est la deuxième de ce genre dans la région, après le colloque organisé en septembre dernier, à Manille.

Outre le fait d'observer la construction de la démocratie dans ces deux pays, le colloque a analysé le développement des minorités musulmanes dans des pays comme les Philippines et la Thaïlande. Dans ces deux pays, les musulmans ont des perceptions différentes de la démocratie. Alors qu'ils vivent dans des systèmes démocratiques installés depuis des dizaines d'années, ils continuent de subir des persécutions et de se sentir dépossédés. Des participants de ces deux pays étaient relativement sceptiques quant au fait que la démocratie puisse apporter des solutions à leurs problèmes.

Néanmoins, dans la plupart des pays musulmans, il est largement admis que l'enjeu ne se situe pas dans le fait de savoir si l'islam est compatible avec la démocratie, et ils remettent ainsi en cause la thèse du «*choc des civilisations*» de Samuel Huntington.

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères indonésien, Hassan Wirajuda, dans son message d'ouverture, a souligné qu'il était maintenant évident que la démocratie n'était pas une valeur exclusivement occidentale, mais qu'elle appartenait à toutes les principales religions du monde. «*Le débat sur*

le bien-fondé de la démocratie et de sa compatibilité avec l'islam est terminé, a-t-il affirmé. Le défi en Indonésie est de savoir comment l'islam et les autres religions peuvent aujourd'hui être une force dans les réformes et les processus démocratiques». Cette conception marque une différence essentielle entre les voies respectives que l'Indonésie et la Malaisie ont choisies.

Comme un participant l'a fait remarquer pendant la table ronde, l'Indonésie a choisi l'approche «*conciliante*», pendant que la Malaisie lui préférerait l'approche «*prépondérante*». En Malaisie, l'islam est ainsi religion d'État et la *charia*, la loi qui s'impose à la majorité musulmane, les minorités non musulmanes étant régies par une loi différente. En Indonésie, l'islam est une des cinq religions reconnues par l'État. Alors qu'il y a eu des demandes pour que l'Indonésie devienne un État islamique et impose la *charia* aux musulmans, le débat s'est clos – du moins pour le moment – lorsque la question a été soumise aux votes lors des débats sur les amendements apportés à la Constitution en 2002. Les demandes des partisans pro islamiques et ceux de la *charia* n'ont pas été retenues lors des consultations électorales.

Alors que l'islam en tant qu'idéologie politique a été largement rejeté par la majorité musulmane en Indonésie, l'enseignement islamique et les valeurs de l'islam continuent à jouer un rôle essentiel dans la vie politique du pays. Il est d'ailleurs difficile de considérer l'Indonésie comme un État laïc ou séculier au même titre qu'un État européen, même si la Constitution indonésienne de 1945 garantit la liberté de religion et oblige l'État à protéger les droits et la liberté de culte des fidèles.

Douglas Rumage, président du bureau de l'*Asian Office* en Indonésie, a souligné le rôle majeur que les organisations musulmanes de masse ont joué dans la participation de l'islam à la construction de la démocratie, lors des deux dernières élections démocratiques qui ont eu lieu dans le pays depuis 1999. L'islam, en tant qu'idéologie politique, est seulement une idéologie parmi d'autres dans les démocraties naissantes. Les partis vainqueurs des élections de 1999 et de 2004 ont été des partis politiques nationalistes comme le Parti démocratique indonésien de lutte (PDI-P) ou le *Golkar*.

Les différentes voies empruntées par l'Indonésie et la Malaisie sont le fait de plusieurs facteurs déterminants. L'histoire coloniale en est un : la Malaisie, ancienne colonie britannique, possède un système politique et judiciaire largement inspiré du système anglais (c'est un royaume), alors que la République d'Indonésie et son système judiciaire ont été mis en place pendant la période coloniale hollandaise.

De plus, l'histoire récente et la politique ont également conduit à des chemins différents de démocratisation. Les Premiers ministres malaisiens, Mahathir Mohamad et aujourd'hui Abdullah Badawi, ont de plus en plus viré vers le conservatisme islamique, en partie pour neutraliser la menace que représentait le *Party Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS). Un participant malaisien du colloque a, pour sa part, estimé que le débat sur le rôle de l'islam et de la *charia* dans la démocratie malaisienne était limité à l'élite politique, sortant peu des salles confinées pour atteindre le grand public.

En Indonésie, du point de vue législatif, il n'existe plus de débat au sujet de la *charia*, mais certaines régions, comme Aceh et différents districts (régences), ont adopté la loi islamique au niveau régional, à la demande des partis islamistes et des oulémas.

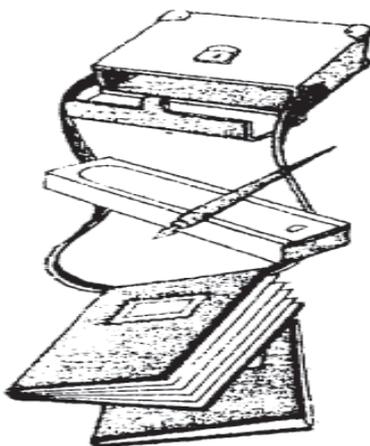
Selon Surin Pitsuwan, ancien ministre thaïlandais des Affaires étrangères, orateur éloquent sur l'islam du Sud-Est asiatique, les relations de la démocratie et de l'islam doivent être abordées sous un angle complètement différent. Selon lui, il n'est pas tant question du rôle que l'islam peut jouer au sein de la démocratie que d'être un bon musulman en comprenant l'importance de vivre sous un régime démocratique. «*Je crois avec ferveur que pour être un bon musulman, vous devez vivre dans un système démocratique*», a-t-il expliqué.

(EDA, *The Jakarta Post*, mai 2006)

Réf. : *Dossiers et documents* n. 5/2006, Supplément *Églises d'Asie*, n. 441, Mai 2006, Cahier de documents, Document n. 5, E/2006.

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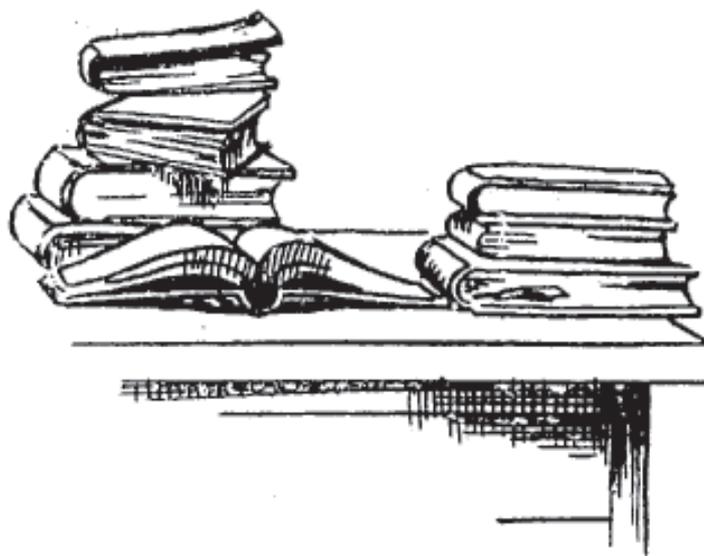
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SEDOS Coming Events

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***