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Peace and All Good!

Africa is a continent traversed by splits and fractures. The missionary living in a fractured Africa needs first to answer Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?". Then, letting himself/herself be transformed by the Word, she/he will be a bearer of God's wisdom as Jesus was and commit him/herself with the people to identify the ills of the continent; to jointly seek solutions which are sustainable and durable. Bomki MATTHEW is offering his personal answer to the question: "Who is Jesus Christ for Me?".

A member of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, Prof. Dr. Franz WEBER, in his conference on "*Ecclesia peregrinans natura sua missionaria est*" (AG, n. 2) that is: "*The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature*" asserts that the word mission is an indispensable theological concept, yet, it does not have a good reputation. Due to the negative and questionable experience of the Mission in the history of the Church, this concept has become a burdened word. "It is urgent at this time to restore to the concept of Mission its inherent dignity" says Theo Sundermeier; and Prof. Dr. Franz Weber, drawing from "*Mission of the Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*", helps to discover anew Mission's original religious-ecclesiastical meaning, in other terms, its deeper theological significance.

The African continent is a paradox in itself: it treasures life yet life is continually endangered. In her article: "*L'homme de Tékoa: un questionnement de la fonction prophétique de l'Église en Afrique*", that is "*the Man of Tekoa: the Question (Concern for) of the Prophetic Function of the Church in Africa*". Sr Anne Béatrice FAYE, NDICC, urges the Church in Africa to become a church which is communion, at the service of life, a space of hospitality; a place where Christians experience that God is present in their suffering, and that He carries it with them. Therefore, the Church in Africa has to re-invent a new kind of prophet who would persuade the Africans to act, to become motivated workers, creative and courageous so as to rebuild a new Africa.

Starting from her life-long experience in North Africa, Sr Lucie PRUVOST, MSOLA, suggests the way to bring about the

rebirth of the African continent. Christians are invited to set out on a new kind of spiritual journey: Daring to live one's faith in a Moslem context and seeking to promote an atmosphere of spiritual conviviality between Christians and Muslims: "*Exposer sa foi à la différence à la recherche d'une convivialité spirituelle entre Chrétiens et Musulmans*". The Church, an "expert in humanity" has to harness all the energies contained in all religions present e.g. in North Africa, and create a space for dialogue of life, of works and dialogue of spiritual and intellectual encounters. By doing so the Church will prepare the way and facilitate the process of Reconciliation, Peace and Justice so needed in Africa.

Fr Thomas MALIPURATHU, SVD, underlines the importance of "*God's Word at Work: Nourishing Our Life, Inspiring Our Mission*". When Jesus' followers listen to the Word of God, ponder over it, share and treasure it, they remain continually attuned to God; and this becomes a singular source of nourishment for them. The Word of God empowers them and enables them to possess the right perspective on values that must guide them in their mission. In the same way the Bread blessed, broken and shared is a source of nourishment and helps to build communion. And the *koinonia* that is established by the partaking of this two fold table of the Eucharistic Bread and the scriptural word has a tremendous witnessing prospective.

This issue presents the summary that Fr Pio ESTEPA, SVD, made of the responses to the SEDOS Questionnaire of October 2009. I say, once more, many thanks to the Congregational Leadership Teams that took time to respond to it.

To conclude this Editorial, I reiterate our congratulations, and express our deep gratitude to Fr Carlos RODRIGUEZ LINERA, OP, for his many tremendous life-giving activities that helped to continue keeping in focus the vision for which SEDOS was founded.

Given that I have just landed on SEDOS' holy ground, let's now continue our journey with hope together.

Sr Nzenzili Mboma, FMM
SEDOS Executive Director

Bomki Mathew

Who Is Jesus For Me?

Introduction

African Christology has become a very crucial study in Theology because it broadens and re-appropriates Christ in the African context. The contact with Jesus Christ brought to us by the missionaries, or the "the colonial Christ"¹ as Peter Phan calls him, has shaped and modelled my Christian life in one way or another. Some scholars, like Edward Schillebeeckx, have termed this re-appropriation of Christ as the "fifth Gospel". According to Schillebeeckx, "the account of the life of Christians in the world in which they live is a fifth Gospel; it also belongs to the heart of Christology".² This is due to the fact that Christ is revealing himself to us in the daily events and experiences of our lives, or what *Gaudium et Spes* calls the "signs of the time".³ Every culture, ethnic group, nation or community is challenged by Jesus Christ with the momentous words in Mark 8:29 "who do you say that I am?". Peter's profession of faith should be an invitation to all Christians to make a profession of faith in Christ drawn from their experience and expressed in their own terms. It should thus be a call to affirm one's understanding of Christ within one's own cultural context.

However, the African context poses tremendous challenges. It is one of dehumanizing squalor yet radically religious, according to John Mbiti. How can we liberate the continent from the aftermath of the Slave Trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism? How can we say that Jesus Christ is the Messiah or liberator in such a context? To attempt a meaningful response to this question, one first needs to describe the sober and disheartening situation of the African context.

I: The African context

Africa has been negatively marked by the Slave Trade, colonialism or neo-colonialism and globalization or the hegemony of market and communication technologies qualified as "The Nouveaux Maîtres du Monde"⁴ according to Ignacio Ramonet. These ideologies have contributed to the poverty and pillaging of the continent's resources, a continent endowed with rich and precious mineral resources yet one of the poorest in the world where most of its inhabitants live on less than a dollar per day. The continent which is experiencing poverty and under-development is inhabited by the greatest number of people affected by HIV/AIDS and, unfortunately, access to the anti-retroviral drugs is still a privilege of a few individuals. There are refugees all over it. Corruption is the canker worm eating deep into our societies. Due to this litany of woes, many authors have described Africa as: *L'Afrique en panne, L'Afrique est mal partie, L'Afrique malade d'elle-même, Et, si Dieu était contre les Africains, L'Afrique des malheurs, L'Afrique étranglée*,⁵ *Africa betrayed, Africa in Chaos*,⁶ and so on.

Cameroon is a living example of this sordid image of Africa. Cameroon is sick! At present Cameroon is oppressed by the yoke of a deadly regime whose political strategies deny human rights and human dignity. The regime of Mr Paul Biya has been described as "anthropophagic".⁷ Many youths are being sacrificed on the altar of the egoistic and mean interests of certain unscrupulous politicians. Public funds are being embezzled and mismanaged or placed in foreign banks. Corruption has become the order of the day.

The citizens are languishing in abject poverty, misery and other ills. Our present regime could be qualified as "soft despotism".⁸ The *res publica* has become the *res persona*. The concept of the common good has been emptied of its essential meaning. Our ancestral cradle has become the cradle of misery, famine, banditry, moral disenchantment, dictatorship, political crimes and treachery, embezzlement, electoral manipulation, demagoguery, prostitution, "feymaniac",⁹ perjury, tribalism and nepotism.

This tainted state of affairs is revolting to upright human beings. It is the epitome of many African countries. The Aristotelian ideal that each State should strive for the well-being (*eudaimonia*) of its citizens remains a utopia for most African countries, where peace has become an empty concept in many peoples' minds tortured by interminable wars and by the fact that good-living is replaced by misery. Who is Jesus Christ for me in such an agonizing context?

II: Who Christ should be for me

From the above, the image of the African that emerges is one of an anthropologically dispossessed or anthropologically poor¹⁰ person, which is not limited to the dispossession of the Continent's material resources but includes the cultural and moral forces that bind us. In Africa, *being* is "being with". I am, because you are, and we are, because I am (John Mbiti). The White man has put a knife into the things that hold us together, affirms Chinue Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*. According to Mveng, this poverty is experienced when "people are deprived not only of goods and possessions of a material, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural, or sociological order, but of everything that makes up the foundation of their being-in-the world and the specificity of their 'ipseity' as individuals, society and history".¹¹ Forty years after Independence, Africa remains stagnant in poverty. There is no significant development yet Africa is being striped of its resources. What we have is independence of flags.

So, I opt for a Christ who knows the reality Africa is going through in this era of globalization, a Christ who cares for the basic needs of my people, a Christ who can help me and my people to identify the ills of my country and seek solutions which are sustainable and enduring in our endeavour to remedy the calamitous situation of our continent. Christ for me will be a Christ of transformation and liberation, liberation from all that has led my people into anthropological poverty, especially from the inferiority complex. In this light, I believe that the methodology of hermeneutics and social analysis are indispensable in understanding the current situation of Africa, and of Cameroon in particular. These methods focus on the context and then seek adequate solutions to the issues identified. We must fight whatever strangles or hinders our liberty as children of God. This liberation is impossible without the recovery of our deeply rooted traditional cultural values because most of them are not incompatible with the Gospel message. The African context is a religious one. Most of its values are liberating values. These should be re-appropriated and integrated into the Gospel values so that the African identity may be re-affirmed. This will help us to shed the dehumanizing reputation imposed on us by others.

III: The need for a contextualized Christ

I believe that understanding Christ as the liberator from everything that hinders human well-being or dignity will help give confidence to my African people. Africans need to get out of the pit of resignation; the fatalism that all their ills are the will of God. They will come to know that Christ really came so that they may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). Our God is not a God of misery, misery is against God's will. Our God is a God of freedom. In Luke 4:18 Christ says, he came to give liberty to captives. But the struggle for justice and freedom without the religious and cultural dimensions will be no more than some sort of social or political activism. This is because our Africa is ontologically religious.

The Christ I believe in is that Christ who knows our history, our joys, our suffering, hopes, despair, love, hatred and freedom, who feels with us in our suffering, who works

with us in our fight for freedom. It is a Christ about whom I can sincerely say: "You are one of us, sharing our pain and leading us in our African dance for new life".¹² "We no longer believe because of what you told us". We have heard him for ourselves in our social and cultural context. He is truly the Saviour of the world (*cf.* Jn 4:42).

IV: Conclusion

I have tried to answer the question: "Who is Christ for me?". This question is actually not simple but a challenging one for me. However, it has helped me to meditate on who Christ is for me. But what come to mind first are those symbols received during the catechism or Christology class. We are taught that Christ is the second person (*prosopon*) of the Trinity, begotten not made, one with the Father in one hypostatic (substance) union or in two *physeis* (natures), human and divine, the incarnate Son of God. These are very abstract terms in Greek categories and foreign to my culture.

But contextualizing Christ in an African or Cameroonian culture as someone who shares the joy and pain of my people — as someone who knows the socio-political context of my country, as someone who wants change in my country so that people may live in freedom and justice, so that the national resources may be shared equitably, so that everyone has an equal opportunity irrespective of gender or religion, so that human dignity and human rights are secured, so that the fullness of life as preached in the Gospel is lived — has meaning for me. I think this is the veritable Christ, the Son of God, for whom the Kingdom of God begins here on earth and heaven is just the fullness of God's Kingdom, where we shall be with God face to face. Therefore, to me, Christ is the Liberator and especially the One who helps me to fight anything which may foster anthropological poverty and the inferiority complex.

Footnotes

¹ Peter Phan, "Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face", in *Theological Studies*, n. 57 (1996), p. 407.

² Joseph Healey, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1996), p. 75.

³ "Gaudium et Spes", n. 4 in Austin Flannery, OP, (ed.), *Vatican Council II* (Leominster: Costello Publishing Compagny, 1980), p. 905.

⁴ New Masters of the World: Market and Communication.

⁵ *Cf. Afrique l'irruption des pauvres* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), p. 21. These labels are titles of books.

⁶ Ayittey George, *Africa Betrayed*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992). *Africa in Chaos* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997).

⁷ Meaning a regime in which many innocent lives are sacrificed for egoistic reasons.

⁸ In Cameroon, one has the impression that there is peace, but in reality there is no real peace. People are afraid to revolt publicly against the present regime, its injustices, for fear of being sent to prison. The military is well paid and thus very loyal to the president, any attempt to criticize the Government would be automatically suppressed by it.

⁹ The art of swindling very rich people just by playing on their psyche is very common in Nigeria and Cameroon.

¹⁰ Anthropological poverty is an expression coined by the late Fr Engelbert Mveng, a Cameroonian Jesuit. J. Mark Ela also speaks of the "anthropology of misfortune" which, according to him, refers to the domination of Africa by the West after the Renaissance. It is also linked with slavery, colonization, post-modernity and globalization. See *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994).

¹¹ E. Mveng, "Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach from Africa and the Third World", in R. Gibellini (ed.) *Paths of African Theology* (New York: 1994), p. 156.

¹² Joseph Healey, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p. 78.

Prof. Dr. Franz Weber

"Ecclesia Peregrinans Natura Sua Missionaria Est"
The Mission of the Church
in the Light of the Second Vatican Council

I PART

*Congress of the Confederation of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, Vorau,
Austria — 17 July 2007*

The Decree "Ad Gentes" states that "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature" (n. 2, [Abbott]).

As will shortly be seen, this is a core ecclesiological idea of the Council. What does "missionary" mean? What is "Mission"? What is included in the Mission of the Church in the world today? Where does this Mission happen? Only in Africa, Asia and Oceania, or does it also happen in Austria, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, England and Ireland? Which Mission do Christians have to fulfill in today's world? What is your Mission as Canons Regular of St Augustine in Europe today?

What does Mission mean for us, given our different offices and tasks within the Church and within the Order? What are the fundamental theological concepts and ideas that I connect with Mission? The Latin word 'missio' probably stirs up in us less ambivalence than the word 'Mission' on account of the way in which the latter word is used today.

1. "Why we must speak about Mission in a new way" — Introducing the Subject

We do not proclaim the Good News since the Gospel is no longer new to us. We are already used to the fact that it has become an old novelty. The living God is no longer an enormously overwhelming joy. Furthermore we do not ask ourselves what it would be like if God were absent; therefore we are not able to imagine, what this means for other people. If we speak of God, we present an idea instead of bearing witness to a love, which we receive and give further. We are not able to proclaim our faith to the unbelieving as a liberation from the meaninglessness of the world without God because we never experience this meaninglessness. We proclaim God as our property, we do not proclaim him as the life of life for all, as the immediate neighbour to all the living.

(Madeleine Debrel, *Wir Nachbarn der Kommunisten*, Einsiedeln 1975, 238)

Has Madeleine Debrel with this self-critical inquiry not given a possible answer to the question why the Mission of the Church is in crisis today? At least, one is able to say that we in our Mission in the world and to the world are not as certain as was the case in the past. Perhaps, we even have basic doubts regarding the legitimacy of Mission. We have, at the very least, questions about the way in which Mission ought to be done. "In the past Mission had problems. Today Mission itself has become the problem". When the Evangelical Missionary Walter Freytag spoke this well known phrase at the 1958 World Missionary Conference in Ghana, he brought up a fundamental uncertainty in the Catholic Church and in other Christian churches, which is one of the many questions which will be discussed today. It is much more a question of the very existence and life of the Church. Would a church that was no longer convinced that it has a Mission to fulfill in the world today really still be the Church of Jesus Christ?

Many people today, who are not immediately concerned with theology or the Church, react negatively when the Catholic Church or other Christian churches begin to speak of Mission again. Does it not indubitably arouse in many modern enlightened people a more or less great fear, when a great world religion like Islam confesses itself unmistakably to be a Missionary religion which even in Europe aggressively seeks new members and actually wins them? May there even be such a thing as "Mission" in an enlightened society within the context of the modern idea of liberty?

Suppose one were to ask the man in the street whether he considers Austria or Germany, France or Italy, England or Spain to be mission territory, and whether the Church even ought to conduct Mission today, one would probably have to reckon with misunderstanding and a firm "No, thank you" or with an even stronger defensive reaction. One may moreover act on the assumption that many convinced Christians and even some theologians are extremely reserved when it comes to Mission, perhaps even helpless and uncomprehending. On the contrary I am definitely of the opinion, as a theologian of a Christian church, that today one cannot develop a theologically responsible perspective for the Church's activity in the diverse multicultural and multireligious contexts of today's globalized world, without first clarifying what Mission means theologically and in which form it can be carried out by Christians in Europe today, so that it can make a genuine contribution to a constructive *modus vivendi* among different cultures and religions.

A Church that invokes Jesus of Nazareth and the religious movement which began with him does not have a mission: it is "Mission". That was the case from the very beginning and is undeniable on account of the witness of the New Testament. "The early church was a missionary church. If at anytime the missionary service of the Church was self-evident, it was during the first fifty years",¹ writes Ferdinand Hahn. Another major Evangelical exegete asserts, "The history and theology of early Christianity are the history of Mission and the theology of Mission". From this he deduces a theological conclusion for which there are hardly any good grounds to disagree, "A church and a theology, which forgets or denies the Missionary mandate of the faithful as the message of salvation in a doom threatened world, abandons its cause and therewith its very self".²

Mission — yes or no? The answer might be fundamentally clear. Nevertheless, one is able to speak of Mission in a theological-ecclesial meaning only with a differentiated "yes, but". This is because Mission is not only an indispensable theological concept, but also a historically burdened word, which recalls the history of the proclamation of Christianity, which not only meant liberation, but also violence and oppression. The Christian Mission has also even caused in many people and nations numerous victims and left behind it traumatic experiences and cultures in ruin.

The reactions to Pope Benedict XVI's Discourse at the opening of the General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops' Conference on 13 May at Aparecida in Brazil show how deep the knowledge of the fact that the missionary activity of the Church not only proclaimed and brought salvation to people, but that it was also for many nations extremely calamitous. The Pope had the missionary history of Latin America in view when he said literally: "In effect, the proclamation of Jesus and of his Gospel did not at any point involve an alienation of the pre-Columbian cultures, nor was it the imposition of a foreign culture" (1).

Such an assertion is not in accord with the historical data. Disappointed and wounded by the Discourse, the representatives of the Indigenous Peoples were not alone in reacting. Also the Bishops, who know the history of these nations and campaign for their survival, were not able to identify with such a declaration. During his weekly Catechesis in Rome on 23 May 2007, Pope Benedict XVI added: "Certainly, the memory of a glorious past cannot ignore the shadows that accompany the work of evangelization

of the Latin American Continent: it is not possible, in fact, to forget the suffering and the injustice inflicted by colonizers on the indigenous populations, whose fundamental human rights were often trampled upon". The Latin American Bishops adopted this statement in their Final Document.

The true history of Christian Mission is therefore, despite all the sacrifices the missionaries made, not only one of salvation, but also one of guilt and crime. This historical fact explains at least in part the negative reactions to the word "Mission". The use of this word "Mission" is characterized above all by a curious ambivalence. National and multinational corporations base their company philosophy and marketing strategies on so-called "Mission Statements". In world politics one continually speaks of diplomatic and military missions. The American President George W. Bush was able to justify the doubtlessly selfishly motivated war in Iraq as the fulfilment of a divine "mission" against evil in the world. However when the Church avows her Mission, she is right away accused of intolerance, sectarianism, the oppression of the rights of others and coercion.³ Precisely here — in order to speak with Theo Sundermeier — "it is urgent at this time to restore to the concept of Mission its inherent dignity". For "the new funding and contouring, which the concept in the missionary and ecumenical discussions of the last decades has received ... has still not been taken seriously either in the theological discussions or in ecclesial practice".⁴ Indeed in many places, mission is unfortunately a matter of peripheral theological interest or of no interest at all. The awareness of the fact that "the pilgrim Church in her essence is missionary",⁵ as the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity of the Second Vatican Council formulated, seems to have reappeared — now forty years after the Council — in recent times in the consciousness of the Catholic Church in Europe. I will address this matter in greater detail in my second talk.

With the end of colonization, it was certainly necessary to reconsider Mission in light of its heretofore historical form which had become a theological and pastoral problematic to be questioned and to which the Second Vatican Council was to give a new understanding. Indeed this is what happened at the Council in a radical and fundamental way. Moreover after the Council the theology of Mission was further developed in various documents of the Magisterium, e.g. the Apostolic Exhortation, "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*" of Paul VI and the Encyclical on the Missions, "*Redemptoris Missio*" of John Paul II, and has in no way been completed as it is continually challenged by new questions.

Above all, step by step on several continents a new practice of Mission has emerged, in which the local Church and its parishes have become the agents of evangelization. Moreover in the Church in Europe, there seems to be an awakening in the last decades of the awareness that Mission no longer lies somewhere far away, but rather has become a task to tackle in one's own home. The talk of "France: Mission Territory" or of "Germany: Mission Territory", which long before the Second Vatican Council was already to be heard from certain perceptive minds, has finally found in recent times a broader hearing and led to a gradual rethinking of pastoral practice. We have to ask ourselves what it means for us and our concrete pastoral practice when John Paul II called Europe the most difficult missionary continent. I would like to ponder over this and other questions a little bit with you now. Although, unfortunately, the subject of Mission has not counted as a main subject of theological reflection or even a subject at all in the last decades — above all at the theological faculties of the German-speaking world but also at others throughout Europe — it has nevertheless in the last few years again emerged as a subject of interest as it touches upon the very reason for the Church's existence. Of course, in theology there are also diverse opinions on the subject of Mission. In the first place I would prefer not to undertake a presentation of this theological discussion, but rather consciously to place my exposition on the common basis of the Magisterium's statements.

Even today it is helpful to consciously recall what the Second Vatican Council has given to the Church. This also goes for the theology of Mission of the Council, which

naturally has its boundaries, but still represents a sound basis to address the new challenges of today, which the Council could not have foreseen. Moreover other ecclesiastical documents are absolutely groundbreaking in their fundamental vision. These challenge us to rethink theologically, which is the condition for a modified pastoral practice.

I would like to invite you to come on a journey through the Documents of the Second Vatican Council and to remind you which theological and pastoral vision the Council proposed and how in the Council this vision garnered a new understanding of the Church and also affected a new vision of Mission. This process was however in now way complete. On the contrary: in pastoral practice on the ground there continues to be an old and a new form of Mission — often in conflict — that stand side by side.

The Church herself is, as she “embodies and lives”, the Body of Christ, in which the history of mankind of the ever-living Christ. Through the Spirit she is again and again awakened and kept alive. The Church therefore cannot be a static reality. The Church is again and again new. She is permanently in “Ecclesiogenesis” (Leonardo Boff). Analogically one can furthermore say: the Church does not have a Mission. She is Mission. Mission is a living event, in which the Church experiences herself as ever new over and over. A Church that no longer hands on what she has received and by which she lives is condemned to die. The ecclesial vision of the Second Vatican Council and the understanding of Mission, as it was laid out at this Council, is still a long way from being grasped and has not yet been implemented at all in practice. The Vision of Church and Mission in my understanding are no dream, but binding guidelines and objectives, which should be implemented step by step in the pastoral activity. Therefore one should consider that salvation history does not stand still; that the God of Jesus Christ is a God of history, who does not remain at a fixed point and detain the Church there. Our God goes with us; He is with his people on the way. Again and again He calls the Church to be new out of each particular historical situation. Her fundamental pastoral task “... is to scrutinize the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4, [Abbott]). God enables us through His Spirit to interpret the present as the age of the presence of the Spirit. In Jesus Christ and in His Gospel, as the Pastoral Constitution of the Council says, is “... the key, the focal point, and the goal of man, as well as of all human history” (*ibid.*, n. 10, *cf.* [Abbott]).

Thus the Magisterial statements regarding the Mission of the Church, which we will read and reflect on together, are not a definitive expression. They will be further rewritten, deepened and in the face of new situations revised, so that they may remain challenges and objectives for ecclesial practice.

2. The Second Vatican Council — A Pastoral and Missionary Council

The Council was a pastoral Council inasmuch as it only reiterated and in part formulated the perennial doctrines and principles of the Church anew. Moreover it had the courage and the clear mandate of John XXIII to give instructions for a new pastoral approach to missionary activity. The Council wanted not only to speak of the matter of pastoral guidelines based on doctrine, but to address the concrete situation of the world with concrete imperatives. At the Second Vatican Council — in spite of all the limits and compromises which characterize its documents — the major pastoral concerns of the two conciliar Popes, John XXIII and Paul VI, as well as the theological competence and the pastoral sensibility of the great Bishops and theologians (e.g. Lercaro, Gerlier, Dopfner, Frings, König, Suenens, etc.) who through a hard and bitter struggle achieved a breakthrough, which today is not always seen with such clarity by a new generation of Bishops (and also many theologians), although it has not lost its relevance.

The pastoral and Missionary situation within the Church and the concrete circumstances

of the work, to which the Church at the Council turned herself, is above all decisively marked by the conciliar ecclesiology. Karl Rahner once described the Second Vatican Council as “the first official act as a global church”. The Catholic Church came to know her catholicity in a new way at the Council. The varied and yet perceptible presence of the global Mission became a key matter for the Council.¹⁸ What the First Vatican Council had largely overlooked, was now reality: the encounter between the representatives of the old Christian Churches and the Bishops of the so-called Missionary lands led to — at least began to lead to — a new discovery of Mission as the duty of the entire Church.

Clear evidence of this is the fact that in addition to the composition of a Missionary Decree of its own, the subject of Mission appears in nearly every document of the Council.¹⁹ I do not wish to give a compilation of the statements of Council on Mission here, but rather a general overview of some key statements of the Constitution on the Church, the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity and the Pastoral Constitution, and then in the second section to read word for word a few key texts accompanied by a short commentary.⁶

2.1 Church and Mission — Theological Foundation of Mission in the Constitution on the Church

Already the first words of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church called Christ, “*Lumen Gentium*”, who always shines on the face of the Church. As “... a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal Mission”. She understands herself as the “universal sacrament of salvation”.²¹ From this key concept of conciliar ecclesiological derive all the statements on the Church as regards her fundamental Missionary dimension.²²

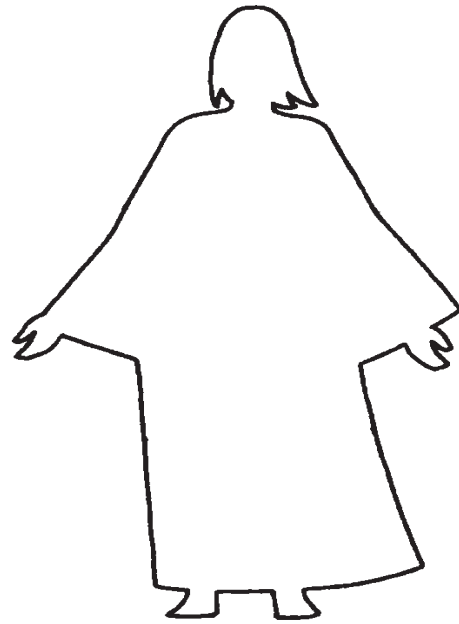
Numbers 13-17 of the Constitution on the Church is the central Conciliar text about the essence, mandate and manner of Mission, on which all the other texts about Mission, including the Decree on the Church’s Mission, are based and from which they spring.²³ Within the Constitution’s second chapter on the Church as the People of God, the universal Missionary mandate of the Church at that moment had to be given expression, in which the New People of God in its catholicity is contrasted with the old.²⁴ Ever since Benedict XV’s Missionary exhortation, “*Maximum illud*” (30 Nov. 1919), the subject of the catholicity of the Church has found a significant place in the theological reflection on Mission and the Church.²⁵

According to *Lumen Gentium*, the People of God gathers together the different nations. “In virtue of this catholicity each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Thus, through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase” (n. 13, [Abbott]). The local Churches with their own traditions, so the Constitution teaches further, justly exist in the ecclesial community. Between them ought to be “... a bond of close communion whereby they share spiritual riches, apostolic workers and temporal resources” (*ibid.*).²⁶

As a religious order, which has an international character, we are agents and mediators, in an exceptional way, of this “*communio ecclesiarum*”, and we know, as it is also stated in the Constitution of the Austrian Congregation of Canons Regular of St Augustine, that we have a duty not only to the local Church but indeed to the universal Church. We/I will have to ask ourselves how we should realize this duty concretely. Moreover the Council itself went beyond this dogmatic text about the universal Church, formulating concrete obligations for the global Church in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church,²⁷ the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests²⁸ and the Decree on the Training of Priests^{29, 30}.

2.2 From Mission to Missions – the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity

The Decree “Ad gentes” — and the many commentators of this document are unanimous — was not, from the point of view of the theology of Mission, one of the great successes of the Second Vatican Council, but rather a compromise document, which nevertheless rests on the new accents for the theology and practice of Mission coming from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and which occurred just as the end of colonization brought about an upheaval in the practice of Mission on the ground.



The prehistory of the document was already turbulent. The tiresome and thorny work of the commission and sub-commission,³² and numerous compromises which the Council accepted, occurred before the Council Fathers approved the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity. The Decree on Missionary Activity states the intention of the Council: “In the present state of affairs, out of which there is arising a new situation for mankind ... wishes to sketch the principles of missionary activity and to rally the forces of all the faithful ...”.³³ Had these principles truly appeared then unanimity would not have lasted. Some of the Bishops expected from the Council clear and practical rules for Mission, not a theological exposition of the foundation of Mission.³⁴ During the course of the conciliar discussion, it seems that, even among the Missionary Bishops, the insight was accepted, that new initiatives for Missionary activity were only to be expected when the theological statements about Mission would be successfully brought into harmony with the newly garnered ecclesiastical self-understanding, and only then could the concrete requirements for the renewal of missionary work be derived. During the course of the Conciliar discussion it seems also that the Missionary Bishops consistently interspersed their perspective, that a new direction for missionary activity would only then be expected, if it happened that a new theological statement on Mission harmonized with the newly garnered ecclesial self-consciousness and to derive concrete regulations for missionary work. In other words: one needs an entirely new theology of Mission so that a new practice of Mission can arise.

The Fathers of the Council seem to have had difficulty in taking the step from “Mission in general” to “Missions”, to missionary activity in the traditional sense.³⁷ The Missionary Decree treats initially the Mission of the Church in its widest sense³⁸ and tries then to situate the “Missions” in the context of the Mission of the Church.³⁹ By “Missions” the conciliar Decree on Missions, one must unfortunately say, still understands

“... special undertakings in which preachers of the Gospel sent by the Church, and going into the whole world, carry out the work of preaching the Gospel and implanting the Church among people who do not yet believe in Christ, are generally called “missions”. Such are accomplished by missionary activity and are, for the most part, carried out in defined territories recognized by the Holy See and practiced usually in specific places. The special goal of this missionary activity is the evangelization and the implanting of the Church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root” (n. 6, [Flannery]).

Behind this new definition of Mission, there had been a struggle between two academic schools of Mission, whose various opinions about the goal of Missionary activity led to a “synthesis” of both directions. These were the missionary idea of the school of Munster (Schmidlin, Glazik) and that of the school of Leuven, and the Roman School (Charles, Seumois, Masson).⁴²

This geographically marked idea of Mission was already obsolete at the time of the Council. Already before and during the Council itself there were voices loudly demanding the enlargement of the idea of Mission. The Bishop of Orleans in an intervention drew attention to the fact that in most missionary lands there were already Oriental Churches, and to the urgent necessity to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world.⁴³ With this the distinction between missionary lands and the so-called Christian lands lapsed. One should understand Mission to be the continuous task of the Church so that every non-Christian region may be penetrated by the Gospel.

Manfred Linz, the Protestant Missionary scholar, rightly asserted after the Council that the Catholic Church at that time was obviously not yet capable of conceiving her newly discovered mandate in the world and her foreign Missions.⁴⁷ Global responsibility and global Mission are not a pair of shoes by which to distinguish right from left. Whoever designates the witness of the Church in the secularized society of the West also as Mission — and the French did this a long time before the Council — has not erred in the idea and matter of Mission, but has drawn attention to the puzzling inconsistencies in the traditional understanding of Mission.

The geographic and canonical choice of the goal of Mission was soon known to be a fiction.⁴⁸ The weak point in the theology of Mission in the Decree on Missions comes from the fact that Mission was still understood as "special undertakings" by special institutes, which as such are in danger of being marginalized in theory and in practice from the life of the Church.

Mission is — and it will be shown still more clearly — the universal task of the entire People of God and the particular responsibility of the local Church and its communities. The Decree on Missions was, as one of its author's, the former missionary scholar of Münster, Joseph Glazik, had once noted correctly, "an adjustment, not a Magna Carta", for the new ordering of the Missionary activity of the Church.

One of the theological advisors of the Council, the Jesuit Josef Neuner of Voralberg, who played a decisive part in the enlargement of the Decree on Mission, had already at that time pointed out that the Council was not primarily interested in numerical considerations.

The current view of Mission thinks, so Neuner said, already forty years ago, more in social and cultural categories. With a look at the missionary field (and Josef Neuner had above all India and Asia in mind).

One must not be so concerned about the numerical minority of Christianity, but rather much more about how alien these great cultural realms are, in which Christianity has no place or in which that influence is lost.

This modest look at the Mission field of the Church and her Mission at that time could not have seen the consequences of the way in which Mission is actually carried out: the part of the Decree on Mission, which speaks about Christian witness, has attained timeliness in today's situation.⁵⁶ The text speaks here of the presence of the Church in different groups, of the spirit of Christian love in solidarity with mankind, of sincere and patient dialogue and of the collaboration of Christians with others in building up a sound economic and social order. These forms of Christian witness are rightly treated in detail. Mission was already then understood not only as the conversion of non-Christians, but also as the emblematic presence of the Church in the world.

The Council, notwithstanding its formal statements about a traditional missionary activity, had prepared a new way. It speaks to the world religions and to the non-believing not about conversion, but about dialogue and partnership. The Church sees her Mission not only as the proclamation of the Gospel and as the invitation to join her society. She no longer simply wants "the others to convert". She would like to confront the non-Christian and non-believing world with her witness, in which she offers the Gospel: "to the Jews, as the hand of reconciliation;

to the Gentiles, as the recognition of their religious worth; and to the Atheists, as the willingness to dialogue and the modest invitation to appreciate the Gospel unbiasedly”.

This new dimension of Mission as dynamic dialogue, though not sufficiently expressed in the Decree on Missionary Activity has been further developed in more recent magisterial documents. It is true that there is a remarkable text in the Decree on Mission, which in the face of numerous fundamentalist tendencies in the world today — also in the Catholic Church and among other Christians, above all the Evangelical and Pentecostals — gives a relevant message:

Even as “Christ Himself searched the hearts of men, and led them to divine light ... so also His disciples, profoundly penetrated by the Spirit of Christ, should show the people among whom they live, and should converse with them, that they themselves may learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth” (cf. Ad Gentes, n. 11, [Abbott]).

The mission “*Ad gentes*” is no longer understood as the well-known catchphrase puts it “a one way street”, but rather as inter-ecclesial assistance.⁶² This concept is moreover most suitable for reducing the concerns which the Council treated in the third and sixth chapters of the Decree on Mission to a common denominator. The third chapter portrays the growth and place of the younger Churches in the whole Church, their share in missionary activity, emphasizing in particular the role of the laity and the legitimacy of their specific contribution to the entire Church.⁶³

As true likenesses of the whole Church the young Churches themselves are agents of Mission. They are no longer the heretofore goal and object of evangelization. They do not stand on the margins of the Church because they are entrusted to foreign missionaries. They are furthermore called to develop their own missionary dynamic in which they carry out their own missionary mandate to their fellow countrymen who do not yet believe in Christ and what is more they actively cooperate in the global mission of the Church through a missionary mandate abroad.⁶⁴ Here a completely new view of Mission came into being, which, through the Instruction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, was legally sanctioned from 24 February 1969.

Missionary territory is no longer entrusted to missionary societies and other similar institutes. Foreign missionaries are only temporary coworkers, who must endeavour to make themselves gradually superfluous. The proper agent of Mission is the local Church itself.⁶⁵ Mission as an inter-ecclesial assistance can however include other yet to be realized aspects. A lay auditor at the Council, Eusebe Adjakpley, Secretary for Africa of the World Federation of the Catholic Church, offered this consideration in his speech at the close of the debate about the Decree on Missions:

... we know that today’s world is completely different from what it was at the beginning of the missionary endeavour, whether we look at ‘Christian lands’ or at ‘Missionary territories’ [...]. The unifying world awakens interest in each nation, [...] not only to receive the needs of others, but also to be true to oneself and to give to others [...] hundreds of people who work in the missions and live in places in which the Church is hardly present; but this world also knows traditional Christian countries, which have regrettably de-Christianized themselves [...]. Mission is everywhere. Therefore missionaries are called to every land and they come from every group of which the Church is built [...] laity from the lands of older Christendom go to serve the younger Churches as lay missionaries or in international organizations for cooperation; laity from mission lands become missionaries in other lands, wherever the Church needs them.

What this statement expresses and what at that time was only just beginning has already been realized for a long time, seen above all in the new forms of activity, e.g. the practice of the so-called “temporary missionaries”.

Today one speaks — also in magisterial documents — more and more about the necessity of the INCULTURATION of the Christian message and the Church. This concept, to which we will return, was not treated by the Council. Nor was there talk about the so-called “contextual theologies”. But the matter was already present in the Decree on Mission, where it speaks about bringing into the theology of the Church the traditions of the nations:

In harmony with the economy of the Incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance [...]. To achieve this goal, it is necessary that in each major socio-cultural area, such theological speculation should be encouraged [...]. Thus it will be more clearly seen in what ways faith may seek for understanding, with due regard for the philosophy and wisdom of these peoples; it will be seen in what ways their customs, views on life, and social order, can be reconciled with the manner of living taught by divine revelation. [...] Particular traditions, together with the peculiar patrimony of each family of nations, illumined by the light of the Gospel, can then be taken up into Catholic unity. Finally, the young particular Churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion [...].⁶⁷

2.3 The Pastoral Constitution as the Necessary Expansion of the Decree on Mission

Criticism concerning the Decree on the Church’s Mission, as we have already stated, asserted, among other things, that the Church at the Council was not yet ready to harmonize the newly discovered mandate to the world with the so-called “foreign missions” or to see her mission to the world in the context of her responsibility to the world.

It is not without significance for this assessment that a Latin American Bishop right away expressed his dissatisfaction with the excessively internal character of the conciliar discussion and from this came the stimulus, which led to the decision to draw up a schema about the Church in the today’s world. Dom Helder Camara further stated, asserted:

Should we really be spending our entire time discussing the problems of the Church while two-thirds of mankind are dying of hunger? Should not the Council express its concern about the great problems of mankind?

Success was not denied to Camara’s efforts.⁸⁵ In the Pastoral Constitution “the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives”. In the introduction the Constitution describes the situation of humanity in the world of today.⁸⁷ What is really new in the conciliar text is that it not only tries to articulate general principles, but also to apply them to human reality.⁸⁸

The spare statements of the Decree on Mission about the contemporary situation, against which the missionary mandate of the Church is to take place needed to be urgently addressed in the Pastoral Constitution. Here in fact a very realistic picture of today’s world is depicted, in which social, cultural, moral and religious metamorphoses are not ignored or played down, but rather are courageously met.⁸⁹

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. [...] they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. [...] Hence this Second Vatican Council [...] now addresses itself without hesitation not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity.⁹⁷

Here then “addressee and goal” of missionary activity for once are formulated in a different and more realistic way: the message of salvation is directed to man, who is pulled here and there by joy and hope, by grief and fear, by every kind of poverty and distress. The Council offers the world a conversation in the light of the Gospel as the

solution to its problems.⁹⁸ The Church would like to make accessible to every human being the understanding of his own existence and indeed truth about himself.⁹⁹

Gorg Schelbert has aptly designated the Pastoral Constitution as “the Areopagite speech of its own day”.¹⁰⁵ It is not simply directed to the missionary thematic, but rather is itself a Mission homily. “With the Pastoral Constitution as a word on the world”, wrote Schelbert, “the Council was Mission *in situ*, a missionary event”. As the Document, among all the conciliar documents, in which the clearest statement on the pastoral and missionary concerns of the Church was made, it remains imperative for any practical missionary theology.

2.4. Mission springs from the love of the Trinitarian God – Towards a Comprehensive Deepening and Concretization of the Missionary Understanding of the Second Vatican Council

The word “Mission” does not have — for understandable reasons — a good reputation. Through a negative and questionable experience of Mission in the history of the Church it is a burdened word, which in common parlance is hardly used according to its original religious-ecclesiastical meaning and — in the Church — must be discovered anew according to its deeper theological meaning.

Mission has been a part of the Church since her earliest days and was never made a subject of discussion in later times. From the very beginnings of Christianity, men and women, boys and girls have simply passed on in a glad manner what they had experienced: their encounter with the person of Jesus of Nazareth, which radically changed their lives. And even after the seeming failure of his Mission the movement which he had called to life flared up again and was, in spite of persecution, clearly no longer stoppable.

The Second Vatican Council in its reflection on the self-understanding and mission of the Church in the world offered a Trinitarian foundation for the universal mission of the Church which can let it be seen and lead to a deeper understanding of what Mission most profoundly means. I invite you to a “spiritual reading” of this foundational text.

Mission has its origin in the sending of Jesus by the Father and in the missionary task of the Apostles. It is an “inner” necessity of the Good News and has as its goal the enabling of the newly founded local Churches to conduct mission themselves

(The following citations come from *Lumen Gentium*, n. 17 [cf. Abbott])

••• “As the Son was sent by the Father, so He too sent the Apostles (cf. Jn 20:21) saying: ‘Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world’” (Mt 28:18-20).

••• “The Church has received from the Apostles, as a task to be discharged even to the very ends of the earth, this solemn mandate of Christ to proclaim the saving truth (cf. Acts 1:8)”.

••• Hence she makes the words of the Apostle her own: “Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel”, (I Cor 9:16) and continues unceasingly to send heralds of the Gospel until such time as the infant Churches are fully established and can themselves carry on the work of evangelizing”.

~ When the Gospel is proclaimed, what moves me?

~ Do I experience the Gospel as a liberating encounter with Jesus Christ and his Spirit, who frees one from anxiety and the fear of human beings and from the pressures of society and the Church?

~ Am I aware of the fact that my duty to carry out the Mission of the Church in the world today is not something which I have given to myself but rather that I stand at the service of Jesus Christ as a missionary and “one sent”?

Mission has its origin in the Trinitarian Love of God – the Church is missionary by her very being

••• *The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father (LG, n.1) This decree flows from the fountain of love or charity within God the Father” (AG, n. 2).*

~ “He who does not love does not know God; for God is love” (I Jn 4:8).

~ A loving God, who himself as God in three persons is relationship and founds relationship, who shares himself lovingly and “speaks to men as friends” (*Dei Verbum*, n. 2), is the source of Mission.

~ A Church, which undertakes Mission violently and lovelessly, does not proclaim Christ who understood his Mission as the proclamation and putting into practice of the love of his Father.

~ The passing on of the Christian faith is only legitimate when the freedom and dignity of every human being is respected, when they are offered the faith without any violence no matter how subtle and when they are invited into the fellowship of the faithful.

~ Christian faith today needs to be more an experience of communal solidarity, in which man feels at home and supported in his joys and needs, his strengths and fears.

Mission assumes the seed of goodness in the spirit and hearts of all mankind and in their religious practices and cultures

••• *“By the proclamation of the Gospel, she prepares her hearers to receive and profess the faith. [...] ** Through her work, whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but is also cleansed, raised up and perfected” (cf. LG, n. 17)*

~ The riches, which the generous God (cf. AG, n. 11) has distributed among the nations, have not always been perceived by missionaries.

~ For the Mission of the Church the others were poor pagans, who were not permitted to bring any of their basic religious experiences into the Church, but rather had to leave behind precisely those things that they considered holy on entering the Church and often literally had to reject their symbols.

~ *What am I assuming about the presence of God among the people I encounter in my care of souls?* How do I respond to the often apparent diffused religious longings of modern and postmodern people and their desire for religious practices?

~ At heart Mission is the sharing and passing on to others of a life and faith experience to which every Christian is called by the power of his Baptism.

Mission requires first of all one’s own interior renewal and “self-evangelization”, which leads to a living consciousness of the responsibility of all the baptized to spread the Gospel, which should take place as far as possible through ecumenical cooperation with other Christians.

•• “Since the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God, this sacred Synod invites all to a deep interior renewal; so that, having a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the Gospel, they may do their share in missionary work among the nations”(AG, n. 35).

•• “As members of the living Christ, all the faithful have been incorporated into Him and made like unto Him through baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. Hence all are duty-bound to cooperate in the expansion and growth of His Body [...]” (AG, n. 36).

•• Therefore, all sons of the Church should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world. They should foster in themselves a truly catholic spirit. They should spend their energies in the work of evangelization. And yet, let everyone know that their first and most important obligation for the spread of the Faith is: to lead a profoundly Christian life. [...] This testimony of a good life will more easily have its effect if it is given in unison with other Christian communities, [...]” (cf. AG, n. 36).

~ "The first who must be 'missionized' is the missionary himself — Mission is not the mediation of religious theories, but the handing on of life. It is an event, which comes from and leads to life.

~ The Mission of Christianity was from the earliest days the handing on of an experience of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who of course one did not have in his pocket, who moreover was not always available for everyone in the Bible, but who in the risk and uncertainty of faith always had to be sought anew.

The lack of courage of many in the Church to stand up and be known for their faith and who play with the thought of leaving the Church incessantly points to a severe lack of faith and identity. Here we have to deal with the fundamental problem of a Church, which all round is a people's or traditional Church, but not a witnessing Church.

** Translation prepared by Dom Elias Carr with the assistance of Dom Daniel Nash and Dom Alipius Müller.

Notes

¹ F. Hahn, *Mission und Bekenntnis im NT*, in: Problem japanischer und deutscher Missionstheologie, Heidelberg 1972, 95.

² M. Hengel, *Die Ursprünge der christlichen Mission*, in: NTS 18 (1971/72) 38.

³ Vgl. M. Sellmann, Einführung, in: Ders. (Hg.), *Deutschland — Missionsland. Zur Überwindung eines pastoralen Tabus*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2004, 9f.

⁴ Vgl. T. Sundermeier/ A. Feldtkeller (Hg.), *Mission in pluralistischer Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, 7.

⁵ II Vatikanisches Konzil, *Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche "Ad gentes"*, n. 2.

⁶ F. Weber, *Mission - Gegenstand der Praktischen Theologie?* Frankfurt am Main 1999, 147-163.

⁷ Vgl. dazu den neuersten Kommentar von Peter Hiinermann, in: Ders.(Hg.), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Bd. 4, FreiburgBasel-Wien 2005, 219-336; 243.

¹⁸ J. Schutte (Hg.), *Mission nach dem Konzil*, Mainz 1967, 7.

¹⁹ G. Schelbert, *Das Missionsdekret des II. Vaticanum im Gesamtwerk des Konzils*, Schoneck-Beckenried, 1967; J. Ratzinger; *Konzilsaussagen über die Mission außerhalb des Missionsdekrets*, in: Schutte; a.a.O., 21-47.

²² *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1.

²¹ *LG*, n. 48.

²² Vgl. J. Bettray, *Das missionarische Grundverständnis der Zentralwahrheiten des christlichen Glaubens: Christus, Trinität, Kirche*, in der Aussage der Constitutio "Lumen gentium" des Vaticanum II, TPQ 114(1966) 239-248.

²³ J. Ratzinger, a.a.O., 22.

²⁴ *LG*, n. 13, vgl. Ratzinger, a.a.O., 22.

²⁵ Vgl. dazu die Studie von F. Kollbrunner, *Die Katholizität der Kirche und die Mission*, Schoneck-Beckenried 1973; W. Beinert; *Um das dritte Kirchenattribut. Die Katholizität der Kirche im Verständnis der evangelisch - lutherischen und römisch-katholischen Theologie*, 2 Bde. Essen 1964.

²⁶ *LG*, n. 13.

²⁷ *Christus Dominus*, n. 6.

²⁸ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 10.

²⁹ *Optatam Totius*, n. 2; vgl. *AG*, nn. 19-22.

³⁰ Ratzinger, a.a.O., 27-28.

³² S. Paventi; Entstehungsgeschichte des Schemas "De activitate missionale ecclesiae", in: Schutte, a.a.O., 48-81; S. Brechter, *Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche, Einleitung und Kommentar, Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Bd. III, 9-125.

³³ Cf. *AG*, n. 1 [Abbott].

³⁴ J. Glazik, *Eine Korrektur, keine Magna Charta*, in: H. Chr. Hampe (Hrsg.), *Die Autorität der Freiheit*,

München 1967, Bd. III, 543. "Brechtler, a.a.O., 33.

³⁸ AG, nn. 2-5.

³⁹ AG, n. 6.

⁴¹ AG, n.6.

⁴² Brechtler, a.a.O., 35.

⁴³ Intervention des Bischofs von Orleans und Mitglied des Komitees Pro missionibus ad extra des französischen Episkopats im Zentralrat der Papstlichen Kommission für Latein-Amerika, Guy Marie Riobe, vom 7.11.1964; zitiert nach HAMPE, a.a.O., III. 527.

M. Linz, *Alte Formeln oder neue Erkenntnis*, in: Hampe, a.a.O., III, 553-554. Ebd., 561.

Glazik, a.a.O., 552.

J. Neuner, *Das christliche Zeugnis*, in: Schutte, a.a.O., 173-174.

Brechtler, a.a.O., 24 AG n. 11-12.

⁶³ AG, nn. 19-21.

Die Sicht der Mission als zwischenkirchliche Hilfe findet sich bis jetzt weniger in missionswissenschaftlichen Publikationen als vielmehr im Selbstverständnis einiger Missionsgesellschaften; zur Geschichte dieses Begriffs vgl. F. Kollbrunner, *Zum Missionsverständnis heute*, TPQ 121 (1973) 123.

⁶⁴ AG, n. 20.

⁶⁵ Instruktion über Grundsätze und Richtlinien für die Beziehungen zwischen den Ortsordinarien und den Missionsinstituten in den Missionsgebieten, von den deutschen Bischöfen approbierte Übersetzung, kommentiert von J. Glazik, in: *Nachkonziliare Dokumentation*, Bd. 18, Trier 1970, 60-77 (Text); 32-42 (Kommentar); vgl. Kollbrunner, *Missionsverständnis*, 123; K. Rahner; *Hpth II/2*, 67.

⁶⁶ Rede vom 13.10.1965, zitiert nach HAMPE, a.a.O., III, 529-531; das Anliegen hat seinen Niederschlag gefunden in AG n. 41, GS, n. 90.

⁶⁷ Cf. AG, n. 22 [Walter M. Abbott, S.J., General Editor].

⁸⁴ C. Moeller, *Die Geschichte der Pastoralkonstitution*, LThK, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, III, 247.

⁸⁵ Ebd., 247-248.

⁸⁶ GS, n. 2.

⁸⁷ GS, nn. 4-10.

⁸⁸ Vgl., J. Folliet, *Die Situation des Menschen in der heutigen Welt*, in: Barauna, 141-153.

⁹⁶ G. Baum, *Der Mensch in seiner Welt*, in: Hampe III, 73.

⁹⁸ GS, n. 3.

⁹⁹ GS, n. 41; dieser Aspekt klingt auch im Missionsdekret an, wenn es dort in einem Text, der eine der wenigen Querverbindungen zur Pastoralkonstitution darstellt, heißt: "Auch zu der menschlichen Natur und ihren Strebungen steht die missionarische Tätigkeit in enger Verbindung. Ebendadurch nämlich, daß sie Christus verkundet, offenbart die Kirche zugleich dem Menschen die ursprüngliche Wahrheit dessen, was es um ihn ist und worin seine volle Berufung liegt ..."; vgl. Congar, *Theologische Grundlegung*, in: Schutte, a.a.O., 168.

¹⁰⁵ G. Schelbert, *Das Missionsdekret im Gesamtwerk des Konzils*, a.a.O., 41.

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L'homme de Tékoa : un questionnement de la fonction prophétique de l'Église en Afrique

Introduction

J'ai reformulé l'énoncé de cette conférence qui était annoncée, sous le titre de « L'HOMME DE TÉKOA : UN QUESTIONNEMENT DE LA FONCTION PROPHÉTIQUE DE L'ÉGLISE EN AFRIQUE ». Cela pour trois raisons :

D'abord, parce que les termes prophète, prophétisme sont spontanément liés à ce qui est religieux, sacré ou spirituel. Or, Amos n'était ni Prêtre, ni Roi, ni évêque, ni religieux, mais simplement l'homme de Tékoa, berger et homme de la terre. Dès lors, qu'est-ce qu'être prophète ? A quels problèmes concrets l'Afrique est confrontée aujourd'hui qui nécessite une désacralisation de la fonction prophétique de l'Église ?

La seconde raison qui m'a poussé à reformuler le titre c'est que nous assistons aujourd'hui à une recrudescence de nouveaux mouvements religieux qui fondent leur discours et leur agir sur des visions et des révélations que leurs fondateurs auraient eues. Ils se font alors appeler « prophètes », « évangélistes », « prédicateurs » ou que sais-je encore.

La troisième raison c'est l'expérience du premier Synode de 1994. Il avait présenté l'Église en Afrique sous le modèle de la Famille de Dieu, évangélisatrice par le témoignage : « vous êtes mes témoins » (Ac 1,8). Or, ce « continent des mauvaises nouvelles » continue à faire face à de graves problèmes. Quel peut être l'apport de ce second Synode sur fond de crise économique mondiale qui affecte profondément l'Afrique ?

Ces trois raisons, m'amènent à écouter cette dernière à partir de l'homme de Tékoa¹ pour repenser et réinventer ensemble la fonction prophétique de l'Église au cœur de la société africaine ? Chers frères et sœurs, je pense ne pas être hors-jeu.

Nous connaissons tous l'histoire d'Amos dont le nom signifie « porteur de fardeau ». Chacun de nous est quelque part porteur du fardeau de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui. Ce prophète était *originaire de Tékoa*, (Amos 1, 1 ; 7, 14). Sa connaissance de la vie agricole transparait à plusieurs reprises dans sa manière de s'exprimer (Amos 2, 13 ; 3, 12 ; 4, 9 ; 5, 8 ; 6, 12 ; 7, 1, 2). Selon ses propres indications, il prophétisa aux jours des rois Ozias de Juda (791-740 av. J.C.) et Jéroboam II d'Israël (793-753 av. J.C.).

L'homme de Tékoa paraît dur, il ne laisse guère d'espoir à ceux auxquels il s'adresse. C'est le cas par exemple, des riches de Samarie, au 8^e siècle avant J.C., qui se prélassent dans le luxe tout en exploitant les petits. Aussi son livre est-il fait de menaces et de condamnations. Les images qu'il contient ne sont que ruines et cataclysmes, guerres et tremblements de terre. La mort entoure de toute part le peuple de Dieu. Mais en même temps, cet homme nous révèle ce Dieu qui est venu prendre le parti des plus faibles et nous en rendre solidaires. Amos nous invite donc aujourd'hui à revisiter le peuple de Dieu qui est en Afrique. Il nous ouvre aux situations concrètes qui marquent ce continent. J'en ai identifié quatre à développer dans la première partie. Il s'agit :

- § De la réalité socio-économique et environnementale,
- § Du drame spirituel des populations,
- § De la dette et du manque de responsabilité de nos gouvernants.
- § Du phénomène de la migration, des déplacés et des réfugiés.

Ces situations concrètes obligent l'Église en Afrique à opérer un déplacement de lieux prophétiques, en passant d'une Église du salut des âmes à une Église du salut de l'homme et de la femme concrets. D'où cet appel à participer à la Construction et/ou Reconstruction de l'Afrique que nous verrons dans la seconde partie. Bien entendu, je laisse le débat ouvert entre les tenants de la Théologie de la Construction et ceux de la Reconstruction. Tout d'abord, voici une définition du prophète à partir de la réalité de l'Afrique aujourd'hui.

Le prophète est celui qui ne se laisse pas enfermé « dans un univers religieux à trois dimensions qui sont le péché, les sacrements et la grâce au moment où, sous couvert de coopération, des groupes économiques et financiers se disputent librement nos terres, nos plages, nos mines de bauxite et de cuivre, de diamant, sans oublier l'uranium et le pétrole et bien sûr la conscience même du peuple africain ». ² Autrement dit, le prophète est l'homme, la femme qui ne se contente plus d'annoncer mais, qui dénonce, interpelle, réoriente dans une dynamique de conversion et de transformation sociale ce qui a dévié ou s'est perverti.

A partir de cette vision, faisons un tour d'horizon de cette réalité avec l'homme de Tékoa.

I. L'AFRIQUE REVISITÉE PAR L'HOMME DE TÉKOA

1. Premier tableau : au sujet des nantis, des dirigeants politiques et économiques

A côté des nantis, des dirigeants politiques et économiques, il y avait toute une frange de la population qui était pauvre, exploitée et même opprimée de la part de la classe dirigeante (Am 3,9b; 4,1a; 5,12b). Qu'en est-il de la situation socio-économique de l'Afrique ?

Situation socio-économique de l'Afrique

Les maux dont souffre l'Afrique aujourd'hui s'abreuvent tous à la même source : celle de la pauvreté, devenue « mère de tous les vices » puisqu'elle est en grande partie à l'origine des conflits armés qui secouent des régions entières autour des ressources qui s'amenuisent, de trafics de tout genre, de pandémies, de la corruption, de la mauvaise gouvernance et de bien d'autres fléaux encore. Voyons quelques exemples :

« Quelque part en Afrique noire, des milliers de paysans sont contraints d'arracher les tiges de mil qui commencent à pousser pour semer le coton « ou le maïs génétiquement modifiés ». Nous sommes à l'entrée du Sahel, dans ces régions tropicales où les producteurs agricoles n'ont qu'une récolte par an, et où la soudure est toujours difficile, livrant les femmes et les enfants à un état de famine chronique ». ³ Cela s'appelle la sécurité alimentaire. Or nous savons tous que cette culture de rente est exclusivement orientée vers l'intérêt des grandes puissances. Que dire de ceux qui cèdent leur lopins de terres, contre des sommes modiques, à des multinationales, des fonctionnaires et à des commerçants pour répondre à des besoins du moment.

Ajoutons à cela, les programmes de restructuration des économies africaines, proposés par les institutions financières internationales (BM - FMI). Leurs conséquences sont visibles : fragilisation des économies africaines et dégradation du tissu social. Des négociations importantes pour l'avenir du continent sont signées sans concertation. Pensons aux Accords de Partenariat Economique (APE). Les multinationales envahissent de plus en plus le continent à la recherche des ressources naturelles avec la complicité des dirigeants africains. C'est connu de tous : la région « Afrique » demeure toujours confrontée à un grand éventail de défis environnementaux.

Ce premier tableau laisse clairement voir que la nomenclature économique mondiale et ses lignes de force telle qu'elles existent actuellement n'ont aucun intérêt à notre développement. Mais le prophète n'est-il pas celui qui intervient dans les périodes de crise ? N'est-il pas celui qui accompagne ou précède les grands tournants de l'histoire ? Avec

l'homme de Tékoa, nous verrons comment réinventer le prophétisme à partir de tous ces problèmes socio-économique et environnementaux. Mais auparavant examinons le second tableau.

2. Deuxième tableau : L'homme de Tékoa nous parle des dirigeants religieux

L'Afrique face au drame spirituel de sa population

Le phénomène religieux est complexe en Afrique. Nous sommes en présence d'une sensibilité religieuse fortement orientée vers le surnaturel, sensible aux miracles et aux guérisons. Le tout traversé par de forts courants d'enthousiasme et de participation émotive. Les gens cherchent souvent les pasteurs, les prêtres, les guérisseurs, et les chefs coutumiers qui « savent » la pensée de Dieu et qui peuvent l'interpréter pour eux. Dans une communauté de prêtres ou de religieuses et religieux, les chrétiens cherchent de plus en plus le père ou la sœur qui a le don de guérir, le don de prophétie, ou de chasser Satan très loin.

Jamais il n'y a eu en Afrique comme aujourd'hui une telle soif d'eau bénite, de médailles et scapulaires protecteurs, une quête aussi forcenée de santé, de bonheur matériel et humain, bref de salut immédiat et intégral. À ce propos, que dire des prières ou messes pour la guérison de « l'arbre généalogique ! », des différentes huiles qui circulent un peu partout. Imaginez un peu l'effet que produit l'huile de St. Siméon, de St. Antoine, de St. Michel, l'huile du Nigeria ? Il ya a même l'huile d'Italie qui est instantané. Et ces chrétiens qui ne prient qu'avec le rosaire des sept douleurs ou qui emploient l'eau bénite qui vient de Lourdes ou de quelque prêtre qui aurait un don particulier de guérir. Si vous essayez de leur dire qu'il s'agit d'un « problème psychologique », ils ne reviendront jamais vous voir. S'ils trouvent un prêtre qui croit à cette façon de prier, ils lui donneront le titre de « meilleur prêtre ».

Que signifie ce courant qui se manifeste dans l'Église ? Il traduit en fait un légitime combat pour la vie, une volonté de s'en sortir, hélas ! Souvent par des voix de facilité (rites magiques et autres charmes du merveilleux), plutôt que par un engagement personnel et responsable. Ce drame spirituel devrait poser question au rôle de l'Église en Afrique. Comment faire pour que nos Églises soient auberges au service de la vie, espace dans lequel les chrétiens se sentent accueillis, écoutés et soulagés. Une Église où santé et salut se répondent en écho ?

Que dire des fidèles qui vivent de la spiritualité du bruit, des églises où l'on chante et prie trop et où l'on pense et travaille peu ? Enfin, comment comprendre que les gestionnaires de fonds publics qui ont le plus de choses à se reprocher sont ceux qui se bousculent tous les dimanches au premier rang dans les églises. Mieux encore, lors des cérémonies solennelles, le célébrant n'hésite pas à remercier Monsieur le PDG Untel pour sa présence. Et les autres ? Complicité ou paradoxe ? Comment comprendre d'un coté le désir de Dieu qui semble inspirer tant de monde et, de l'autre, le péché et l'absence de conscience dans les actes de la vie quotidienne ? Cela nous amène à voir le 3^{ème} tableau qui affiche : dette, malhonnêteté, faux procès.

3. Troisième tableau : dette, malhonnêteté, faux procès

Oui, du temps de Amos, il y avait des gens qui devaient se vendre «pour une paire de sandales» (2,6b), qui n'avaient même pas de quoi se couvrir la nuit (2,8a), qui étaient carrément réduits à l'esclavage parce qu'ils n'avaient pas pu payer leurs dettes (8,6). Des personnes qui étaient victimes de la magouille ou de la malhonnêteté dans le commerce (8,5). Des gens qu'on piétinait comme des moins que rien dans des parodies de procès (2,7b; 5,12b), et qu'on était même en train d'anéantir et de supprimer complètement (8,4).

Les pauvres dont le prophète prend la défense ici ne sont pas des pauvres spirituels. Les mots qui les désignent et le contexte dans lequel Amos s'exprime renvoient clairement à la pauvreté matérielle.

§ Le « nécessaire », qui est pourtant, innocent, est vendu comme esclave en remboursement d'une dette insignifiante (l'équivalent d'une paire de sandales !).

§ Les « victimes de la magouille », conduits au tribunal. *Des gens qu'on piétinait comme des moins que rien dans des parodies de procès.*

§ La petite servante est transformée en prostituée domestique.

§ Les amendes et les prises de gages qui pleuvent sur les cultivateurs....

De plus, Amos ne s'en prend pas seulement à des actes isolés d'exploitation des pauvres, mais au dysfonctionnement d'une société qui élimine les pauvres. C'est justement le problème de la dette en Afrique.

Au sujet de la dette des pays africains et de la mal gérance

Quelques mois avant sa mort, un jeune leader africain Thomas SANKARA s'exprimait à Addis-Abeba, au sujet de la dette. « La dette, sous sa forme actuelle, contrôlée et dominée par l'impérialisme, est une reconquête savamment organisée, pour que l'Afrique, sa croissance et son développement obéissent à des paliers, à des normes qui nous sont totalement étrangères, faisant en sorte que chacun de nous devienne l'esclave financier, c'est-à-dire l'esclave tout court, de ceux qui ont eu l'opportunité, la ruse, de placer des fonds chez nous avec l'obligation de les rembourser. On nous dit de rembourser la dette. Ce n'est pas une question morale... ». SANKARA va plus loin en affirmant : « nous ne pouvons pas rembourser la dette parce que nous n'avons pas de quoi payer. Nous ne pouvons pas rembourser la dette parce que nous ne sommes pas responsables de la dette. Nous ne pouvons pas payer la dette parce qu'au contraire les autres nous doivent ce que les plus grandes richesses ne pourront jamais payer, c'est-à-dire la dette de sang. C'est notre sang qui a été versé ».⁴

Tous nous reconnaissons notre terrible histoire et son poids sur la société africaine actuelle, mais disons-le clairement, ce n'est pas une excuse pour la corruption, la dictature, la mal gérance, les guerres interminables et tous les maux qui secouent l'Afrique aujourd'hui. Il est temps pour nous d'arrêter de se servir des torts du passé comme une excuse pour mal vivre. Je le répète encore, les torts faits au continent dans le passé par les autres ne sont pas une excuse pour ce qui se passe à l'heure actuelle, au Zimbabwe, au Darfour, au Congo, au Soudan, au Gabon, en Côte d'Ivoire, au Ghana (même s'il a eu le privilège d'accueillir le frère Obama) et j'en passe. Arrêtons de nous plaindre comme des "enfants de chœur", bons et pacifistes. L'homme de Tékoa nous invite à un nouveau départ pour une nouvelle Afrique.

Pour finir la visite du continent avec Amos, voyons enfin le phénomène des migrations, des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées.

Le phénomène des migrations récentes : réfugiés et personnes déplacées

Vous avez certainement suivi ces derniers temps, cette scandaleuse nouvelle de 70 émigrés érythréens morts en mer parce que personne ne s'est soucié d'aller les secourir. La raison c'est la peur de la répression après les accords italo-lybiens de repousser en mer tous les immigrés. Hélas, l'Occident ferme les yeux *devant le drame de l'immigration clandestine, comme ce fut le cas lors de la Shoah ...* » lançait sévèrement le quotidien des évêques italiens.⁵ En Afrique, ils sont nombreux ceux qui se lancent sur les routes de l'espoir qui parfois se transforment en non retour. Les émigrés du désespoir, qu'ils embarquent sur les berges sénégalaises ou ailleurs, continuent de partir à tout prix, au péril de leur vie. Dans les conditions actuelles de départ, rien ne leur garantit qu'ils auront du travail. Envers et contre tout, ils ont choisi de partir à l'aventure par l'océan sur de frêles embarcations ou par le désert. Tout cela montre l'immense désillusion d'une partie de la jeunesse africaine qui a perdu tout espoir et ne voit plus d'avenir dans leur propre pays.

Au moment où les médias parlent de flux migratoires, paradoxalement, les autres, les Italiens, les Français, les Belges, les Hollandais, etc., sont sur les autoroutes, dans le désert, les bateaux de plaisance ou les avions pour une autre forme d'émigration, cette

fois-ci, touristique ou aventurière. Et que dire de l'émigration chinoise en Afrique. Pourquoi les africains viennent en Europe, et les chinois sont-ils si nombreux à travailler en Afrique ? L'Afrique sera-t-elle bientôt terre chinoise ? La complexité du problème ne doit pas nous faire perdre notre responsabilité.

Il y a un autre défi quasi insurmontable concernant les réfugiés et les personnes déplacées dans leurs propres pays. Ces gens ont perdu leur foyer et leur terre là où l'agriculture est d'une importance capitale pour la survie des familles. Dans les régions déchirées par la guerre, se font entendre les cris de détresse de ceux qui sont mutilés pour leur vie entière, le plus souvent des civils et, parmi eux, beaucoup de femmes et d'enfants. « L'Afrique », affirme l'historien Achille Mbembe, « n'en finit pas de se déchirer et de se transformer, sous l'effet conjugué de sa démographie, de l'urbanisme massif et des ambitions économiques, militaires ou religieuses qui s'y déploient ».⁶

Ce troisième tableau nous présente un continent de paradoxe où la vie a tant d'importance mais où elle est la plus menacée et les inégalités sont les plus criantes. L'absence de protection et de sécurité est manifeste. Que nous dirait l'homme de Tékoa face à cette situation ? Ces moments difficiles que traverse notre continent ne peuvent-ils pas être un temps favorable pour exprimer la vie de Dieu, comme appel à l'hospitalité, à la créativité, à la conversion, à la responsabilité et à la reconstruction de l'Afrique ? C'est ce qui nous amène à voir quelques lieux privilégiés de l'engagement de l'Église. Nous en avons repéré quatre.

4. Quelques lieux privilégiés de l'engagement de l'Église pour la Construction-Reconstruction de l'Afrique

4.1 Oser la parole face aux problèmes socio-économiques et environnementaux

L'Église en Afrique a la lourde mission d'être aux avant-postes de la renaissance du continent. Comme corps, elle peut davantage œuvrer avec les gouvernements pour revoir tous les systèmes d'éducation afin d'inclure des conseils, des programmes et des modules spéciaux de formation en matière de développement socio-économique, de résolution des conflits et de négociations de paix dans les programmes d'études et à tous les niveaux de l'éducation formelle et non formelle.

Pour un développement durable en Afrique, l'Église à travers ses structures de formations peut renforcer la solidarité entre chercheurs, intellectuels et principaux groupes acteurs de la vie sociale. Cette convergence des compétences et des idées favorise la collaboration pour la réalisation de plans et programmes communs de développement conformes aux réalités du continent. De plus, cette solidarité peut permettre d'éclairer et d'orienter les pouvoirs publics ainsi que leurs partenaires pour le développement dans leur prise de décision. Promouvoir de centres régionaux d'excellence et de réflexion stratégique devient une priorité pour le continent.

L'Église devra aussi poser la question de Dieu à partir de la base et surtout miser sur la qualité de sa présence aux soucis et aux détresses des hommes et des femmes.⁷ Elle est appelée à assumer plus radicalement la kénose de la mission de Jésus pour pouvoir être une force transformatrice dans le continent. Pour cela, il lui faudra descendre de ses montures et privilèges, de ses structures rigides, pour se lier au destin des plus démunis et des laissés pour compte.

4.2 La bonne gouvernance

Que l'Église en Afrique soit libre vis-à-vis du pouvoir politique. Qu'elle parle franchement aux dirigeants qui sont au pouvoir depuis cinquante ans et dont les politiques ont provoqué d'indescriptibles difficultés économiques et la misère du peuple. Certes, en 1995, les évêques du continent avaient lancé ce message d'espérance : « En ce moment même où tant de haines fratricides provoquées par des intérêts politiques déchirent nos peuples, au moment où le poids de la dette internationale ou de la dévaluation les écrase, nous, évêques d'Afrique, avec tous les participants à ce saint Synode, unis au Saint-Père et à tous nos Frères dans l'épiscopat qui nous ont élus, nous voulons dire un mot d'espérance et de réconfort à ton adresse, Famille de Dieu qui est en Afrique; à ton adresse, Famille de Dieu qui est de par le monde: "Christ notre Espérance est vivant; nous vivrons!" ».⁸

Oui, nous vivons aujourd'hui surtout, si nous utilisons aussi nos immenses potentialités pour nous développer. Parce qu'aussi, nous avons suffisamment de bras et nous avons un marché immense, très vaste du Nord au Sud, de l'Est à l'Ouest. Nous avons suffisamment de capacité intellectuelle pour créer. L'Afrique s'étend devant nous comme un vaste chantier à construire. Elle suppose des acteurs, des travailleurs motivés, créatifs, courageux. L'Église peut participer à la reconstruction de l'Afrique à partir de son passé, avec les autres. Pour cela, elle doit oser choisir le risque de la liberté de parole et d'action comme mode de vie pour transmettre « la vie et la vie en abondance » (Jn 10, 10).

4.3 Créer des espaces où salut et guérison se répondent en écho

Devant la soif inouïe de la Parole de Dieu, que l'Église s'investisse davantage dans la création des centres d'étude ou de formation biblique à l'adresse non seulement des fidèles, mais aussi des non-croyants qui en manifesteraient le désir. Il y a là un défi à relever. L'Église peut créer, de nouveaux espaces pour partager la vie, analyser les situations sociales et religieuses à partir de la lecture pertinente de la Parole de Dieu et des événements. C'est pourquoi je me permets de rêver d'une Église-communion à partir d'en bas. Une Église hors les murs de l'institution empruntant le modèle des Églises domestiques des origines et répondant aux besoins immenses de notre Afrique. Une Église où la tradition, les rituels et les structures hiérarchiques, sont repensés en termes de « tables-rondes » ou « tables d'hospitalité », plus ouvertes aux marginalisés et aux défavorisés.

4.4 Un continent en mouvement pour une «culture de l'accueil et de l'hospitalité» face au phénomène de migration

Des immigrés, des réfugiés (politiques ou économiques), des personnes déplacées, des rapatriés, des refoulés, des sans-papiers, nous les retrouvons partout sur le continent, particulièrement dans les grandes agglomérations. Ce phénomène migratoire est un vrai « signe des temps » à travers lequel l'Esprit interpelle aujourd'hui l'Église d'Afrique, un moment spécial, d'une grande vitalité pour la vie du Peuple de Dieu tout entier. L'Église pourrait être une présence et un soutien pour tous les trois (3) niveaux ?

En mettant en contact entre elles des personnes de nationalités, d'ethnies et de religions différentes, le phénomène migratoire contribue à rendre visible la vraie physionomie de l'Église et met en valeur le caractère œcuménique et favorise le dialogique interreligieux. Il serait urgent d'abord d'élaborer une pastorale de l'accueil et de l'hospitalité en mettant en valeur l'importance de l'accueil dans nos traditions. Il s'agit d'apprécier les valeurs de l'autre, au-delà des nombreuses difficultés que comporte la convivialité avec des personnes différentes.

Ensuite, passer du service d'aumônerie spécialisée à l'accueil à l'intégration des migrants dans la vie de l'Église locale. Il s'agira de faire le choix de se mettre en exode vers une Église locale à multiples visages en respectant le patrimoine spirituel et culturel de chacun.

Enfin, Le phénomène migratoire nous met devant un défi majeur qui consiste à avancer vers une Église qui se conçoit elle-même dans le dynamisme trinitaire de la communion et de la participation des différents comme source d'unité. Un signe prophétique d'annonce d'un monde nouveau serait de créer une culture de l'accueil et de l'hospitalité comme antidote de tout un système d'exclusion de l'autre. Pour cela, renforcer et **encourager la création de structure interculturelle.**

Pour conclure, j'aimerais exprimer un souhait et une conviction.

Conclusion

Mon souhait, qui est sans doute le vôtre, est que ce Synode participe à la recherche des voies et moyens pour former une Afrique unie, intégrée ... solidaire et forte. Une Afrique résolue à se doter d'une stratégie ambitieuse et soutenue, capable de tirer profit de ses

ressources humaines et matérielles, soucieuse d'assurer l'épanouissement de ses populations. Une Afrique qui offre l'hospitalité à ceux qui s'enferment sur eux-mêmes.

Ma conviction est que l'Église en Afrique sera influencée non seulement par ce qui se dit au Synode entre le Pape, les Cardinaux, les Évêques, les observateurs et les experts, mais aussi par ce que nous échangerons ici. En cela, je vous remercie.

Footnotes

¹ Cf. article « Le potentiel de la femme pour la construction d'une Afrique juste, pacifiée et réconciliée », 2S 14, 1-22. Au cours d'une réception, Absalom, fils du roi David tue Amnon, un autre fils de David, pour se venger du viol de Tamar, sa sœur. Absalom prend la fuite et David ne veut plus le voir. La femme avisée du village de Tékoa a donc servi d'intermédiaire entre le général Joab et le roi David en faveur d'Absalom.

² Jean Marc Ela, *Ma foi d'Africain*, Paris, Karthala, 1985, p. 185.

³ Jean Marc Ela, *Le cri de l'homme africain*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1980, p. 7.

⁴ Discours de Thomas Sankara à Addis Abeba, le 29 Juillet 1987, quelques mois avant sa mort se qualifiant : jeune, sans maturité, sans expérience mais révolutionnaire.

⁵ Entendu dans Radio Vatican le 21 août 2009.

⁶ A. Mbembe, « *Les frontières mouvantes du continent africain* », Le Monde Diplomatique, Novembre 1999, pp. 22-23.

⁷ C'est d'ailleurs toute la dynamique du Document conciliaire de Vatican II : *Lumen Gentium*.

⁸ *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 13.

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Exposer sa foi à la différence à la recherche d'une convivialité spirituelle entre Chrétiens et Musulmans

Du 4 au 25 octobre dernier, s'est tenu à Rome la **Deuxième Assemblée pour l'Afrique du Synode des Évêques**, avec pour thème « *L'Église en Afrique au service de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix - Vous êtes le sel de la terre. Vous êtes la lumière du monde* » (Mt 5, 13.14). L'orientation de ce second synode fait suite à la première Assemblée de 1994. Elle peut être vue comme une réponse de l'Église qui est en Afrique aux préoccupations de ses filles et fils d'aujourd'hui. En effet, la paix, la réconciliation et la justice définissent le nouveau processus lancé pour le développement économique et la croissance spirituelle du continent. Ce thème tient donc compte du contexte général du continent et de ses problèmes en divers domaines. Ainsi l'appel est lancé à tous les Chrétiens, en même temps qu'aux croyants de toutes confessions : en Afrique autant qu'ailleurs tous sont fermement invités à promouvoir concrètement réconciliation, justice et paix pour tous. « Afrique lève-toi ! ». Un appel dynamique lancé à tous par le Message final du Synode et repris par Benoît XVI au cours de son homélie à la Messe de clôture le dimanche 25 octobre, dans la Basilique St Pierre ; un défi lancé à tout Chrétien appelé à exposer sa foi à la différence.

Comme l'ont remarqué certains commentateurs, il s'agit d'un « **Synode du dialogue** ». Car pour parvenir à susciter une dynamique en vue de la renaissance du continent, il s'agit d'unir l'ensemble des forces vives contenues dans chaque religion, Christianisme, Islam et Religions traditionnelles, et de les mettre en dialogue.

« *Dans une Afrique fracturée, le **dialogue** est important. Dialogue au sein de la communauté chrétienne, dialogue avec d'autres Églises, avec les nouveaux mouvements religieux, avec les religions traditionnelles, avec **l'Islam*** ». ¹

Dialogue avec l'Islam, disons plutôt « façon de rencontrer les Musulmans et de se laisser rencontrer par eux ».

Dans leur 3^{ème} partie, intitulée « **Les religions et la paix et la justice en Afrique** » les *Lineamenta 2* évoquent le rôle de la Religion Traditionnelle Africaine, de l'Islam et de la collaboration avec les autres Chrétiens dans la promotion de la paix et de la justice. Ce document parle de la religion musulmane dans les numéros 27 et 28. De même *l'Instrumentum Laboris* qui, dans son n° 102, inscrit le rôle des religions dans le cadre de l'engagement pour une Afrique réconciliée. Deux documents dont plusieurs évêques ont regretté la brièveté au regard de l'importance de l'Islam, religion répandue sur tout le continent. Il est heureux que le message final du Synode ait assez largement rectifié cette brièveté.

Pour ce qui concerne **la partie Nord du continent** (Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie et Libye) on notera que les Musulmans, d'origine arabe aussi bien qu'autochtones islamisés, représentent presque 100% de la population. Les Chrétiens sont massivement des étrangers très rarement intégrés dans les familles, en dehors des familles dites de foyer mixte où des étrangères chrétiennes ont épousé des Musulmans. Telle est la caractéristique de cette région par rapport non seulement à l'Afrique subsaharienne mais encore au Moyen Orient et jusqu'aux confins de l'Extrême Orient. Ailleurs, en Afrique subsaharienne, la population musulmane est distribuée dans l'ensemble des pays du continent avec d'importantes majorités

comme au Nigeria, au Mali et au Niger. Dans ces pays, ce sont des populations autochtones qui pratiquent l'une ou l'autre des deux religions et la mixité se retrouve parfois au sein des fraternités. Cette situation entraîne nécessairement de grandes différences dans la manière d'aborder la question de la convivialité entre Chrétiens et Musulmans.

C'est bien de ces différences, du défi qu'elles représentent pour la foi, et de la convivialité qui existe dans les pays arabo-musulmans entre Chrétiens et Musulmans que les Pères Synodaux venant d'Églises enfouies au cœur de ces régions ont voulu témoigner dans la grande assemblée.

En fait, l'ensemble de la démarche est l'aboutissement d'une longue évolution historique. **(I)** Dans ce contexte, il est bon de relever comment oser « exposer sa foi à la différence » a permis d'établir des chemins nouveaux qui conduisent à la convivialité entre Chrétiens et Musulmans **(II)**.

I. UN APPEL À LA CONVIVIALITÉ QUI SE SITUE DANS UNE HISTOIRE

« Synode du dialogue », voilà une bonne formule pour résumer l'un des aspects de ce « Synode de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix ». En tant que sacrement de la réconciliation entre tous les peuples, l'Église est appelée à agir en vue de briser les barrières qui séparent les diverses religions et engendrent les confrontations et les guerres³ et particulièrement les relations avec l'Islam et les Musulmans.

Pour ce qui regarde l'Afrique, le témoignage de l'Église d'Afrique du Nord sur les modalités d'une rencontre conviviale entre Chrétiens et Musulmans apparaît comme vraiment original et peut-être même fondateur. Le Nord de l'Afrique fait partie des régions où l'Islam s'est installé très rapidement après son apparition dans la Presqu'île arabique. Rappelons déjà que, dès la mort du Prophète Muhammad en 632, ses successeurs ont lancé leurs missionnaires aussi bien vers l'est, le continent asiatique, que vers l'ouest, l'Afrique et l'Europe. Ainsi l'Islam est arrivé en Afrique très vite après son apparition au 7^{ème} siècle. C'est actuellement la religion d'une grande proportion des Africains qui compte aujourd'hui près de 430 millions d'adhérents, soit 60% de la population *africaine*.

L'Islam a d'abord été introduit dans le Nord du continent par les armées arabo-musulmanes. Quant à l'Afrique subsaharienne, ce sont les commerçants et trafiquants d'esclaves, arrivés très tôt eux aussi par la côte Est, qui se sont rapidement chargés de ces conversions.

En Afrique du Nord, après quelques combats d'arrière-garde menés par les armées romaines, les troupes musulmanes sont rapidement accueillies comme des libératrices par rapport au joug de l'administration romaine. Les populations nord-africaines s'islamisent et s'arabisent peu à peu. Si bien qu'au 12^{ème} siècle, du fait des émigrations de Chrétiens vers le nord de la Méditerranée, et des conversions de ceux qui restent à la nouvelle religion, l'antique et vénérable Église d'Afrique du Nord a complètement disparu.

Les périodes de convivialité entre Chrétiens et Musulmans n'ont sans doute pas manqué, en Europe par exemple. Pensons à la cohabitation entre les deux religions dans l'Espagne musulmane du 8^{ème} au 15^{ème} siècle. Le mouvement commence pourtant à s'inverser entre les 11^{ème} et 13^{ème} siècles avec les Croisades suscitées par les Puissances européennes de tradition chrétienne, qui, aux appels de la Papauté et de ses délégués, se lancent à la reconquête du tombeau du Christ et des autres lieux saints de Palestine. C'est pourtant en pleine Croisade que François d'Assise s'embarque pour l'Égypte en 1219. Bravant humblement tous les risques possibles — Chrétiens et Musulmans le prennent pour un fou — il rencontre le Sultan El-Kamil dans son camp de Damiette afin de lui annoncer Jésus-

Christ. Bien que sa démarche n'ait visiblement pas eu de suite, le Sultan n'en demeura pas moins profondément touché par cette rencontre.⁴

La période des Croisades terminée sans aucun succès durable pour les Chrétiens, plusieurs siècles s'écoulent au cours desquels, la convivialité islamo-chrétienne n'est pas vraiment à l'ordre du jour. Ces « Croisades » ont laissé un souvenir cuisant et toujours vivant dans la mémoire de nombreux Musulmans et sans doute aussi de certains Chrétiens. La méthode ne brille pas par la convivialité ! De plus, les Musulmans considèrent que la révélation coranique est le sceau définitif de la Révélation à travers laquelle Dieu purifie ses Écritures, Tora et Évangile, des altérations et falsifications que Juifs et Chrétiens leur auraient fait subir au long des siècles.

Pendant la période ottomane (1515-1830), une Église d'étrangers se reconstitue dans la région avec les Chrétiens européens, commerçants, serviteurs, esclaves et autres, qui se trouvent surtout dans les villes du littoral. A partir du 17^{ème} siècle, cette petite Église est gouvernée par des Vicaires apostoliques sans caractère épiscopal. C'est en 1838, huit ans après le début de la conquête de l'Algérie par les troupes françaises, qu'une bulle de Grégoire XVI rétablit la hiérarchie dans ce pays, avec un premier évêque, Mgr Dupuch puis, à partir de 1866, des Archevêques dont le premier est Mgr Lavigerie.

D'une manière générale, pendant plusieurs siècles, les missionnaires s'en tiennent à une pensée théologique courante : on ne saurait annoncer Jésus-Christ sans démanteler les religions existantes. Envoyés en Terre musulmane, ils semblent bien avoir ignoré les directives données par l'*Instruction de la S. Congrégation de la Propagande aux Vicaires Apostoliques en Chine...* En 1659, celle-ci leur prescrivait de respecter les usages et les mœurs des peuples auxquels ils étaient envoyés. Mais en ce qui concerne les pays musulmans, les missionnaires, connaissant mal l'Islam, n'en voyaient que ce qui leur paraissait des contre-valeurs totalement opposées au Christianisme.

C'est dans cette ambiance générale que doit être située l'expérience nouvelle apportée à l'Église universelle par l'Église d'Afrique du Nord des temps modernes et plus particulièrement par les deux sociétés missionnaires fondées en 1868 et 1869 par Mgr Lavigerie, archevêque d'Alger, M.Afr. et SMNDA. Après quelques conversions dont certaines furent, il est vrai, solides, le Fondateur s'était rapidement rendu compte qu'il était impossible, en pays majoritairement musulman, d'annoncer la Parole d'une manière explicite.⁵ Il comprend alors qu'il convenait avant tout de gagner les cœurs par la charité et le service des populations à travers œuvres éducatives, hôpitaux et autres œuvres sociales. C'est ainsi qu'il oriente ses instructions dans un sens tout à fait différent, prescrivant à ses missionnaires de s'abstenir de toute prédication directe, une manière d'exposer leur foi au défi de la différence.

Il faut constater que, après sa mort en 1892, Lavigerie ne fut pas toujours suivi par ses missionnaires. Osant faire œuvre de prédication directe, leur action avait sans doute produit quelques conversions en Kabylie et dans certaines Oasis du sud du pays. Mais l'opposition farouche des confréries musulmanes ne leur avait pas permis d'aller bien loin dans leur désir de donner naissance à une Église autochtone, autonome et solide.⁶ C'est alors qu'ils sont amenés à retrouver les intuitions du Fondateur et prennent conscience de la nécessité de modifier leur méthode apostolique.

Il convient ici de rappeler l'action du P. Henri Marchal, membre pendant 30 ans du C.G. des M.Afr., qui dès 1907 rappelait la nécessité d'apprendre les langues parlées en Afrique du Nord, arabe et langues berbères. Les apprendre d'une manière sérieuse en se donnant des maîtres qualifiés, choisis dans le pays d'accueil lui-même. La connaissance de la langue permettrait d'entrer directement en communication avec les personnes. Elle donnerait aussi accès à l'approche du Coran et autres textes de la tradition musulmane qui sont au fondement de la culture arabo-musulmane. Cet appel à une meilleure

connaissance est confirmé le 30 novembre 1919 par l'Encyclique *Maximum illud* de Benoît XV qui demande que les missionnaires soient préparés à leur futur apostolat.

Un Décret de la S. Congrégation de la Propagande de 1923 précise :

« *Par-dessus tout, il serait très utile que les missionnaires arrivent convenablement préparés au travail évangélique, soit dans une maison d'Europe ou ailleurs (...) soit dans des établissements organisés en pays de mission. Cette préparation (...) devrait consister dans l'étude de la langue (...) dans l'accoutumance dès le début, aux usages et mœurs de la région...* ».

Le tournant décisif est pris en 1937 lors d'une « Conférence des Supérieurs de Kabylie »⁷ convoquée par le Supérieur général de l'époque qui désirait procurer aux chefs de mission de la Kabylie et du Sahara « *le moyen de confronter et discuter ensemble les principes et les règles directives de leur difficile apostolat dans les pays musulmans* ». Un tournant à partir duquel la mentalité même des missionnaires tant hommes que femmes, ainsi que leur approche des Musulmans allaient être transformées. Une réorganisation complète s'impose alors concernant l'étude sérieuse des langues parlées dans la région afin de permettre une meilleure communication avec les populations concernées. De plus, pendant une année, les conférences théologiques seraient remplacées par des questions plus pratiques en rapport avec le dogme et la morale de l'Islam, mieux adaptées aux besoins de l'apostolat dans la région.

Des maisons d'études sont ouvertes en Algérie et en Tunisie pour permettre l'étude systématique de ces questions. Cette décision avait cependant été préparée en quelque sorte par le P. Marchal. Dès 1926, celui-ci avait ouvert à Tunis une maison d'études de langue et de civilisation arabo-musulmane. De cette maison procéderait en 1960 l'Institut Pontifical d'Études Orientales devenu en 1964 l'actuel Institut Pontifical d'Études arabes et d'Islamologie, aujourd'hui installé à Rome.

La présence auprès des Musulmans semblait alors être devenue le domaine réservé des deux Instituts fondés par Lavigerie. Mais dès la nomination au siège archiepiscopal d'Alger de Mgr Duval, en 1954, et au cœur de la guerre d'Indépendance, les choses changent. L'action menée par cet Archevêque et par son successeur immédiat, Mgr Teissier, va s'inscrire dans l'optique du Cardinal Lavigerie. C'est de cette expérience que surgira le virage pris dans les plus hautes instances de l'Église, notamment au cours du Concile Vatican II vers une convivialité effective.

Dès son élection, en juin 1963, au cœur de ce Concile, Paul VI exprime la nécessité pour les Chrétiens de s'ouvrir à la connaissance des autres religions et d'entrer en dialogue avec leurs membres. Tous les documents qui suivent le premier discours du pape au Concile (29 septembre 1963) insistent sur cette nécessité dont le fondement théologique est clairement exprimé par l'Encyclique *Ecclesiam suam* (6 août 1964). C'est l'Incarnation. Le dialogue entre Dieu et l'humanité est à la fois la norme et la source du dialogue des Chrétiens avec les autres hommes. C'est le Père qui a pris l'initiative de rencontrer l'humanité par la médiation du Christ et d'inaugurer avec elle un dialogue de salut. De la même façon, il appartient aux Chrétiens de *prendre l'initiative pour étendre ce dialogue sans attendre d'y être appelés* (n. 74).

La rencontre islamo-chrétienne trouve ses lettres de noblesse dans la Déclaration conciliaire *Nostra Aetate* du 28 octobre 1965. Cette Déclaration résulte, à la fois, de la pratique des Églises du Nord de l'Afrique, et de la réflexion d'experts venant de ces Églises vivant en minoritaires dans des pays totalement ou partiellement musulmans. Il faut citer ici, entre autres, les PP. Anawati et Jomier, dominicains du Caire, Louis Gardet, PFJ, et le P. Caspar, M.Afr. *Nostra Aetate* s'inscrit dans ce mouvement.⁸ Chrétiens de toutes obédiences et Musulmans de toutes appartenances sont appelés à sortir de la défiance et du conflit pour se rencontrer en vérité et en arriver à reconnaître leurs valeurs réciproques. Surtout, il leur faut désormais agir ensemble pour, dit le texte, « *promouvoir ensemble, pour tous les hommes, la justice sociale, les valeurs morales,*

la paix et la liberté ». Une première application en a été faite au cœur du Synode avec l'invitation de Benoît XVI à un Musulman sénégalais, Jacques Diouf, directeur général de la FAO. Celui-ci a pu expliquer en Assemblée générale comment l'actuelle crise mondiale a gravement porté atteinte à la sécurité alimentaire en Afrique.

La recherche d'une vraie convivialité entre Chrétiens et Musulmans s'appuie donc sur une longue histoire elle-même surgie d'une pratique assidue d'Églises locales qui ont osé exposer leur foi à la différence. Les interventions des représentants des Églises d'Afrique du Nord au Synode, montrent que le mouvement ainsi lancé est assez largement reconnu par l'Église d'Afrique tout entière. C'est au sein de cette Église continentale que Chrétiens et Musulmans sont appelés à vivre ensemble, parfois au sein d'une même famille, le thème même de ce Synode : « L'Église en Afrique au service de **la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix** ».

II. DES CHEMINS QUI CONDUISENT À LA CONVIVIALITÉ ENTRE CHRÉTIENS ET MUSULMANS

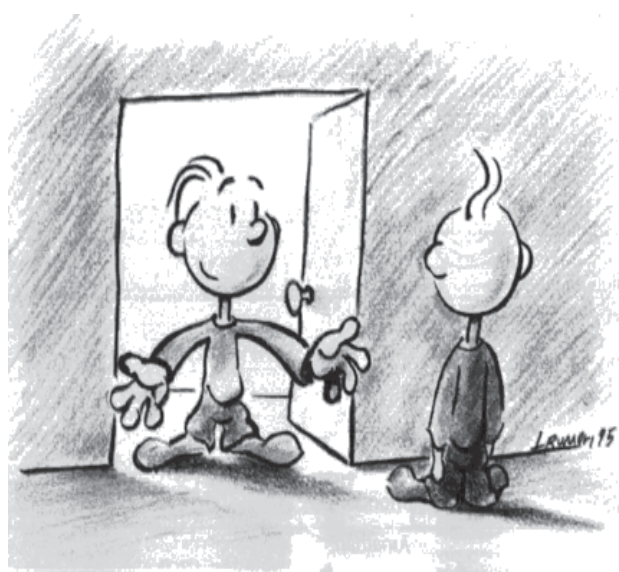
Le thème de ce 2^{ème} Synode pour l'Afrique a été présenté comme « *Un thème capital et vital à plus d'un titre pour l'avenir du continent africain à l'heure où la plupart de ses pays s'apprêtent à célébrer le jubilé d'or de leur accession à l'Indépendance* ». ⁹ Dans la synthèse d'un Colloque organisé en novembre 2008 à Yaoundé, Paulin Poucouta met en lumière les trois trajectoires qui se dégagent de cette rencontre : « *d'abord une trajectoire de mémoire ; ensuite une trajectoire éthique ; enfin une trajectoire ecclésiale* ». ¹⁰

Une trajectoire de mémoire, tout d'abord. En effet, ces documents tirent profit d'une évolution historique au sein même des Églises d'Afrique, qui permet de « *s'interroger sur les concepts de paix, de justice et de réconciliation, au regard de la philosophie et de la pensée traditionnelle africaine* ». Une trajectoire éthique ensuite, illustrée par le sous-titre du thème du Synode : « *Vous êtes le sel de la terre. Vous êtes la lumière du monde* » (Mt 5, 13.14) qui appelle l'Église à s'investir dans l'éducation à la paix, à la justice et à la réconciliation. Une trajectoire ecclésiale enfin, illustrée par le rappel de la mission de l'Église au sein de laquelle tout Chrétien est appelé à témoigner de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix. Qui dit trajectoire, dit mouvement, cheminement donc, vers un certain but : trouver ensemble des chemins pour parvenir à établir un règne de justice, de paix et de réconciliation.

Du fait que, en tous ces domaines, l'Église entend se mettre au service de l'ensemble des populations d'Afrique, il est possible de définir sa mission comme diaconale au sens plein du terme. L'Église ne se dit-elle pas « *experte en humanité* » selon l'expression du Pape Paul VI souvent reprise par la suite ? « *Experte en humanité* » donc « *au service de l'humanité tout entière* » C'est d'ailleurs ce qu'évoque l'intitulé même du Synode : « *L'Église en Afrique au service de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix* ». C'est bien dans un chemin de service diaconal que se situe l'Église en Afrique en se sentant responsable d'une mission singulièrement importante : parvenir à faire naître un règne de réconciliation, de justice et de paix dans un continent marqué par les violences, les guerres et, pour une part, les compétitions entre les religions, particulièrement entre Islam et Christianisme.

C'est dans cette optique que les Églises du Nord de l'Afrique, Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie et Libye ainsi que l'Église de Mauritanie, ont fait de la rencontre conviviale entre Chrétiens et Musulmans une priorité pastorale. ¹¹ Il faut noter au passage que les populations auprès desquelles les Évêques exercent leur charge, se sont assez substantiellement transformées en quelques années sous l'effet de mouvements de populations parfois définitifs. Dans l'ensemble de ces pays, la population autochtone reste majoritairement arabe et presque à 100% musulmane. Mais d'autres Africains tant Chrétiens que Musulmans, venant d'Afrique subsaharienne avec des motivations variées, y sont maintenant accueillis. Ce qui devrait pouvoir favoriser la rencontre islamo-chrétienne.

Cette rencontre spécifique se vit effectivement déjà au niveau des étudiants, sachant qu'environ 30 mille étudiants subsahariens musulmans et chrétiens, surtout francophones avec quelques lusophones, sont accueillis dans les Universités et grandes Écoles des trois pays du Maghreb proprement dit. S'y ajoute pour les quatre pays de la CERN A l'afflux de migrants subsahariens en marche problématique vers l'Eldorado européen que des passeurs sans scrupules font miroiter à leurs yeux. Une population de pauvres où Chrétiens et Musulmans se retrouvent, tous logés à la même enseigne. De ces pauvres que Frantz Fanon appelait les « damnés de la terre ». ¹² Pour les Chrétiens, pasteurs, religieux, religieuses et laïcs engagés dans l'Église, tous, sans distinction de religion, font partie du peuple qui leur est confié, et ils font tout leur possible pour parvenir à les soutenir dans leur détresse au risque parfois de mécontenter les autorités du pays.



Tous, à quelque catégorie qu'ils appartiennent, font partie des préoccupations premières de la CERN A. C'est au cours de leur rencontre de juin 2009 que les Évêques ont préparé la participation de leurs représentants au Synode, quatre Évêques et un P.F.J. invité par le St Père en raison de la qualité de son témoignage de proximité auprès des Musulmans. ¹³ Les participants se sont alors réparti les trois défis les plus spécifiques de la Région : dialogue islamochrétien proprement dit, souci des étudiants et des migrants, diversités culturelles.

En fait ces défis se rejoignent en raison du caractère particulier du peuplement des cinq pays de la région élargie, Mauritanie, Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie et Libye, et ce qui en fait la spécificité au regard des autres régions, non seulement d'Afrique, mais aussi de l'ensemble des continents. Dans ces cinq pays, la population nationale est arabe ou berbère, d'obédience musulmane et l'Islam est la religion de l'État. S'il y a des Chrétiens autochtones, leur nombre est dérisoire. Ils appartiennent pour l'essentiel à des Églises évangéliques de fondation très récente à tendance prosélyte, mal tolérées par les régimes en place. Toutes ces Églises, à l'exception des évangéliques, ont également en commun de chercher à vivre le « dialogue » à ses divers niveaux : celui de la vie d'abord, le dialogue des œuvres ensuite, une forme de dialogue intellectuel et enfin le dialogue spirituel. Elles ont opté pour le service des populations, services sanitaires, sociaux, et éducatifs. Une manière de vivre l'Incarnation, une manière aussi d'exposer sa foi à la différence.

Dans l'ensemble de ces pays, c'est d'abord ce que l'on appelle « dialogue de la vie » qui se vit au quotidien, déjà dans les quartiers des villes où cohabitent Musulmans et Chrétiens engagés au service du pays et de ses populations. Qui se vit aussi à travers les Chrétiennes étrangères épouses de musulmans, à l'égard desquelles les Églises locales témoignent d'une attention toute particulière pour les soutenir dans leur foi. Par ailleurs, lorsqu'on suit avec attention l'évolution sociale du pays, en Algérie par exemple, on peut très bien se rendre compte d'une transformation notable chez les anciens élèves des écoles tenues jusqu'en 1976 par du personnel catholique, sous la responsabilité de l'Évêque et majoritairement fréquentées par des élèves musulmans. Sans les détourner de leur foi, la formation humaine qu'ils ont reçue dans ces écoles a certainement influencé, et pour le meilleur, leur manière de vivre leur foi musulmane et leur ouverture à l'autre différent.

C'est aussi le « dialogue des œuvres ». Ainsi par exemple la présence dans ces pays de la *Caritas internationalis* permet de vivre une présence sociale animée par des services dans lesquels Chrétiens et Musulmans travaillent au coude à coude. En Mauritanie par exemple « la *Caritas* Mauritanie fondée en 1970, emploie actuellement environ 120 personnes, dont au moins 110 hommes et femmes de nationalité mauritanienne, donc musulmans ». ¹⁴ Ce qui vaut tout aussi bien pour l'Algérie où diverses œuvres sociales et éducatives sont soutenues par cet organisme, en relation directe avec les personnels diocésains. Nous pouvons encore citer le travail important réalisé grâce aux services de *Caritas* par les divers membres d'Églises, catholiques et méthodistes, dans les camps de réfugiés sahraouis de Tindouf ou encore la formation féminine en divers lieux parfois assez reculés du pays.

La rencontre conviviale prend aussi une forme intellectuelle grâce aux divers centres culturels ouverts par les Églises locales dans plusieurs pays, Mauritanie, Maroc, Algérie et Tunisie, parfois depuis de longues années. Ainsi à Tunis où l'Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes offre aux étudiants et professeurs universitaires une magnifique bibliothèque spécialisée dans la culture arabo-musulmane ainsi qu'un personnel aussi bien chrétien que musulman capable de les guider dans leurs recherches. De même à Tunis encore, la bibliothèque de religions comparées, organe de l'Église diocésaine, où étudiants et chercheurs tunisiens peuvent trouver les documents dont ils ont besoin pour certains de leurs travaux.

J'ai moi-même vécu un engagement analogue lorsque, pendant 24 ans (1980-2004) j'ai participé aux diverses activités du Centre d'Études diocésain d'Alger qui accueille lui aussi depuis sa fondation en 1971, des universitaires et chercheurs de tous degrés. J'y ai participé à deux titres. D'une manière indirecte tout d'abord, en étant chargée par l'Archevêque d'Alger de la formation islamologique des communautés chrétiennes réparties sur le territoire algérien. ¹⁵ En second lieu, c'est en raison de mes compétences personnelles, toujours dans le cadre de ce Centre, que j'ai été invitée par un groupe de femmes universitaires lectrices de la Bibliothèque du Centre d'Études, à participer à une recherche pluridisciplinaire sur les questions sociales et juridiques concernant les femmes et les enfants.

Il convient enfin de parler d'un autre type de rencontre, la « rencontre spirituelle » qui fait partie elle aussi de la pratique des Églises du Nord de l'Afrique. Dans cette région, cette dimension particulière de l'approche et de la rencontre est pratiquée par un certain nombre de Chrétiens et de Musulmans. Citons le petit groupe appelé « *Ribât al Salâm* » (Lien de la paix) né en Algérie à la fin des années 1970, de l'initiative conjointe du Prieur de Tibhirine, Christian de Chergé, et d'un M.Afr., Claude Rault, l'actuel Évêque du Sahara. ¹⁶ Le petit groupe des débuts a fait des émules en Tunisie et même dans l'un ou l'autre pays d'Europe.

Permettez-moi d'ajouter que, pour ce qui concerne l'Algérie, au cours des années 1994-1996, l'Église a vu confirmer dans le sang sa vocation à « exposer sa foi à la différence ». Il suffit d'évoquer ici le souvenir de ses membres, laïcs, prêtres, dont un Évêque, religieux et religieuses – au total 19 membres de ce groupe de permanents soit environ 10% de ce groupe de Chrétiens. C'est par solidarité avec la souffrance de tout un peuple que ceux-ci avaient voulu rester sur place en dépit du danger croissant, solidarité avec les Algériens dont plusieurs centaines de milliers ont eux-mêmes été victimes de ces massacres sans nom.

Tous les pays de cette région, Mauritanie, Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie et Libye, ont à faire face à l'afflux massif de personnes arrivant de pays d'Afrique subsaharienne qui tentent de rejoindre les pays du Nord de la Méditerranée dans des conditions véritablement épouvantables. « Un phénomène d'Exodus, dit l'un des Évêques. ¹⁷ Qui révèle un visage d'injustice et de crise sociopolitique dans l'Afrique ... ». Parmi ces migrants trompés dès le départ de leur pays par des passeurs sans vergogne, il se trouve aussi bien des Chrétiens que des Musulmans. « C'est une communauté qui souffre (...) mais qui est pleine de joie dans l'expression de la foi ! Et qui, dans un contexte social et religieux de type musulman, rend l'Église crédible ». De plus, formant une Église pèlerine et étrangère, ces hommes et ces

femmes pratiquent le dialogue de la vie avec beaucoup de Musulmans et, en tant que Chrétiens, ils sont « lumière de Jésus et sel de la terre » pour leur entourage musulman.

On oppose souvent à la volonté des Églises de pratiquer la rencontre et le dialogue, l'absence de réciprocité de la part des Musulmans. Et pourtant, cette réciprocité existe sinon officiellement, du moins au quotidien. Un exemple d'initiative musulmane entre autres, une première *lettre ouverte* au Pape par des personnalités musulmanes de premier plan, en 2006. Faute de réponse de la part du St Siège, le groupe a relancé l'initiative en octobre 2007. À cette date, ce sont 138 personnalités de diverses tendances musulmanes qui ont adressé une nouvelle *Lettre ouverte* à Benoît XVI et aux « Guides des Églises Chrétiennes en tout lieu » dont 27 sont personnellement nommés.¹⁸

Cette *Lettre* a pour titre « Une parole commune entre vous et nous ». Elle comprend trois chapitres. Le premier porte sur « L'Amour de Dieu » et le second sur « L'Amour du prochain ». Chacun de ces deux chapitres aborde le thème, d'abord au regard des textes musulmans fondamentaux, Coran et Tradition du Prophète Muhammad (Sunna) puis au regard de la Bible, Ancien et Nouveau Testament. Le troisième chapitre « Venez à une Parole commune entre vous et nous » (cf. Coran 3, 64) suit la même méthode en partant du Coran et de la Sunna d'une part, de la Bible d'autre part. Ce chapitre se conclut avec cette invitation :

« Ne faisons donc pas de nos différences une cause de haine et de querelles entre nous. Rivalisons les uns avec les autres dans la piété et les bonnes œuvres. Respectons-nous les uns les autres, soyons bons, justes et aimables entre nous, et vivons dans la paix sincère, l'harmonie et la bonne volonté ».

Le St Siège a répondu à l'invitation en organisant à Rome en octobre 2008, un « 1^{er} Séminaire catholico-musulman ». La Déclaration Finale relève que « La discussion qui s'est déroulée dans un esprit chaleureux et convivial, s'est concentrée sur deux grands thèmes : 'Fondements théologiques et spirituels' et 'Dignité humaine et respect mutuel' » .

Et si « des points de ressemblance et de divergences ont émergé », ces points « réfléchissent le génie spécifique et distinctif des deux religions ». Ce qui permet d'espérer qu'une suite positive sera donnée à cette première rencontre.

Ici c'est vraiment de dialogue théologique qu'il s'agit et cela non dans la polémique, mais dans un climat de rencontre dont on peut dire que « c'est du jamais vu » !

Ce désir de dialogue en même temps théologique et spirituel est bien évoqué dans la quatrième partie du Message Final du Synode « *Mettons ensemble nos ressources spirituelles* ». Le Message n'écarte pas pour autant les risques de fanatisme religieux dont les méfaits sont largement répercutés par les médias. Il regrette aussi l'absence de réciprocité dont témoigne certains pays musulmans par rapport au respect du droit humain fondamental de pratiquer et d'enseigner librement sa religion et de l'enseigner. Mais il relève que « *Beaucoup de Pères synodaux ont témoigné de leur succès sur les chemins du dialogue avec les Musulmans. Ils ont attesté que ce dialogue se passe et que la collaboration est possible et souvent effective...* ». Le Message, témoin d'un désir de mettre sa foi à l'épreuve de la différence, insiste enfin sur la nécessité absolue du respect mutuel.

Footnotes

¹ Cf. P. Poucouta, P.S.S. Pr. de Bible à l'U.C.A.C (Yaoundé), *Esprit et Vie*, « Un deuxième synode africain ».

² *Lineamenta* élaborés dans le courant de l'année 2006, à partir des données fournies par les Conférences épiscopales d'Afrique.

³ Cf. Paulin Poucouta, « Paul et le service de la réconciliation » *Spiritus*, septembre 2009, n° 196, 291 et s.

⁴ Cf. André Vauchez, *François d'Assise : Entre histoire et mémoire*, Paris, Fayard, avril 2009, p. 548.

⁵ Cf. Jean-Claude Cellier, *Histoire des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs) De la fondation par Mgr Lavigerie à la mort du Fondateur (1883-1892)* Paris, Karthala, 2009, p. 300.

⁶ Cf. Marie Lorin (SMNDA) *Après « L'Histoire des Origines de la Congrégation 1910-1974 »*, Document photocopié, p. 148 + Annexes, Archives SMNDA (2000), Archives de la Maison Générale des SMNDA.

⁷ Cf. *Conférence des Supérieurs de Kabylie réunie à Bou Noh sous la présidence du R.P. Millinault du 6 au 15 juillet 1937*, Document photocopié, p. 94 Archives M.Afr. 102344 ainsi qu'autres documents d'archives. Voir aussi Marie Lorin, *Après « L'Histoire des Origines ... »*.

⁸ « *Si, au cours des siècles, de nombreuses dissensions et inimitiés se sont manifestées entre les chrétiens et les musulmans, le Concile les exhorte tous à oublier le passé et à s'efforcer sincèrement à la compréhension mutuelle, ainsi qu'à protéger et à promouvoir ensemble, pour tous les hommes, la justice sociale, les valeurs morales, la paix et la liberté* ».

⁹ Léonard Santedi Kinkupu, *Spiritus*, septembre 2009, n° 196, p. 281.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Poucouta, *Spiritus*, mars 2009, n° 194, pp. 107-112.

¹¹ Membres de la Conférence des Évêques de la Région Nord de l'Afrique (CERNA) : Maroc, Vincent Landel (Rabat), Mgr Santiago Agrelo Martinez (Tanger) ; Algérie, Ghaleb Bader (Jord.), A. Georger, Cl. Rault, P. Desfarges, Maroun Lahham (Jord.), Tunisie, Maroun Lahham (Jord), Libye, G. Martinelli.

¹² Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris, La Découverte.

¹³ V. Landel, M. Lahham, Cl. Rault, Gh. Bader. Armand Garin, P.F.J, invité du Pape.

¹⁴ Cf. Mgr M. Happe dans son Intervention au Synode.

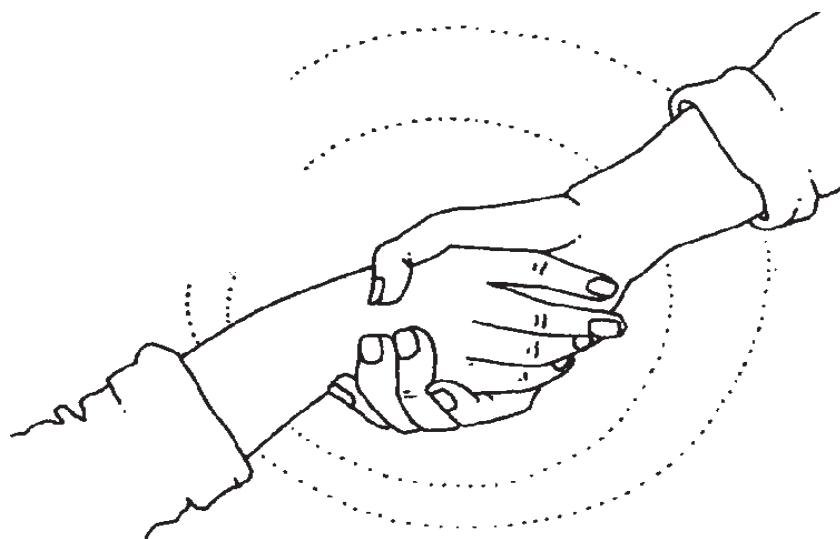
¹⁵ Il s'agissait principalement d'aider les prêtres, religieux, religieuses et laïcs de s'initier d'une manière sérieuse à la culture islamique qui imprègne l'ensemble des habitants du pays, ceux-là mêmes que tout chrétien installé dans le pays pour un temps ou, parfois définitivement comme les épouses chrétiennes de musulmans, ne cessent de rencontrer au cours de leurs journées au travail et en famille.

¹⁶ Cf. Claude Rault, *Désert, ma Cathédrale* (DDB, 2008).

¹⁷ Cf. Intervention de Mgr Martinelli au Synode.

¹⁸ Autre exemple intéressant, la réalisation architecturale de la grande Mosquée de Rome. Cette mosquée, la plus grande d'Europe, construite sur l'initiative du doyen de la famille royale saoudienne a été inaugurée en 1995. Elle accueille des milliers de fidèles les jours de prière et constitue un point de ralliement pour les Musulmans de la ville de Rome et de toute l'Italie. Il s'agit là d'un exemple frappant d'architecture moderne pour cet édifice religieux islamique qui s'intègre parfaitement à la nature environnante et qui, de plus, témoigne d'une synthèse entre architecture occidentale classique, tant chrétienne (ex. Colonnade d'entrée, même style de courbe que Place St Pierre et Place du Campidoglio à Rome) que musulmane (ex : Cordoue).

Réf. : texte de l'auteur pour la Conférence de SEDOS (4/12/2009).



Thomas Malipurathu, SVD

God's Word at Work: Nourishing Our Life, Inspiring Our Mission

The title of this article is a paraphrase of the theme of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God (5-26 October, 2008) which is formulated as: "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church". What follows is an attempt to explain this theme with the help of two Gospel stories. The study does not pretend to be exhaustive. Each passage is considered only to highlight the way it illumines each of the two vital functions of the Word of God posited by the theme of the Synod. The Gospel is a unique repository of genuine illumination because in it we meet the Lord as he is and as he has manifested himself in history. God's word present in the Gospel, when received and responded to, paves the way for a radical transformation from the merely human to the divine and thus ennobles our life and empowers us for mission. The author presented another reflection in the January issue, [Vol. 72, n.1, pp. 53-69].

I. THE RICHNESS OF THE WORD OF GOD

1. The Need for Ongoing Reflection

The October 2008 Synod is in a certain sense a follow-up on two previous ecclesial events of great significance. The first is the promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* by the Second Vatican Council a little over 40 years ago. The cover letter accompanying the *Lineamenta*¹ published by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops notes that in this distance of time questions arise regarding the fruits of this conciliar document in our Church communities. Was *Dei Verbum* really accepted and acted upon? The Synod can thus be seen as a moment of collective reflection for the entire Church. The second event is the 2005 Synod, whose theme was "The Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church". It was admittedly inspired by the Council's affirmation that the Church must receive nourishment from the "one bread of life from the table of both God's word and Christ's body"². Since that Synod provided a forum for reflection on the table of Christ's body, it was now opportune to turn the Church's attention to the table of the word. As the *Lineamenta* puts it: "The Synod wishes to reverently contemplate (this mystery of) the Word, God's greatest gift, to render thanks for it, to meditate upon it and to proclaim it to all members of the Church and all people of good will"³. In short, the Synod intends to promote a rediscovery of the Word of God as a living, challenging and active force in the heart of the Church.

The theme of the Synod implies that this collective reflection on the Word of God has the purpose of enriching the life of the Church and revitalizing its missionary efforts. The *Lineamenta* speaks about the need "to nourish ourselves with the Word in order to be 'servants of the Word' in the work of evangelization"⁴. The Church is preparing itself for the Synod, the *Lineamenta* assures us, since it is optimistic about its potential to revitalize its life and mission:

The purpose of this Synod is primarily pastoral, namely, spreading and strengthening encounters with the Word of God by thoroughly examining its doctrinal underpinnings and allowing them to show the manner in which this is to be done. This will lead to experiencing the Word of God as the source of life in everyday circumstances and devising true and readily available ways in which Christians and all people of good will can listen to God and speak with him.⁵

2. The Word of God as a Symphony

Making us aware that the Word of God has a number of overlapping senses, the *Lineamenta*

compares it to “a symphony played with many instruments”.⁶ This phenomenon of varied meanings is to be evaluated against the long history of Revelation and the multiplicity of its heralds. The different meanings of the Word of God can be set out as follows:

- (a) The Word of God as the eternal Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, who was present with God at the moment of Creation and through whom everything came into being (Jn 1:1,3).
- (b) The created world as it “tells the glory of God” (Ps 19:1). The whole of creation becomes an unerring witness to God.
- (c) The Word made flesh (Jn 1:14) is the Word of God *par excellence*. For the ultimate and definitive Word is the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God’s Gospel to humankind.
- (d) The Word of God as the proclamation of the prophets and apostles. The proclamation of the prophets and apostles mediates the Word of God to their listeners.
- (e) The Word of God as Sacred Scripture. “In containing the Word of God written under divine inspiration, the Bible can truly be said to be the Word of God”.
- (f) The Word of God as the continuous preaching of the Church. Although the authenticated Scriptural Word was concluded at the end of the apostolic era, the Word of God is constantly conveyed to living people by means of the Church’s proclamation of the Gospel.

An awareness of this symphony of meanings helps us to understand more fully how the Word of God becomes a source of nourishment for the life and mission of the Church.

II. ‘NOT BY BREAD ALONE...’ — THE WORD AS THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF LIFE (LK 4:1-13)

1. The Temptation Story as a Synoptic Datum

Of the four Gospels, only Matthew and Luke’s contain an elaborate version of the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). Mark briefly mentions that such a testing took place (Mk 1:12-13) but leaves the mode of temptation unspecified. John does not speak at all of Jesus’ temptations at the start of his ministry. So the temptation story forms part of the common synoptic tradition. However, both Matthew and Luke are using “Q” material to recount the details of the testing of Jesus. In addition, both Gospels are dependent on the Marcan order, for they follow Mark by placing the event between the Baptism of Jesus and the actual launching of his public ministry. The only notable difference is that Luke inserts the genealogy of Jesus right after the description of the baptism scene.

The two versions of the story are very similar. Yet Luke’s redactional modifications are noteworthy. His statement that Jesus “was filled with the Holy Spirit” is a significant addition, consistent with the prominent role Luke attributes to the Spirit (as the initiator of Jesus’ ministry and the inspirer of the Christian community’s mission) in his two-volume work. Similarly, Luke uses the singular “stone” and “loaf of bread” in contrast to the plural in both cases (stones and loaves of bread) in Matthew. The third evangelist omits the mention of a “very high mountain” found in Matthew’s version. These changes are believed to have been introduced in order to present the temptations in a plausible form.⁷ Luke does not use the Marcan details for concluding the episode (the mention of Angels waiting on Jesus) which Matthew retains.

The major difference between the two versions is, however, the order of the temptation scenes. Matthew’s order is: desert - pinnacle - high mountain, whereas in Luke we find: desert - view of world-kingdoms - Jerusalem pinnacle. The change of order concerns the last two scenes, as the first is common to both. The question arises, what was the original order of the scenes in “Q” and who introduced the change? Scholars are divided in their opinion. There are strong reasons to attribute the change to either of the two evangelists. One motive that is frequently cited is the symbolic significance of “mountain” in Matthew. That Matthew attaches a high symbolism to “mountain” is clear from the depiction of the Sermon on the Mount and the “Great Commandment” given on a mountain (28:16-20). Thus, because of the symbolic significance he attaches to mountains Matthew could have placed the concluding scene of the temptations as taking place on

a mountain and changed the original order in "Q". On the other hand, there are commentators who point out that for Luke Jerusalem is the city of Jesus' destiny and the temple is theologically a key location. Because of this the third evangelist could have changed the original order of the temptations to depict the concluding scene as taking place on the pinnacle of the temple implying a kind of "theological climax". The dominant scholarly opinion is in favour of considering Matthew's as the original "Q" order.

The thread that invariably holds the story together in both versions is the citation of the Book of Deuteronomy which Jesus uses to refute each of the devil's three challenges. The Old Testament citations also impart an impressive cohesion to the narrative as a unit. As a matter of fact, with the sole exception of the words "Begone, Satan!" in Mt 4:10, the only words attributed to Jesus are Scripture quotations. More precisely Jesus is borrowing from the exhortations which Moses used while trying to impress upon the people of Israel, fresh from the exhilarating and liberative Exodus experience, the need to remain vigilant against compromising their loyalty to Yahweh. Inasmuch as in all three temptations Jesus' loyalty as God's Son was being put to the test, these quotations from Deuteronomy and the events of the Exodus journey they recall are eminently appropriate.

The origin of the temptation story, too, is a much discussed topic. The event takes place between Jesus and the devil, with no onlookers. The baffling question is how the early Christian community could have come to know of it. The use of the OT quotations is an indication that the story may have been formulated from the reflections of the early followers of Jesus. Its location in the narrative sequence and the fantasy involved in some of the details (instant physical transfers, the flash-sighting of world's kingdoms, etc.) would suggest a theological or symbolic value for the story. Jesus repeatedly reminded his disciples of the hostility, opposition and rejection that constantly accompanied his ministry and how he was frequently tempted to use his power to neutralize their adverse effects. Jesus' warning to Peter in Lk 22:31-32, which speaks of a confrontation with the devil, can be seen as such an instance. There were occasions when the unbelieving Jews among his listeners demanded a sign from Jesus as a conclusive proof that he was indeed the Son of God (*cf.* Mt 16:1-4; Mk 8:11-13). The temptation story seeks to establish that such demands for signs are of diabolic origin and to put forward the Christian community's understanding of the messianic dimension of Jesus' life and mission. As Fitzmyer has convincingly argued: "To understand the various temptations or testing of Jesus in this way means that they did not take place as real, external happenings in which the devil in some visible form encountered Jesus, and that physical changes of place actually ensued between the acts (...). Yet it does ascribe the origin of these stories to Jesus himself in some form".⁸

2. The Content of the Three Temptations

The Gospel accounts seem to suggest that the three events forming the temptation story in Matthew and Luke are really samples of the many tests that Jesus faced during his sojourn in the wilderness. Mark's brief notice clearly mentions that Jesus was tempted by Satan during the period of forty days (Mk 1:13). Similarly Matthew and Luke in their elaborated versions establish the same fact, the former by implication (*cf.* Mt 4:1) and the latter through a clear statement (*cf.* Lk 4:2). The mention of forty days is evidently reminiscent of the forty years of Israel's journey through the desert (*cf.* Dt 8:2; Ex 16:35). Against this background it is obvious that the temptation story intends to contrast Jesus' unflinching loyalty to the Father with Israel's constantly fluctuating fidelity to Yahweh. Whereas Israel repeatedly failed when put to the test, Jesus resoundingly triumphs at every instance of being tested.

The narrative context in Luke perhaps brings out this comparison more emphatically. The baptism scene (Lk 3:21-22) unequivocally confirms Jesus' privileged position as God's beloved Son. The narrative unit which immediately follows (Lk 3:23-38) provides information on Jesus' genealogy. The author's intention is to show that the Son of God is also the son of humanity. He does this by retracing Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam. This is in clear contrast to Matthew, whose descending genealogy starts with Abraham, the Father of the Jewish race (*cf.* Mt 1:1-17). But more pertinently, Luke also connects Jesus with all the major figures of Israel's history in an attempt to establish his impeccable Jewish credentials.

It is this Jesus, Son of God, authentic representative of Israel, who is being tested for his fidelity to God (Lk 4:1-13). It is instructive to bear in mind that "In the OT and in subsequent Jewish tradition, fidelity to God was proven in the midst of testing — whether by the direct action of God himself, through difficult circumstances, or by direct activity of the devil".⁹ In addition to the contextual build-up, a number of other elements in the passage also serve the purpose of highlighting the subliminal contrast between Jesus and Israel.¹⁰

a. The First Scene

After long days spent in fasting Jesus is hungry. And in the wilderness there is no immediate access to food. It is against this background that the devil throws the first challenge at Jesus and asks him to turn one of the desert's readily available stones into a loaf of bread. Essentially the challenge is to use his power as Son of God for a strictly private purpose. Jesus responds to the devil with a quotation from Deut 8:3, "One does not live by bread alone". This short sentence is taken from a passage (Dt 8:1-6) recounting Israel's wandering in the desert. When Israelites longed after the fleshpots of Egypt and the bounteous supply of bread there (Ex 16; Num 11:7-8) — an act of rebellion against Moses and Aaron and ultimately against Yahweh Moses tried to convince them about the need to abide untiringly by the commandments of the Lord. On that occasion the Israelites were humbled by Yahweh — when, despite their lack of trust, they were fed with manna and quail.

In contrast to Israel, Jesus refuses to relieve his hunger in disregard of the design of his heavenly Father. Even in the face of the most fundamental human need Jesus chooses to remain steadfast to his path of obedience to God's will and not to use his power for anything other than the fulfilment of the salvific task entrusted to him. The ideal that is illumined through this first temptation is that one should not allow the desire for physical pleasures and material possessions to rise above a far more important hunger — the hunger to seek God's will at all times and in every circumstance.

The placing of this event as the opening one of the series is particularly revealing. At issue here is the most fundamental of human needs that refuses to go away even in the face of the steeliest determination that one can muster. When confronted with persistent hunger most convictions and even the most painstakingly cultivated sense of priorities are likely to evaporate into thin air leaving us humans miserably weak and pitifully prone to temptations. For that same reason a failure at this level has grave consequences. One who succumbs to a temptation at this fundamental level unwittingly opens the floodgate of temptations. It is this fact that renders Jesus' reply to the devil that human beings do not live by bread alone crucially significant. He does not deny the reality of physical hunger or the need for bread. What Jesus emphasizes is the even more significant need to adhere to God's Word. As Pope Benedict XVI has observed while discussing the temptation story, "When God is regarded as a secondary matter that can be set aside temporarily or permanently on account of more important things, it is precisely these supposedly more important things that come to nothing".¹¹

b. The Second Scene

In the second phase the scene changes from the mundane to the spectacular. Jesus is taken to an unspecified vantage point¹² where he is allowed to have a glimpse of the world's kingdoms. The devil promises to pass on the dominion of everything to him, but for a great price: Jesus' allegiance. "In effect, this is an invitation for Jesus to deny his identity as God's Son, substituting in its place an analogous relationship to the devil. Resident in the devil's own words, though, is recognition that these two possibilities are not really parallel after all, since the devil is not co-equal with God.... What Jesus is offered, then, is a shabby substitute for the divine sonship that is his by birth".¹³

Jesus' response in this case is a solemn affirmation taken from Dt 6:13: "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him". Dt 6:10-15 contains allusions to the days of Exodus when the people of Israel, while journeying to the Promised Land, were attracted by Canaanite cultic practices (*cf.* Dt 12:30-31; Ex 23:23-33). Moses, while addressing the people at the threshold of the Promised Land, draws attention to their past frivolous ways, cautions them against the tendency to make compromises in matters of faith and fidelity to Yahweh and issues a stern directive not to turn to alien gods. Jesus, borrowing

Moses' words, explicitly rejects the devil's offer and reiterates his commitment to the mission of establishing God's dominion over all.

There is a certain centrality to the principle that is established through this scene, justifying its place in the middle of the three-scene narrative. Jesus' answer to the devil contains an assertion of pivotal significance: God must always remain at the centre of our life. No human being is free from the temptation to push God to the periphery, since there are always a number of competitors waiting to occupy that central spot. Moreover, placing God at the centre of our scheme of things is fraught with many consequences which often make us look for less demanding alternatives. The response of Jesus to the second temptation leaves no room for half-way measures.

c. The Third Scene

The concluding act of the drama unfolds on the pinnacle of the temple. This time Jesus is challenged to undertake a spectacular feat and thereby win the unstinting approval of his contemporaries as a formidable heaven-sent leader. To convince Jesus the devil even quotes Scripture (Ps 91[90]:11-12). Insofar as Scripture promises total protection for him, argues the devil, Jesus could boldly jump from the temple roof.

Jesus silences the devil by offering yet another Scripture quotation, once again a Mosaic directive found in Dt 6:16: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test". Moses' words allude to the Exodus experience of Israel putting Yahweh to the test at Massah and Meribah (Ex 17:1-7). On that occasion, in response to the people's persistent demand to give them water to drink, God makes water flow from the rock struck by Moses.

It was a miracle to convince unbelieving Israel because their quarrel with Moses expressed doubt in the power of Yahweh. Reminding them of that incident Moses cautions them against putting God to the test. Jesus rejects the devil's challenge by refusing to count on a miraculous protection for himself and make a show of the divine power that accompanied his mission. The devil's invitation in effect was to challenge God's faithfulness and the reliability of God's Word. What Jesus affirms through his answer is his uncompromising loyalty to God and his total commitment to God's agenda.

We have here the proverbial case of the devil quoting Scripture. Jesus rebuffs him with another Scripture quotation. He does not deny the validity of the divine promises which the devil brings to his attention, but he questions its suitability in this context. God's promises in Ps 91 are addressed to those who through their fidelity reside in God's presence (*cf.* Ps 91[90]:1-2). The devil's demand was to challenge God rather than place unreserved trust in the divine promises. For Jesus that was an unacceptable proposition.

3. The Message in Context

The question that is relevant at this point of our discussion is how and to what extent the temptation story and the ideas it proposes illumine the contention that the Word of God is a source of nourishment for our lives as Christians. Insofar as Jesus faces these temptations as God's Son, we can say that Matthew and Luke do not record them for a hortatory purpose, i.e., to offer them as a model for Christians to follow when they themselves are tempted.¹⁴ Yet, like all other New Testament passages, this too has indicative and imperative elements. That is, after having made a statement it calls for an appropriate response from the reader or the listener. The defining characteristic of Jesus' identity in Luke-Acts is his central, active role as God's agent, the faithful witness of God. This special relationship and its implications are crucial for the way Jesus lives his life and carries out his mission.¹⁵ It is this faithfulness that is tested by the devil. It is against this background that Jesus' emphatic reply to the devil in the first temptation assumes special significance: "One does not live by bread alone". While not denying the need for bread to nourish one physically, Jesus insists that the attitude of being permanently attuned to God's message is a singularly important source of nourishment for him. It cannot be any different for Jesus' followers. The Word of God is the primary source of God's message. Having recourse to it on a regular basis results in nourishing ourselves progressively.

In all three scenes Jesus emerges as the winner, having been able to overcome the devil's challenge by quoting Scripture. "He is thus portrayed as the conqueror because he is armed with 'the sword of the Spirit ... the Word of God' (Eph 6:17), to put it in non-Lucan,

but nevertheless apt terminology.... Thus at the very outset of his ministry, Jesus is portrayed as the 'more powerful one' standing guard over his Father's plan and obedient to Scripture itself".¹⁶ Although at the end of the third scene the devil took leave of him, the struggle against the diabolic forces would continue so that Jesus could describe the whole of his ministry with the language of testing (*cf.* Lk 22:28). Throughout his ministry Jesus faced forces hostile to God's purpose as it was being worked out through his life and mission. But he could claim victory because he was constantly armed with this uniquely potent weapon, the sword of the Spirit. For Jesus' disciples at all times and places this weapon is readily available, and with its help they will be able to successfully fight the battle of life.

It was mentioned above in passing that Jesus' response to the devil in the second scene, "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him", has a crucially significant ring to it. The devil's challenge to Jesus was to accept someone other than God as his lord and master, but Jesus outrightly rejects the suggestion. Jesus' answer can be interpreted as a call to maintain a God-centred stance under all circumstances. "At the heart of all temptations, as we see here, is the act of pushing God aside because we perceive him as secondary, if not actually superfluous and annoying in comparison with all the apparently more urgent matters that fill our lives".¹⁷ It is by keeping God at the centre of our lives that we come to possess the right perspective on values that must guide us. Evidently it is a process that calls for a relentless struggle and it is our readiness to keep our ears open to the Word of God that empowers us for this challenging task.

III. 'WERE NOT OUR HEARTS BURNING...' — THE WORD AS THE MOTIVATING FORCE OF MISSION (LK 24:13-35)

1. The Emmaus Story, Luke's Unique Tradition

The episode involving the two disciples journeying to Emmaus on the first Easter Day and their thrilling encounter with the Risen Lord is a Lucan exclusive. There is an allusion to it in the Appendix of Mark's Gospel (16:12-13), but neither the name of the disciples' destination nor any other salient details are mentioned in it. There are commentators who see the notice in the Marcan Appendix as dependent on Luke's account.¹⁸ But others think that a cryptic datum present in pre-Lucan tradition was elaborated with dramatic details by the third evangelist.¹⁹ Luke undoubtedly appears at his story-telling best here. As in the case of the heartwarming stories of the Lucan Infancy Narrative and the stirring parables such as the Good Samaritan (Lk 10) and the Prodigal Son (Lk 15), Luke recounts the Emmaus story with compelling narrative force and lucidity, endowing it with that rare quality of tugging at the reader's heartstrings every time it is read.

Described as taking place on the same day as the Resurrection, some of the details in the story stretch its credibility somewhat. For instance, an Emmaus sixty *stadia* or about seven miles²⁰ away from Jerusalem is not easily located. The problem of fitting all the activities mentioned in Lk 24 within a 24-hour framework poses another hurdle. There is hardly anything known of Cleopas, named as one of the disciples, adding to the difficulty of the other remaining unnamed. There is the mention of an appearance of the Risen Lord to Simon Peter (*v.* 34) before the evening of that day, but the author does not tell us anything of the circumstances in which that crucial encounter takes place. However, an important appearance of the Risen Christ with a revelation of far-reaching consequences taking place during a journey²¹ is very understandable in Luke, whose Travel Narrative has a pivotal significance.²²

According to Carlo Maria Martini, the narrative is the fruit of deep theological reflection. Each word in it is profoundly meaningful, for behind the story stands the experience of a conversion and the acceptance of the kerygma on the part of the primitive Christian community.²³ In the early chapters of his Gospel Luke speaks insistently of such processes as 'pondering' (1:20,66; 2:19) and 'treasuring' (2:19,51) when describing the internal reactions of some of his characters. Such repeated use of these words may be construed as an indication that such processes were part of his own acceptance of the Good News and that he himself internalized to a remarkable degree many of the experiences he attributes to the characters of his book. Situated as it is at the very end of the

narration of what "Jesus did and taught" (cf. Acts 1:1), the theological denseness of this pericope cannot indeed be overstated.

The Eucharistic motif seemingly present in the story has provoked animated discussion among scholars. The scene describes Jesus as reclining with the two disciples, taking bread, blessing it, breaking it and giving it to them (24:30). The verbal contacts with the Last Supper (22:19) can hardly be denied. Added to these linguistic similarities is the fact that in Acts "breaking of the bread" becomes a classic Lucan way of referring to the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2:42,46; 20:7, 11; 27:35). Based on these indications there are those who think of an immediate connection between the Emmaus meal and the celebration of the Eucharist. Others point out that closer verbal contacts can be established between what we see in this story and details in the miraculous feeding of the five thousand described in Lk 9:10-17.²⁴ Fitzmyer points out that there are two separate questions to be considered here. The first is: Did Christ celebrate the Eucharist before the Emmaus disciples? He observes that the question is anachronistic given the fact that we are speaking about Stage I of the gospel tradition here. It is to be noted that the two disciples were not among the "apostles" with whom Jesus celebrated the Last Supper (cf. Lk 22:14) and so they could not immediately draw a similarity between what occurred then and at the Emmaus meal. Besides, the recognition of Christ which the story speaks of can be traced back to a scene such as that recounted in 9:10-17 (the feeding of the multitude). The second question is whether in Stage III of the gospel tradition Luke had in mind to superimpose a Eucharistic connotation on what happened at Emmaus. The answer is affirmative in the light of the Acts usage.²⁵

2. A Transformative Journey

With the tumultuous events of Good Friday behind them, totally disillusioned, sensing the failure of their hopes and bewildered by what has happened, the two disciples set out on a journey to Emmaus. The purpose of their journey is not mentioned. Two phrases, *duo ex autōn* (= two of them) and *en autē (i) tē (i) hēmera(i)* (= on that same day), serve the purpose of linking this episode with what has just been narrated. The day is "the first day of the week" mentioned in 24:1 and the "two of them" are from "the Eleven and all the rest" to whom the women had announced the baffling experience of the empty tomb (Lk 24:9). The travel companions are described as "two of them" precisely to identify them as belonging to the inner core of the early community because their experience is truly the experience of the entire community. This highly transformative experience is depicted as taking place in the course of a journey, which is a particularly remarkable detail in the Lucan context. The two are also so identified ("two of them") to highlight their unbelief regarding Jesus' resurrection. They were part of the group which dismissed the women's experience at the empty tomb as an idle tale unworthy of credence.

While walking they were talking excitedly with each other about all that had taken place in Jerusalem in the past days. The reference is obviously to the passion and death of Jesus and to the report of the women about finding Jesus' tomb and an angelic vision. Even in their despondency and hopelessness, the disciples could not keep their minds off the terrible happenings that had shattered their dreams. It is at this moment that Jesus joins them, as if he were another pilgrim returning from the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem. In fact, the two did not think of him as anything more than that. The evangelist notes that "their eyes were kept from recognizing him". This may be a literary device which Luke uses to build up suspense. Jesus asks the first question about the topic of their conversation. The author notes that they stood still looking sad. The prospect of having to narrate to a third person the sequence of events that had robbed them of their peace of mind appears forbidding to them.

Yet one of the two makes bold to speak. He has a name, Cleopas, while his companion remains unnamed throughout. Cleopas occurs only here in the NT. That and the reason why the other is left anonymous have fuelled much speculation. Attempts to identify Cleopas' companion are known from the time of the Church Father Origen (c. 185-c. 254). The possibilities include Peter, Cleopas' wife, and a person with the name Emmaus.²⁶ One could think of this as a literary device as well. It is possible that Luke left the second traveller unnamed to let the reader insert himself/herself into the events that

are narrated as a way of actively participating in the drama so that he or she could have the same experience of an encounter with the Risen Christ.

In reply to Jesus' probing questions the two give him the gist of the events of the recent past, including their assessment of the great dream gone sour. Martini notes that Luke composes these lines with supreme humour. We have here two of Jesus' well-formed disciples repeating all the essential details about his person and mission, all the key elements of the Creed (24:19-24), but with such sadness and resignation that their profession of faith comes out as a recital of terrible, disgraceful happenings! Their recital even includes details about the Resurrection of Jesus. All the main facts of the kerygma are here — the three days, the women at the tomb, the angels who announce that he is alive. But the problem is that they announce it as a terrible tragedy. It can be called "the half-kerygma". All the words are there, but something crucial is missing, a convinced, joyful heart. In its place is a heart filled with sadness, disillusionment and depression — which makes the announcer bitter and turns off his listeners.²⁷

It is at this stage that Jesus decides to confront them squarely. Using strong words Jesus calls attention to his companions' lack of understanding. Then, in a second moment, he gives them the key to interpret Scripture, to come to a full understanding of all that had been written about him. In essence it is the biblical announcement of the history of salvation: "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" It is not that any new revelation is made at this hour. The facts all remain the same. What they gained additionally was the right interpretive key to comprehend their salvific significance. This is really the turning point of the story. It is in fact referring to these moments that the two disciples would at a later moment exclaim with unconcealed joy: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?" (v. 32).

The story reaches its climax when Jesus, accepting the invitation of his embattled travel companions, goes in to stay with them and at supper reveals his true identity to them. This happens at the moment of "breaking the bread". The mysterious veil in front of their eyes is removed and the Lord becomes really present to them. What is striking is that the disciples maintain that they recognize Jesus not by just seeing him but "in the breaking of the bread" (v. 35). But their conscious togetherness is over in a flash as Jesus vanishes from their sight. The transformative journey is now concluded. But the end of the journey coincides with a momentous discovery: that their mission was just beginning! They begin their return journey to Jerusalem to share with the Eleven and their companions the details of their electrifying encounter with the Risen Lord (vv. 33-35).

3. Enlightened by the Word — to the Mission of Witnessing

The miraculous turnaround for the Emmaus disciples²⁸ as a result of the journey and all that takes place during and at the end of it can be summarized as follows:

- their eyes are opened to recognize the Lord;
- their hearts are set on fire;
- they set out with enthusiasm to share their God-experience with others.

The crucial element in this transformation is Jesus' interpretation of the Scriptures. Jesus proclaims the plan of salvation in their hearing, announces the kerygma to them, presenting himself before them as its quintessential personification. This warms their hearts from within and transforms them into convinced and convincing witnesses of Jesus' Resurrection, indeed of his whole person and message. Jesus appears here as a true *didaskalos*, master, putting into effective use all his skills as an exegete of Sacred Scripture and as a catechist, and clarifying many vital questions for the disciples — for they were much in need of such a clarification.²⁹

The broader lesson that the Emmaus story conveys to us is that by listening attentively to God's Word, by imbibing its message in a consistent manner, we are rendered capable of encountering the Lord in the day-to-day vicissitudes of our life. Such an ongoing discovery of the Lord will keep our hearts permanently on fire, which in turn will transform us ever more into enthusiastic bearers of God's saving message. The activity of such messengers of the Gospel is represented in Lucan terms as 'witnessing'. In a crucial context in the Acts of the Apostles, where Jesus is despatching his disciples into their field of activity, charging

them with a new responsibility, he says: "...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In the concluding part of the Gospel, as Luke sets the stage for Jesus' final leave-taking from his closest followers, he depicts the Lord as reminding them that they were witnesses to all the salvifically significant events of his ministry (Lk 24:48). The implication is that as eyewitnesses to his saving ministry they were to mediate its life-giving message to others. They were to carry out their mission as witnesses to their master. In narrative after narrative, Acts bears consistent testimony to the disciples' redoubtable conviction regarding this vital aspect of their identity (*cf.* 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31; 22:15; 26:16).

IV. LIFE NOURISHED — MISSION INSPIRED

The study of the two biblical passages set out in the preceding pages was aimed at establishing the point that the Word of God is as much a source of nourishment for our life as it is a medium of inspiration for our mission. Both passages were drawn from the Gospel of Luke, located one near the beginning and the other at its conclusion. This choice has a certain symbolic significance.

The first passage of the temptation story refers to an episode that takes place at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It demonstrates that while bread nurtures one's body, the spirit is nurtured by the Word of God. A wholesome life integrates both the physical and the spiritual dimensions. Jesus at the very beginning of his ministry makes a clear statement regarding the priorities of his life: "One does not live by bread alone". The Word of God has obvious primacy in his life. This makes the options clear for those who set out after Jesus, those who follow in his footsteps. They must accept God's Word as an irreplaceable means of sustenance. This I see as the symbolic significance of this passage's location in the narrative complex. The second passage is closely linked to the missioning of Jesus' first disciples. After having walked with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry to the moment of his being taken away from their midst, the disciples are now ready to be commissioned as his witnesses. Before that takes place, however, through an intense encounter with two representatives of their group, he interprets the meaning of the Scriptures for them. What results from this encounter is that those two become instantly convinced about their mission of witnessing to Jesus' Resurrection and to his saving Gospel. Implicit in the episode is a lesson which is valid for all disciples of Jesus in every generation: opening oneself to the power of the Word of God propels one to mission.

The Eucharistic motif that the evangelist almost certainly brings to bear on the concluding part of the Emmaus story imparts a community-dimension to the mission of witnessing. 'Breaking the bread' is a community engagement and the bread that is shared nourishes not only the individuals, but insofar as it helps build communion, it is a means of nourishment for the community as well. Similarly the word that is broken and shared in a community leads to individual and corporate nourishment. The *koinonia* that results from the partaking of this two-fold table of the Eucharistic Bread and of the Scriptural word has a formidable witnessing potential. From the earliest times Christian mission has never been an individual enterprise. Starting with Jesus' own practice of sending out his disciples on mission in pairs (*cf.* Mk 6:6b-13; Lk 10:1-16), one can cite numerous examples from the NT writings where evangelizing work is shown as being undertaken by pairs or groups. It is an unmistakable pointer to the effectiveness of community-witnessing over against individual efforts at proclamation. God's word and the Eucharistic assembly, thus, form a truly potent combination that ceaselessly vitalizes the Church and reinvigorates her missionary outreach.

Notes

¹"Lineamenta" is a draft of a document intended to present in brief the subject in question. It attempts to re-read the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* from a pastoral vantage point.

² *Cf.* *Dei Verbum*, no. 21.

³ *Lineamenta*, no. 1.

⁴ No. 25. This is a restatement of the idea expressed by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter

Novo Millennio Ineunte, n. 40.

⁵ N. 5.

⁶ For what follows, cf. *Lineamenta*, n. 9.

⁷ Cf. Joseph A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX: Introduction, Translation and Notes*. (Anchor Bible 28), Doubleday: New York 1981, 507.

⁸ Luke I-IX, 510.

⁹ Joel B. GREEN. *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans, 1997, 191.

¹⁰ For details, see *ibidem* pp. 192-3.

¹¹ *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*. New York, etc.: Doubleday, 2007, p. 33.

¹² Luke's version does not mention a physical transfer to a "very high mountain" found in Matthew. In fact, Luke speaks of a vision-like tour of the world, rather than a physical change of place. See further on this Heinz Kruse, "Das Reich Satans", in *Biblica* 58 (1977), 45-6. Kruse contends that Luke is actually demythologizing the Q account, as there is no high mountain anywhere on earth from where one can see "all the kingdoms of the world". For more scholarly views on the matter cf. Fitzmyer, Luke 1-IX, 515.

¹³ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 194-5.

¹⁴ Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 512. But according to A. FEUILLET, "Le récit Lucanien de la tentation", *Biblica* 40 (1959), 613-31, Jesus' Baptism and temptation which in the beginning were considered as personal messianic events, gradually came to be seen as containing exemplary significance for Christians. Traces of this transformation can be seen in the accounts of both Matthew and Luke (see especially 630-1).

¹⁵ Cf. Green, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 191.

¹⁶ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 512-3.

¹⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 28.

¹⁸ Cf. Howard I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Erdmans, 1989, 889.

¹⁹ See Joseph A. Fitzmyer. *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Anchor Bible 28A).

²⁰ There is a critical problem in the text: 24:13. Although "60 stadia" is accepted as the more reliable reading, a good number of manuscripts have "160 stadia" (roughly 18.4 miles). Similarly an important manuscript has the name "Oulammas" in place of Emmaus.

²¹ Particularly notable is the double use of the expression *en te hodo(i)* (= on the road) in v. 32 and v. 35, *poreuomenoi* (= making their way) in v. 13 and *synporeueto autois* (= walk with them) in v. 15.

²² Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1997, 261. Also Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1557-8.

²³ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1997, 261. Also Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1557-8. Cf. *L'Evangelizzatore in San Luca*, 11th edition. Milan: Ancora Editrice, 2000, 33.

²⁴ Cf. Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 849.

²⁵ Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1997, 261. Also Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1557-8. *Luke X-XXIV*, 1559-60.

²⁶ *Idem* at p. 1563.

²⁷ Cf. *L'Evangelizzatore in San Luca*, 39.

²⁸ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 850: "The difference between the beginning and the end is remarkable. Earlier, they were puzzling over recent events, but they are now able to articulate the reality of the divine presence among them, transforming them, as they had the Scriptures interpreted to them during the journey".

²⁹ Martini, *L'Evangelizzatore in San Luca*, 43.

Pio Estepa, SVD

Summary of the Responses to the SEDOS Questionnaire of October 2009

**MANY THANKS TO THE CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS THAT
GENEROUSLY RESPONDED TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE!**

**1. WHAT CURRENT GLOBAL MEGATRENDS APPEAR TO YOU
AS SIGNIFICANTLY TRANSFORMING OUR MISSION SITUATIONS OF TODAY?**

The summary that follows tries to interpret how the megatrends highlighted by the respondents are interrelated within a coherent missiological 'narrative'. The reader – who may prefer only an 'objective' listing of them – can browse this section for the capitalized words.

GLOBAL MEGATREND 1 The nations fiercely capitalistic project to attain 'economic progress' has not only worsened the wide GULF BETWEEN RICH AND POOR, but even between 'developing' and 'developed' countries.

Firstly, at a global scale, it is spawning new forms of CRIME, VIOLENCE and ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (e.g., human trafficking especially of women and children).

Secondly, today the worst effect of such unbridled economic exploitation of Nature is ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION – the cause of CLIMATE CHANGE threatening our planet with ecological extinction.

Ecclesial Impact — Mission today as *diakonia* has to help promote ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE that works to re-create a healthy habitat for the present as well as future generations of humankind.

GLOBAL MEGATREND 2 MIGRATIONS within and among countries are presently impacting on national populations in two major ways.

Firstly, the population of almost all developing countries is shifting from the rural to the urban zone at differing rates ... yet faster than their respective governments are able to cope with the social problems consequent to URBANIZATION.

Secondly, people of differing creeds, classes and cultures come to live side by side in urban settings sooner than they may be ready and willing to resolve conflicts arising from such MULTICULTURALITY.

Ecclesial Impact — Mission today as *koinonia* has to help promote INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE and INTERRELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP. In the war-torn countries of today, the healing ministry of SOCIAL RECONCILIATION serves as the best mediating phase.

GLOBAL MEGATREND 3 Today, anywhere and anytime, one can access electronic and audiovisual 'cyberspace' through the advanced MEANS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION that are ubiquitous and affordable.

Firstly, this cyberspace is serving as a 'global megamall' for divergent and even conflicting worldviews and value systems – secular and religious alike. Though SECULARIZATION is presumed to be ongoing, RELIGIOUS REVIVAL – ranging from militant fundamentalism to inclusive syncretism (e.g., New Age) – emerges as a surprising global countertrend. Thus, religion is coming back to the public (political) sphere as a potent cultural force.

Secondly, cyberspace is also serving as a 'global school' where POSTMODERNITY challenges, and competes with, Western secular modernity as a cosmopolitan 'spirit of the age' (*Zeitgeist*). The latter ethos exalts progress, knowledge, and nation. To the contrary, postmodernity – as generally manifest through the mindset and lifestyle of urban youth worldwide – values the *present* ('the future is now') more highly, *pleasure* ('whatever turns you on'), and one's free and unique *person* ('different folks, different strokes').

Ecclesial Impact — Mission today as *keryma* has to assume the platform and process not only of ECUMENISM and INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE – but also of INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE with postmodern youth ... who feel alienated from institutionalized religions.

GLOBAL MEGATREND 4 Concurrent with the global SOUTHERN SHIFT of the Catholic population, (since the year 2000, 65% of Catholics live in the South of the globe), is the NORTHERN SPREAD of Islam in Europe and North America. The latter trend owes its sociocultural force much more to massive migration and natural demographic growth ... than to militant proselytism.

Ecclesial Impact — As we lose many Catholic youth to present-day CONSUMERISM, traditional Islam – based on familial upbringing – may be revealing what Catholics have overlooked: that *mission begins at home and in the family* as the locus for handing down the faith.

GLOBAL MEGATREND 5 WOMEN'S LIBERATION today may be seen as resulting from the concurrent impact of urbanization and mediatization. On the one hand, urban multiculturalism is setting women free from the traditional (rural) role that has confined them to childbearing and homemaking. On the other hand, the POST-INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY has been briskly tilting the national labour force toward the tertiary sector (goods and services). The consequent increase in the demand for information – and people-processing jobs has been luring women to study and compete for such work ... for which they seem more apt than men. To the degree that women gain financial autonomy, they feel free to reshape their social role and personal lifestyle as they please.

Ecclesial Impact — The priestly ordination of women remains a controversial issue. Yet mission today as *koinonia* urgently calls for finding new 'corresponsible' ways of sharing ecclesial leadership with women – lay and religious alike – in the Catholic Church.

HOW CAN SEDOS BE OF (BETTER) HELP IN THE SEARCH FOR ENVISIONING ANEW THE MISSION ENTERPRISE OF THE CHURCH IN OUR CENTURY?

The respondents congratulate and thank the SEDOS leadership team:

§ for having offered diverse channels for intercongregational dialogue and ongoing formation around current global issues of vital mission relevance ... all at most affordable prices;

§ for empowering religious women in intercongregational leadership ... on an equal footing with men religious;

§ for giving voice to missionary experiences, reflections and concerns in Rome as the ecclesial capital ... that tend to be enclosed in a Europe-centred understanding of Church and Mission.

For these reasons it is unanimously believed that the vision for which SEDOS was originally founded remains ever valid and vital.

The proposals offered for broadening the vision and aims of SEDOS further are:

§ to break away from a Western – or European – centred way of viewing and framing global and ecclesial issues and to reflect the plural mindsets of the Southern Church more;

§ to keep on challenging religious congregations – especially the male ones – to break away from being institutional ‘islands’ ... and to sustain the intercongregational search for new prophetic ways/forms of missionary presence and service, especially among the poor and marginalized;

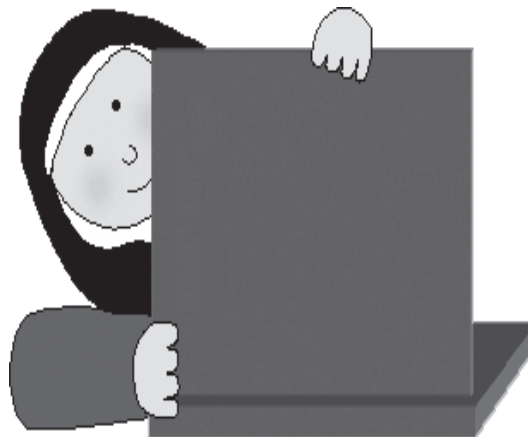
§ to explore new ways of intercongregational collaboration, as for examples:

{1} networking in and through cyberspace;

{2} SEDOS mission animation team(s) roving at the ecclesial grassroots;

§ to include and ‘empower’ the laity, men and women, as our dialogue – and mission-partners;

§ to reflect on whether SEDOS will be more effective by narrowing down the dialogue on mission *mainly* at the level of congregational leadership, or by broadening it so as to include *even* missionaries at the ecclesial grassroots.



Events

NEXT SEDOS SEMINAR 2010

18–22 May

***"The Prophetic Challenge
of the African Churches"***

- ARICCIA -

"CASA DIVIN MAESTRO" -

Daily Sub-themes: (With emphasis on Formation)

18, Tuesday evening:

Overall situation of Africa: Political, Social, Economical, Religious

19, Wednesday:

Kerigma: Evangelizing for Non-Violence

20, Thursday:

Koinonia: Building Communities in Justice and Peace

21, Friday:

Diakonia: Being Instruments of Reconciliation

22, Saturday:

Guidelines for Formation

... more details will follow