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# Editorial

This year the Church is joyfully celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-2012), a truly important event in the life of the Church, Fr. James KROEGER writes. The literature on the Council is extensive and voluminous; to choose articles from the mountain of material on the Council is a difficult and a very taxing enterprise.

In this issue we strive to tap resources which are the result of the thorough research of Theologians and Missiologists seeking to fathom the meaning of Mission as well as the many concepts they coined as they continued to draw inspiration from the Documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Theologian Paulo Suess offers a fascinating reflection on the concept of *missio Dei*: "*Missio Dei* always leads us by the way of Golgotha, the way of suffering. But *missio Dei*, as the sending of the Spirit, also means breaking with the *scenario* of brutal bondage and fatal subjection. *Missio Dei* is not just the journey to killing fields. It is the initiation rite that turns greater love into greater justice. It means being caught up in the loving moment of God, who does not simply record the injured and the dead, as a camera might, but breathes God's Spirit into his people so that they may live (Ezek 37:14).

The short article by Alberto da Silva Moreira delves into the impact of the Second Vatican Council. It was a Pentecost for the Church but its reception met with some resistance. Both articles from Latin America seek to pave the way and prepare our Readers for the SEDOS Residential Seminar of 2012.

The study by Dr. John Sankarathil, OSFS, on the means to build prophetic religious communities in India, mentioned in the Editorial of November/ December, was to have been published in that issue. We are sorry for causing any confusion.

In his issue our Readers will also find the Annual Report of the Executive Director and a poem on "Snow, my Sister" in French, the original is in Portuguese by Bro. Teofilo MINGA, FSM.

We are pleased to publish the "Compendium of Resources" compiled by Fr. James KROEGER, MM: "This "Compendium of Resources", resulting from a decade of research is designed as a kind of "road map" to assist those interested to avail themselves of the treasures of Vatican II, the most significant religious event of the twentieth century. This "Compendium of Resources", would be especially useful to anyone who is particularly interested in understanding the Council better. Fr. James KROEGER was able to complete and update this item, since he has been lecturing on the Council for the past ten years.



Sister Nenzili MBOMA, FMM  
Executive Director

Graphics are from the Internet  
Cover: Lighthouse symbolizes the Second Vatican Council.

Paulo Suess\*

## *MISSIO DEI* AND THE PROJECT OF JESUS: THE POOR AND THE "OTHER" AS THE MEDIATORS OF THE KINGDOM AND PROTAGONISTS OF THE CHURCHES\* \*



**Paulo Suess** is a Catholic theologian from Germany who has lived and worked in Brazil since 1966. He is a prominent exponent of Liberation Theology and, his scientific work has greatly influenced the theology of inculturation. Besides his work as a theologian in the German-speaking world Paulo Suess is also known as a poet. \* Paulo Suess is theological advisor to the Brazilian Missionaries Council for Indigenous People, and President of the International Association for Mission Studies. In 1987, he founded the first post-graduate course for the study of missiology in Brazil.

Latin America's 500 years of Church History, while intertwining with that of colonial history, has never fitted into the thirty or forty-thousand-year-old human history of the continent. In addition, we have often shown a healthy disrespect for anything smacking of formulae, claiming: "By their fruit you shall know them" (Mt 7:20) and not by their liturgies or theologies. After all, it is possible to do the right thing even with the probably wrong theology of the Samaritan, while theological orthodoxy has often concealed anthropological emergencies behind temple walls.

Again, for Latin American Theology, practice has played a more important role than that of seeking to dig ever deeper with discourses aimed at justifying or reconstructing but whose spades only get bent on the stony ground of reality. Or is the "crooked spade" of the *missio Dei* still good enough at least to fill in the odd theological ditch that sometimes seems to divide us so that we can move backwards and forwards, to our mutual benefit? Perhaps *missio Dei* can be understood as an initiation rite that is always preceded by a testing time of desecration or a descent into the underworld. Perhaps *missio Dei*, despite the most varied conceptual Trinitarian analogies of which it is the end product, does work as a metaphor after all. Perhaps it can mean something to people who are wandering around rootless, unwanted and blind, and can speak to them of the love of God.<sup>3</sup>

### II. Concepts

How can the *topos* of *missio Dei* be made into Good News for the poor, for the "other"? The concept of *missio Dei* presupposes a long history of reflection on the mystery of the Trinity. Even today, this still involves us in a complex tangle of linguistic terms about the inner life (*processiones*) and external workings (*missiones*) of the Triune God. To what extent can these *missiones*, where we are dealing with analogies to start with, serve as analogies for what today we call mission or the missionary nature of the Church? Has *missio Dei* anything to do with the grounds and fruits of our hope, of which we can give an account (1 Pt 3:15)?

For Christians, the *missio Dei* model is initially about the presence and, at the same time, the transcendence (German: *Unverfügbarkeit*) of God. No creature has ever seen God (Jn 5:37; 6:46). Jesus' mission is precisely due to his own seeing, his authoritative testimony (Jn 3:11). The tension between God's transcendence, on the one hand, and God's presence in the world, on the other, draws our attention to the question of the mediating Divine presence. *Missio Dei* is the theological concept that allows us to speak of both — the presence and transcendence of God.

The cultural references made to explain *missio Dei* come from afar, it is true, but I rather suspect that mission without the link to *missio Dei* would, in the hands of an insipid pragmatism, be

reduced to a short-term mission of social-ethical liberation. Alternatively, a mission fixed on the truth of its salvation message would end in fundamentalism.

Christians seek the grounds for mission, which they understand as a mission of hope and love in faith, in God, who is unfathomable. This loving God cannot remain alone and withdrawn but has to give him/herself in relationship. This unfathomable and transcendent God has left visible tracks not just in Creation but, for Christians, above all in the revelation and Incarnation of the *logos*. We retrace God's steps when we seek the grounds of mission and its contextual and universal legitimization. We go back over the path of verbal and documented revelation, over the revelation in non-verbal signs (creation) until we reach its invisible grounds. Starting from the specifically Christian path of salvation, as offered to humankind through the Incarnation of the *Logos* in Jesus Christ, we strive to proclaim God's benevolence to all human beings. Local salvation history forms the matrix of universal redemption. This universality must just be accepted because, otherwise, salvation would become a matter for the privileged and the happy few.

*Missio Dei* indicates the universal mission and presence of God without any reservations. It indicates a particular form of the presence of the One and Triune God in the form of the *pneuma* and the incarnate *logos*. The invisible foundation of *missio Dei* is described in theology by "immanent trinity". "Immanent trinity" combines what theology calls the internal processions (*processiones*) of the *pneuma* on the basis of the "spiration" of the Father and the Son, and of the *logos* through "procreation" by the Father. These processions of *logos* and *pneuma* — understood in theological reflection as required by the love presupposed in God — are then described more exactly as "communication" and "relationship" (*relatio*). The invisible ground of the "immanent Trinity" coincides with the visible consequences of the "salvation-history (economic) trinity" (Incarnation, Cross/Resurrection and sending of the Spirit) that we call *missio Dei*. That explains why classical theology considered *missio Dei* to be the crux of the most important mysteries of faith and an analogous continuation of the processions that had begun "before the foundation of the world" (Jn 17:24).

### III. God's presence

*Missio Dei* first means the presence of God on the basis of the sending of the *logos* and the *pneuma*. The sending of the *Logos* into the real human nature of Jesus of Nazareth is continued in the sending of the Holy Spirit into the world and the Church. The sending of the Holy Spirit also happens in respect to individual persons. The indwelling of the Triune God in pardoned human beings is one of the goals of *missio Dei* (Jn 14:23) that must, however, not be understood as a particularization of God's presence and salvific action. "Sending" and "triune dwelling" always mean the whole presence of God. God the Father does not remain somehow "behind" the sent *pneuma* and the incarnate *logos*, thereby suffering loss of identity, as the metaphor of *missio* might suggest, presupposing, as it does, a recipient and messenger different from the sender. God is revealed through the Son as the sender of the *logos* and of the *pneuma* and at the same time as being *logos* and *pneuma*. In our everyday understanding, mission and sending are always linked to a change of place. With *missio Dei* this is not the case. The arrival of *logos* and *pneuma* in our very small world, cosmologically speaking, does not make God or "parts of God" (*logos* and *pneuma*) absent "elsewhere", but can only be understood as a special manifestation of the one and all-present God under historical and anthropological conditions.

It is always the One, Trinitarian God who comes to us in different forms of giving and divine life as *pneuma* and *logos*, as Holy Spirit and Son, and who is God from everlasting to everlasting, while remaining the God of infinite and mysterious distance. God is not only the sender. In the Son and in the *pneuma*, God is at the same time the envoy. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). The two of them have a kerygmatic identity: "The Father who sent me has instructed me in what to say and how to speak" (Jn 12:49).

Since the One God is always also the Triune God, God's mission - *missio Dei* - can always only be understood by analogy. God does not send parts or envoys of the Trinity. God's mission is basically only a sign of God's *whole presence* in our midst. In other words, God does not come to

godless human beings through mission, and does not need to be brought to regions far from God. Mission is therefore about spreading faith and not about spreading God. Mission only proclaims the specific manner of God who has always been present. If we also consider that the Church is "by its very nature missionary" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 2), and we understand this nature such that in the Church there is no non-missionary proclamation or action, either *ad intra* or *ad extra*, the distinction between Church history and mission history can no longer be upheld. Deepening faith in traditionally "Christian countries" is also a form of spreading faith. Church history is always mission history, and mission history is Church history. So there are no "mission countries" as against countries which are not, and this has not been the case just since secularization started a general corrosion of Christian substance.

Church mission is mission through the founding of communities. Churches and communities that have understood what Christianity is about are missionary, and the sending out of their members is only a special form of their missionary character. The same applies to life in religious orders. Following Jesus, living "fraternal life in community for the sake of the mission", and observing Gospel poverty are signs of the missionary spirit of every order.<sup>4</sup> *Missio Dei* in the history of the world, of the churches and of mission can only be proclaimed in discipleship. It is the continuation of the history of revelation of the Triune God, whose self-emptying in words and signs always happens inside and outside the churches as institutions: "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18).

Everyday Church practice does not always leave room for *missio Dei*. Even in the Church we have to draw attention to the mysterious presence of God. We have to call a halt to the everyday routine of the institution, with all its longing for magic solutions and general business. Believers also have to grapple constantly with unbelief (Mk 9:24).<sup>5</sup> The self-expression of God always takes place in the form of an ambiguous self-emptying.<sup>6</sup> Evangelization and missionary proclamation are therefore always addressed both to our own Church and to those outside it. The essentially missionary Church always evangelizes itself at the same time (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n.15). Every teacher of Scripture is also a student of the Kingdom of God (Mt 13:52). And the call to repentance that is part of the proclamation of the nearness of the Kingdom of God always presupposes the repentance of the preacher and of the Church.

#### IV. God's plan

If *missio Dei* is a manifestation of God's radiating love, no grounds for *missio Dei* are needed, apart from that very groundless and essential divine love.<sup>7</sup> In missionary practice and reflection this radiant love of *missio Dei* has often been presented too tentatively. It has often been overshadowed by pessimistic talk of redemption as a "planned repair job" to God's Creation, caused by the Fall. However, to see God's so-called "plan" in a way that is rooted in *missio Dei* will lead to a shift in emphasis. This "plan" then takes on a different form: the "radiant love of God" is reconfigured through the sending of the *logos*, the saving Son of God, and the *pneuma*, the giver and bearer of that dynamic force we call grace. The Spirit breaks through the incarnate structures of evil that represent the matrix of a counter-plan. The Son who becomes human in Jesus of Nazareth opens up new prospects for God's plan. In the unity and continuity of the *pneuma*, the Incarnation of the *logos* brings a decision between "anti-project" and "project".

Throughout history mission has endeavoured to come closer to this "divine plan". Vatican II speaks of it in connection with the missionary nature of the Church, "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" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 2). The Church unfolds the *missio Dei* in its missionary activity, as "a manifestation or epiphany of God's will, and the fulfillment of that will in the world and in world history" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 9).

In terms of the documents, all this would seem conclusive, were it not for the fact that the underlying concepts have lost their original freshness through modernity's break with Tradition, and, secondly, that pre-modern colonial conditions still prevail. That has led to two fronts arising between the *élite*, who can - postmodern-style - afford to live without a plan, and the great majority

of Latin American people, who interpret "God's plan" as affirming that injustice is "God's will". They think that "God's plan" unfolds in two stages, the first stage of colonization and "earthly suffering" being overcome in a second stage, viz. that of "heavenly glory". The Jesuit Provincial, Antonio Vieira, was thus able to call the slavery of Africans in Brazil "a great miracle of heavenly providence and mercy". Visiting a sugar-mill in Bahia in 1633 he declaimed to the slaves:

"Oh, if only the Blacks taken from their Ethiopian deserts and brought to Brazil would realize how much they owe to God and their Most Holy Mother through that which could seem to be banning, captivity and unhappiness but is in reality a miracle, a great miracle! Tell me, your parents who were born, live and will die in heathen darkness, without the light of faith or knowledge of God where will they go when they die? They will all... go to hell and they are burning there right now and will burn there for ever and ever".<sup>8</sup>

The placebo preaching of yesterday has not ceased to this day. In Latin America people learned early to accept consolation from the hand of Divine Providence, where they could have tried to work to bring about change. That may have been a survival strategy. The suffering Saviour was a refuge for many. However, the powers-that-be made this Christianity into an ideology of oppression. Good Friday Christianity lacks the dimension of "resurrection justice" which annuls the death sentence imposed by the victors.

## V. The Project of Jesus

The sobering experiences of the modern age caused Liberation Theology and its accompanying pastoral practice to revise fundamentalist views and ideological justifications; former colonialist Christianity has achieved greater self-awareness. The dynamics of *missio Dei* were too rapidly forced into an apparently one-size-fits-all ontological "eternal divine plan", where the dream of God's will was turned into a regular timetable. But this "divine plan" can also be interpreted as "God's project", continued in the project of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is the task of mission, based on the premise of faith in Jesus Christ and in the *kairos* of different historical and cultural contexts, to proclaim liberating redemption over and over again. Against the backdrop of the burning issues of every age, mission must show redemption to be an option, both historically and collectively and in the personal lives of individuals.



The Gospel of Luke confronts us at the beginning of Jesus' public life with the important decision between the project of the world, here called the "anti-project", and God's project, that represents the central message of Jesus' teaching. Using the expression "anti-project" seems to me to cover many elements of what we conventionally term "original sin" in theology, even though there are fundamental differences. If we address Jesus' humanity seriously, then the reality of the temptation of the incarnate *logos* cannot be devalued as mere play-acting for pedagogical purposes.

The story of Jesus' own temptation depicts the possibility of a comprehensive, i.e. social, political and religious, anti-project on the Kingdom of God (Lk 4:1-13). This anti-project follows Jesus throughout, not just in the voices of his adversaries but also in the questions his disciples asked about the "restoration of the Kingdom of Israel". Their dreams are directed to the past. They think of the Kingdom of David as an alternative to the Roman Empire. They even confront the Risen Christ with this possibility when they ask, "Lord, is this the time that you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

The anti-project is the project of the princes of this world. It makes one blind. In their case "the god of this world has blinded the minds of these unbelievers", says Paul (2 Cor 4:4). The anti-project is in the realm of continuity, populist partial agreements and small-scale bartering that leaves the

world as it is. It is in the order of offering a small crumb of comfort so as to preserve one's own privileges, in the sphere of the consumer society, and that of power, prestige and idolatry. For Jesus the stakes were high and this was a real alternative. Why not meet the expectations of the ordinary people? Why not take the course of history into one's own hands and, with one powerful word, improve the world?

The Church inherited this temptation and has been haunted by it through history. It has found many reasons not to break with the rulers, and has been continually battered by power claims, privileges and prestige. When Latin American Christians, who were allied with the colonial powers and invoked Divine Providence, committed themselves to the fight of good against evil but also accepted privileges from the powerful and held the prestige of the devil on the pinnacle of gilded temple façades for the glory of God, they were blind to the evil in their own ranks and denied the crucified Christ the justice of the resurrection.

Jesus denounced the culture of privilege of his age because every privilege concealed a voice that had been silenced. The privileges distributed by the powerful in an economy of exploitation demand compliance and silence in return. In politically and socio-economically privileged situations there is a patent decline in spiritual zeal and the vocation to be apostles. The power that bestows favours on missionary work, and endows it with money, honours and privileges, is its corrupter. The best way to silence the prophetic voice of churches is not by persecution but by furnishing them with material and symbolic privileges.

The trappings of patronage, for example, damaged evangelization and also the Church. When the missionaries began to cast off ideological ballast they became a threat to the colonial system. The repeated eviction of the Jesuits from Brazil shows that their presence and role of cultural go-between between colonial rulers and indigenous society suddenly became dangerous when their evangelization challenged the important premises of colonization. Eviction, the plundering of mission stations and martyrdom: are the events in history, of the "dangerous memory", that call for a rethink of the whole of the missionary past, present and future. These events led, often belatedly, to the recognition of responsibility for the victims of colonization that today we call "the option for the poor and the 'other'".

If the Church is poor and unrecognized, owing to its faithful being unrecognized, the "others" and the poor are able to congregate in its buildings. The nearness of the poor is the touchstone for well-meaning sermons and bold declarations. It also tests the calling to engage in mission, which thrives not on good intentions but on greater justice and love. The option for the poor and the "other" as adult protagonists demands a professional ethic in missionary work that breaks with the culture of privileges. This break is a kind of *praeambula fidei* of any proclamation of faith, one that recognizes the poor and the "other" as adults and also recognizes their role as protagonists in a new world and a living Church. Bread on the table of all human beings and roses in their neighbours' gardens will be one outcome of the long struggle for justice as well as of incarnate celebrations of the Eucharist and the Lord's Supper.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1-14), puts up programmatic resistance to the real temptation of a world order based on the privileged access to bread, power and prestige. He incarnates *missio Dei* in the project of the Kingdom of God and, in three defining discourses and wherever the gospel is about bread, marks the contours of a radically different logic. In the discourses in the Synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4:14ff), the Sermon on the Mount (Lk 6:20-49, Mt 5:3-12) and the Judgement of the Nations (Mt 25:31-46), Jesus highlights the addressees and protagonists of the Kingdom of God; the Feeding of the Five Thousand reveals his basic principle. Jesus' project is meant for those who are poor, depressed, captive, blind, hungry, hated, foreign-looking, ill and excluded. They are both the addressees and promoters of this project. God accepts the proximity of the poor and the dregs of society. They are divine revelation and sacrament in the world. They are the historic exponents of *missio Dei*.

Of course, traditional normality collapses here. Jesus' project presupposes a quite different logic. The basic needs of humanity are satisfied not by privileged access or economy measures but by

the logic of sharing and distributing. Bread is not just collected to be distributed — first the small remnant, five loaves and two fish, are distributed. Jesus' suggestion: "Give them something to eat" is in contrast with that of the disciples who think that the people should "go to the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat" (Mt 14:15f; Mk 6:36ff). When all was distributed and given away twelve baskets were left over (Mt 14:13-21). It is not accumulation, economy or precaution — the logic of the world — that solve the problems. On the contrary, they have a blinding effect and produce misery. It is only in the distribution and breaking of bread that the disciples' eyes are opened and then recognition becomes a form of loving, as at the beginning of Creation (Lk 24:13-35; Gn 4:1).

Now the question is: whether this may not mean exclusion for all of us, the new protagonists of Jesus' project, in our churches, since we do not live on trash heaps but in comfortable homes? The Gospel responds to this question by presenting two people who, perhaps like us, also want to climb aboard Jesus' project, i.e., the Kingdom of God. These two late-starters were a teacher of the Law and a rich young ruler. They believed everything, observed Tradition and kept the Commandments. One knew everything and the other had everything. They were worried about whether they belonged to the Kingdom of God. They both asked Jesus the same questions: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk 10:25; 18:18).

The two men wanted access to Jesus' project via the old, legalistic, moral channels. They wanted to participate in it by means of the privileged access to the law and the commandments that are available to the educated and well-to-do. They would have willingly accepted a few more regulations or laws, of course without dismantling the temple walls in their hearts. Don't break with the system! Don't change my way of thinking! And please, no participation for all! But the goods of this world will not suffice for everybody if the privileges of the rich are not abolished.

Jesus imposes no extra regulations on the men. Instead of coming to the dead-end they are travelling along, he offers them a new orbit across the heavens through *diakonia* in service of those who have fallen among thieves or, right away, through the radical sale of all their accumulated possessions. It is about time that the churches cleared out all their junk, too. *Missio Dei* commits them to *diakonia* and the school of the poor. The churches' question about truth can only be communicated through the active presence of poor people in church life. When the Church has understood that it is not some question of truth understood only by way of analogy — but that the poor and the outcast betoken the presence of God in its institutional brokenness, and when the poor are not just at the receiving end of the Gospel but are empowered as its bearers, then this Church will be able to claim that it has taken the *missio Dei* to heart and is truly a missionary Church.

God's mission that came with Jesus of Nazareth and lives on in the Holy Spirit can be summed up quite simply: the mediation of the presence of God leads to the crucified ones of history. *Missio Dei* always leads us by the way of Golgotha, the way of suffering. But *missio Dei*, as the sending of the Spirit, also means breaking with the *scenario* of brutal bondage and fatal subjection. *Missio Dei* is not just the journey to killing fields. It is the initiation rite that turns greater love into greater justice. It means being caught up in the loving moment of God, who does not simply record the injured and the dead, as a camera might, but breathes God's Spirit into his people so that they may live (Ezek 37:14). The divine gaze is accompanied by a new song that tells of the justice of the Resurrection: "Christ is risen!". Through *missio Dei* the day of Resurrection became the first day of the week and the key to history.

(Translated from the German Language Service, World Council of Churches)

## Notes

\*\*This is the English version of Paulo Suess's original German paper as presented during the Willingen Consultation.

1. Based on the novel of the same name by Makeyama Michio (1903-84), 1946.
2. "IV Encuentro Ecuménico Latinoamericano de Teología India, Ykua Sati. Asunción, Paraguay (6-11.5.02)", *Porantim* XXIII/246, p. 8f.
3. The relatively few texts in Brazil on the concept of *missio Dei* include Martin A. Dreher, "Missão de Deus na Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil" in *Estudios Teológicos*, 33/3, 1993, pp. 261-277; Roberto Zwetsch, "Missão e alteridade. A contribuição da pastoral indigenista na *missio Dei* ou Os outros como sinais", *Estudios Teológicos*, 34/2, 1994, pp. 159-175.
4. See John Paul II, *Vita Consacrata*, No. 72, 1996.
5. Christianity identifies itself not just in contrast to external atheism but also to its own inherent atheism. E. Bloch, *Atheismus im Christentum: Zur Religion des Exodus und des Reichs*. Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1968.
6. See K. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens. Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*, 5th ed. Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 1977, p. 222.
7. *Ad Gentes*, n. 2: This Decree, however, flows from "that 'fountain of love' or charity within God the Father". *Ad Gentes*, n. 3, then elaborates on "this universal design of God for the salvation of the human race" (Walter M. Abbott, SJ, ed.).
8. Antonio Vieira, "Sermão décimo quarto (1633)", in: *Sermões. Obras completas do Pe. Antônio Vieira*. Porto, Lello & Irmãos. 1951, vol. 4, Tomo 11, No. 6. p. 301.

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## UN NUEVO PENTECOSTÉS. EL CONCILIO VATICANO II ENTRE LA MEMORIA Y EL OLVIDO<sup>1</sup>

### Concilio Vaticano II, lugar de conflicto

Nuestras reflexiones en este breve artículo tienen dos objetivos: primero, pensar lo que significa el evento *concilio*, e intentar entender el olvido impuesto y la regresión ultramontana, y cuáles son las oportunidades de romperlos en algún momento. Como segundo objetivo, aprovecho un pentecostés muy actual—la expansión global del pentecostalismo— para pensar si existen condiciones estructurales para que ocurra un evento o proceso similar de cambio como el provocado por el Concilio Vaticano II, en un futuro próximo.

1. Si hablamos de conflicto y tentativa de abortar los cambios iniciados por el Vaticano II, es porque la simiente del concilio generó una nueva realidad, en América Latina y más allá. Éste es un primer hecho histórico relevante que no puede ser olvidado. El sueño de Juan XXIII y el proyecto del concilio se realizaron en el mundo entero, aunque con intensidades diferentes. Tal vez un poco más en Asia, Europa y Estados Unidos, y principalmente en América Latina. No tengo la menor duda de que Medellín, Puebla y la teología de la liberación, en el sentido de asumir e ir más allá, el propio concilio.<sup>2</sup> En este continente las simientes del concilio echaron raíces, las raíces produjeron árboles, los árboles flores y las flores dieron fruto. Todavía no paran de madurar, y si ahora su número es menor, todavía continúan alimentando el trabajo y la vida de mucha gente, y la vida alimentaron la fe y la vida de por lo de *cristianos*, hombres y mujeres. El hecho es que a través de la nueva Medellín y Puebla, a través de la nueva presencia misionera entre los pueblos indígenas, las *diversas* corrientes de la teología de la liberación, las comunidades de base, los círculos bíblicos, la opción por los pobres, los grupos de defensa de los derechos humanos, los movimientos sociales, la lucha contra las dictaduras y la opresión económica y cultural, a través de todo eso que el concilio inspiró y animó, provocó una increíble y sufrida primavera de vida, espiritualidad, inteligencia y madurez en la fe para la Iglesia de América Latina. Nosotros somos parte activa de esa tradición; en cierta forma el concilio nos enseñó a pensar y sentir así.



Por tanto, el conflicto hermeneúutico tiene que partir de la constatación y de la experiencia de que hubo un concilio y de que dio frutos, que rompió con el pasado y construyó un camino alternativo, rompiendo con el integrismo, el legalismo, el ultramontanismo, el antimodernismo y el eurocentrismo de la Iglesia católica de entonces.<sup>3</sup> La otra constatación también es obvia: el futuro de esa tradición continúa abierta y nosotros somos responsables de ella.

2. Así como la teología de la liberación no se resume en los libros de los teólogos, pues no es solamente una corriente teológica, sino también un *movimiento* religioso-político y social,<sup>4</sup> tampoco es posible entender o reducir el Vaticano II solamente a los documentos que produjo. Ciertamente los textos registraron y expresaron las posiciones, las ideas-fuerza y el posible consenso. Por eso, los documentos tienen valor paradigmático y son referencia fundamental, ya que sin ellos se corre el riesgo de deshistorizar el evento y quitarle la propia identidad. El *evento* concilio desencadenó un *proceso*, un movimiento religioso y pastoral con evidentes consecuencias *sociales*, políticas y culturales, inusitadas, no previstas y, de sus participantes. La historia conflictiva y no finalizada de la recepción del concilio también pertenece a él; no puede ser dissociada del evento, como si fuese algo grande totalmente separado. Algunos parecen pensar que habría una *esencia*, una identidad previa del concilio, a-histórica y pura, a la cual algunos (como el obispo Marchetto de la Curia o el Papa)<sup>5</sup> tendrían acceso directo y privilegiado, y los demás solamente harían "interpretaciones a su

manera", e igualmente "distorsionaría" la "verdad" del concilio. La verdad es que estamos todos en el conflicto de las interpretaciones; nadie tiene un acceso privilegiado a la "esencia" del evento, porque no existe. El concilio como proceso histórico es siempre fruto de reconstrucciones, y como tal es lugar de disputa hermenéutica. Esa disputa revela proyectos diferentes de Iglesia y de sociedad. Eso no acontece solamente *a posteriori*, ya que antes de que aconteciese, cuando era apenas idea y proyecto, el concilio no agradó a mucha gente. Mons. Aloísio Lorscheider cuenta de una audiencia que tuvo en marzo de 1962 con el Papa, a quien llama familiarmente Juan:

"Juan me contó cómo fue la reacción de los cardenales presentes cuando anunció el Concilio (el 25 de enero de 1959). Ninguno aplaudió. Todos callaron. El Papa quedó receloso, no sabía qué pensar. La oposición residía en la línea de apertura y del diálogo. Lamentablemente, en la Curia romana era donde se daban los principales obstáculos".<sup>6</sup>

Si la tradición, como afirmó Alasdair Macintyre,<sup>7</sup> es la interpretación corriente del significado del pasado, lo que hacemos aquí es establecer tradición, interpretando el significado esencialmente no definido del pasado. Por tanto, la crítica no puede estar fuera de los límites de la tradición, a menos que la tradición sea esencialmente inauténtica. Ser auténtica quiere decir que la tradición generada acerca del evento y de los textos no permite cualquier tipo de interpretación y no soporta una violencia hermenéutica. A pesar de ser fruto de la negociación entre posiciones plurales o igualmente divergentes, los documentos registran grandes consensos, grandes líneas de fuerza, directrices y actitudes fundamentales. Son estos trazos los que le confieren un perfil propio y una singularidad única en la historia.

3. El problema y la decepción, que surgen al abordar los cincuenta años del Vaticano II, consisten en percibir que —desde mi punto de vista— el presente de la Iglesia nunca más llegó al grado de densidad pastoral y teológica propuesto por el evento pasado. La situación actual de la Iglesia es mucho más pobre de lo que fue su pasado reciente. La Iglesia católica en el presente, parece no querer llevar la historia adelante, tiene miedo de confrontarse con la realidad del mudo actual. Por eso intenta fijarse infantilmente en un pasado atemporal, en el cual no existirían conflictos o enfrentamientos, solamente continuidad de la gran tradición. Muchas actitudes y decisiones recuerdan justamente el modelo de Iglesia contra el cual el concilio tuvo que batirse para poderse afirmar. La fijación ideológica y psicológica en la pseudo-atemporalidad de la "continuidad sin rupturas" tiene una función: sirve para librarse de la obligación moral y espiritual de tener que construir *colectivamente* una respuesta de fe, madura, humilde y responsable, a las demandas de nuestro tiempo. Fue eso lo que hizo el concilio, en su doble fidelidad a las fuentes (*ressourcement*) y a las señales de los tiempos (*aggiornamento*).

4. Por causa de ese rechazo a rehacer el método del concilio, lo que tenemos hoy en la Iglesia, en términos de organización y disciplina más que en términos doctrinales, es una versión reciclada de una matriz anterior al propio concilio. Y en términos pastorales —debido a la falta de iniciativa, de preparación y de creatividad— se repiten burocráticamente las prácticas clericales tradicionales. Hay casos que bordean el absurdo, como si nunca hubiese tenido lugar un concilio y cuatro conferencias episcopales latinoamericanas. Ejemplo reciente: un obispo del ala conservadora es atacado por algunos sacerdotes y laicos de forma virulenta y desleal, inclusive por internet, por estar en contra de la misa celebrada de espaldas al pueblo y por no aprobar el uso de reclinatorios. Hasta entonces eso era práctica corriente en la diócesis. Tales males no acontecen en la institución tradicionalista de Lefebvre, sino en el Brasil de la teología de la liberación, en una diócesis vecina a la de Pedro Casaldáliga.

### **La producción eclesial del olvido**

¿Cómo es posible que la Iglesia católica haya retrocedido tanto? ¿Cómo es posible que en un época histórica en que la humanidad discute su sobrevivencia y la sobrevivencia de la vida sobre la tierra, que se ve envuelta en enormes conflictos culturales, étnicos, religiosos y económicos, que enfrenta nuevas cuestiones generadas por la globalización, por el calentamiento global, por las migraciones, por la ingeniería genética, por la escasez de energía, etc., un grupo de católicos reaccionarios se ponga en pie de guerra por causa de unos reclinatorios sacados del museo de

Trento? El desconocimiento y el escarnio acerca de la realidad en que vive el mundo son de tal dimensión hoy en la Iglesia, que constituyen una falta moral grave.

Mas todo tiene su historia. Eso solo fue posible, como muy bien sabemos, porque la Curia romana, los dos últimos papas y la parcela conservadora del episcopado, aun cuando mantenían un discurso de filiación y reverencia por el legado del concilio, trabajaban incesantemente por el desvanecimiento de su carácter formativo y vinculante. Inmediatamente después del concilio, Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx e Yves Congar se quejaron de que la Curia estaba minando las reformas propuestas por el Vaticano II.<sup>8</sup> En América Latina el anticoncilio<sup>9</sup> también comenzó pronto: "el gran giro fue el golpe de Sucre, en 1972, que entregó el CELAM a Alfonso López Trujillo".<sup>10</sup> Cuando en 1978 el cardenal Wojtyla (a quien Yves Congar en sus memorias del concilio dedica observaciones poco entusiastas) se convirtió en Juan Pablo II tomó una serie de medidas que objetivamente fueron contra el proyecto conciliar de renovación:

- Fortaleció la Curia romana.
- Reprimió a teólogos reformistas: Küng, Pohier, Boff y muchos otros.
- No permitió que los obispos discutiesen el celibato.
- Dictó la agenda de los sínodos y vetó propuestas hechas por ellos.
- Intervino directamente en las conferencias episcopales, debilitándolas.
- Nombró gran número de obispos conservadores, cambiando radicalmente la configuración de los episcopados que venían de Juan XXIII y Pablo VI.
- Encomendó un catecismo católico, algo que ni Juan XXIII y ningún concilio querían.
- Mandó revisar el Código de Derecho Canónico, lo que el concilio tampoco quería.
- Alimentado con informaciones de la CÍA, persiguió la teología de la liberación y mandó a D. Helder Cámara dejar de viajar. La escena paradigmática fue el dedo apuntando al rostro de Ernesto Cardenal en Managua.
- Finalmente, Juan Pablo II, que en otros aspectos fue progresista, concedió cada vez más espacio y poder a la orientación del cardenal Ratzinger, el mayor enemigo de la teología de la liberación.

El actual Papa fue más allá y profundizó el proceso de vaciamiento del concilio. En 1984, cuando todavía era cardenal prefecto de la Sagrada Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe, Ratzinger escribió su famoso *Rapporto sulla fede*.<sup>11</sup> En él ve la Iglesia posconciliar de forma sombría y pesimista, como "una obra donde se perdió el proyecto original y cada quien continúa construyendo a su talento" (p 28). El concilio sería como "una luz crepuscular" (p 26), en "proceso progresivo de decadencia" (p 28). La restauración posible, que no puede ser una vuelta atrás, debía alcanzar un nuevo equilibrio. "Después de las exageraciones de una apertura indiscriminada al mundo" (p 36). Esa restauración para Ratzinger estaba en curso y la señal positiva que ella emitía era la irrupción de movimientos como: el "Movimiento Carismático, Cursillos, Focolari, Comunidades Neocatecumenales. Comunión y Liberación, etc." (p 41s). Clodovis Boff, al comentar ese *Informe sobre la fe*, en un texto corto y denso, titulado *La tragedia de un Titanic*, escribió proféticamente:

"...en fin, ¿cuál es el proyecto de Iglesia que propone el cardenal prefecto de la Congregación de la Doctrina? Es un modelo de Iglesia vertical, que recibe todo su poder y legitimación de fuera y de lo alto, y cuyas relaciones internas son mando-obediencia (...). Un proyecto así, difícilmente puede ser asumido por un Sínodo representativo de toda la Iglesia. A pesar de eso, es de suponer que, determinado y seguro como el Titanic, ese proyecto seguirá inflexiblemente de frente, ocasionando muchas víctimas ante de llegar a su fin".<sup>12</sup>

El proyecto de "restauración", del entonces cardenal, fue puesto en práctica cuando Ratzinger se convirtió en Benedicto XVI. En 2005, al comentar los cuarenta años de la finalización del Vaticano II, Benedicto XVI cambia de tono, elogia abiertamente a Juan XXIII y las contribuciones del Vaticano II.<sup>13</sup> Afirma que no es posible volver atrás, pero critica a aquellos que defienden que el concilio constituyó una ruptura con relación al pasado de la Iglesia, como señalan: O'Malley, Schloesser y Alberigo en sus excelentes estudios (cf. nota 2). Verdaderamente hubo una vuelta atrás. Benedicto XVI, además de ser el inspirador de muchas medidas de Juan Pablo II, continuó el proceso de

desmontar la Iglesia de los Pobres con toda su fuerza; reintrodujo el latín y el rito tridentino en la liturgia para grupos; reintegró a los obispos cismáticos consagrados por Marcel Lefevre, dos de ellos con procesos civiles por declaraciones antisemitas. En relación a los judíos y a los musulmanes, hubo declaraciones del Papa con efectos desastrosos. Sus pronunciamientos en relación a los homosexuales, al uso de anticonceptivos por la población africana infestada de VIH; el papel "sólo religioso" de los misioneros en la evangelización el Nuevo Mundo, así como declaraciones durante sus visitas a Londres y a España en 2010, provocaron indignación. Añadido a la onda de escándalos de los sacerdotes pedófilos, tales hechos aumentaron el descrédito de la Iglesia católica ante la opinión pública internacional. Además de eso, la pérdida acelerada de fieles, ahora también en países católicos de América Latina, ha generado una preocupación alarmante.

La Iglesia católica fue lejos y para atrás de lo que había alcanzado en términos de entendimiento de la realidad y de comprensión de sí misma en el Vaticano II. Se empequeñeció, volvió a la "gran disciplina",<sup>14</sup> amordazó a sus profetas y recompensó a sus burócratas, centralizó la atención en el Papa y dejó de formar comunidades críticas, se aproximó al capitalismo y olvidó su opción por los pobres. Hoy buena parte de las comunidades de base, que todavía existen, fueron abandonadas por los obispos y sacerdotes; la formación de los nuevos sacerdotes separó los seminaristas del resto de la sociedad y proscribió de su formación las obras de diversos teólogos de la liberación. En cuanto a la teología oficial, hace poco más que repetir los documentos oficiales; la red de formación crítica de laicos, como el "Curso de Verano" de Brasil, los cursos del CEBI y otros van perdiendo apoyo. El gran circo del cambio pastoral se desplazó para la religión mediática y los grandes eventos religiosos. Recientemente el Vaticano, al sentir que le faltan las bases de apoyo a la Iglesia católica en Brasil, buscó mantener privilegios a través de un acuerdo de cúpula con el gobierno brasileño. El resultado del proceso puede ser considerado un desastre, pues la reacción generada va a dañar todavía más la posición de la Iglesia católica a largo plazo. En términos de ecumenismo, tal actitud destruye la confianza y el diálogo que existía con las otras Iglesias, además de causar un retraimiento y un alejamiento por parte de otras religiones.

### ¿En la vigilia de un nuevo Pentecostés?

Ante esta situación dramática es necesario encontrar un punto de descanso, una pausa, un momento de sabiduría para poder respirar y proseguir. En los párrafos siguientes doy paso a una necesidad de simplemente especular, para tal vez percibir otras dimensiones y posibilidades que el inventario de la desconstrucción del concilio, realizada en los últimos cincuenta años, no ha permitido visualizar.

1. Tratándose de procesos históricos de *longue durée*, no podemos —en una vida que es necesariamente de *brève durée*— captar todos los impactos, desdoblamientos e interpretaciones posibles de un gran evento del pasado; los horizontes de interpretación, lo mismo que de eventos del presente, van más allá de nuestra capacidad de aprehensión. Además los horizontes posibles de la recepción del mismo evento, en el futuro, van más allá de nuestra propia duración histórica. O sea, nadie puede afirmar que el Concilio Vaticano II "pasó" totalmente, que se volvió solamente pasado. Todo evento de una época, tiene futuro. ¿No hay organizaciones civiles y movimientos sociales que toman la Revolución francesa de 1789, hasta hoy mismo, como referencia e inspiración al luchar por conquistas sociales? La continuidad verdadera solo se da a través de la ruptura necesaria para la creación de lo nuevo.

2. Hoy, tal vez podamos decir que el Vaticano II "tenía que ocurrir", debido a las necesidades estructurales y coyunturales de la época, y las profundas angustias y miedos que la sociedad vivía, como dice O'Malley. Mas quien estuviese allí, y observase a la Iglesia un día antes del anuncio del concilio, el 25 de enero de 1959, diría con toda razón: "¡No puede ser. Eso nunca va a suceder. Las fuerzas contrarias, los siglos y siglos de la herencia me dieval, son demasiado fuertes!". Acuérdense de Giordano Bruno, del *Syllabus*, de la Iglesia del fascismo. Pues bien: una amiga mía que estaba en Berlín en septiembre de 1989, el día en que cayó el muro, a la misma hora en que las cosas estaban ocurriendo, ella estaba sentada con una colega en un tren suburbano, en otra parte de la ciudad, y recuerda haber preguntado a su amiga cuándo caería, en su opinión, el muro que dividía a Alemania. "Talvez en veinte o treinta años", fue la respuesta. O sea, cuando las condiciones están

maduras, es mucho más fácil que lo improbable acontezca.

Si miramos bien, las necesidades estructurales y coyunturales de un cambio, hoy en la Iglesia, son tan extremas como lo eran en vísperas del concilio. Las angustias y dudas que el mundo vive hoy no son menores que las de aquella época. De la misma forma, las condiciones hoy para un *aggiornamento* y un *ressourcement* parecen tan difíciles e imposibles como parecían en 1959. Y sin embargo, en ese momento el Titanic sale de su hundimiento: *leppur si muove!* ¿Las presiones estructurales y las condiciones "objetivas" están maduras para que un proceso semejante de cambio pueda acontecer en los próximos años? Quién sabe.

¿Cuáles son algunas de esas presiones estructurales y condiciones objetivas que podrían favorecer un proceso de cambio? ¿Por qué no es absurdo imaginar un nuevo Pentecostés (con o sin concilio) en la Iglesia?

3. Primero, porque ya está aconteciendo un nuevo Pentecostés, que ni Juan XXIII ni el concilio previeron: se trata del pentecostalismo, la religión que más creció en los últimos cien años en el mundo. ¿Qué podemos aprender del creciente pentecostalismo popular en nuestros países?

a. El pentecostalismo se está convirtiendo en la cuarta modalidad del cristianismo, al lado de la católica, ortodoxa y protestante.

b. El pentecostalismo parece ser más compatible con la modernidad globalizada que el catolicismo, debido a su énfasis en la iniciativa, en la creatividad y en la responsabilidad del individuo; en la búsqueda de objetivos concretos de mejoría, en la experiencia religiosa más inmediata y debido a su capacidad de organizar (dar leyes o normas) la experiencia subjetiva de las personas.

c. El pentecostalismo crece porque es una religión popular, adaptable al mundo globalizado.

d. El desafío pastoral para la Iglesia incluye dos aspectos básicos: la mayor parte de sus seguidores es pobre, y salió de la Iglesia católica. Una autocrítica: la teología de la liberación cometió un error al no aproximarse más a la renovación carismática. Una alianza entre la teología de la liberación y el Movimiento carismático podría haber cambiado el rostro de la Iglesia hace tiempo.

4. La globalización invadió la Iglesia católica y las religiones.

El proceso de globalización capitalista volvió mucho más densa la tela de relaciones y de interdependencia económica, cultural y política entre los países y entre las personas. Ese conjunto de cambios aceleró la crisis de las instituciones religiosas y de las culturas tradicionales; fortaleció la cultura del individuo, estimuló la participación de la mujer, transfirió las opciones religiosas a la subjetividad de las personas. Ante ese cuadro, la forma de organización milenaria de la Iglesia católica, basada en el modelo clerical y en su extensión pastoral, la parroquia, ya demostraron que no tienen futuro. Cambios sustanciales ya no son cuestiones de preferencia teológica, son cuestiones de sobrevivencia, si el cristianismo católico no quiere convertirse en una religión de guetos.

5. El pluralismo religioso.

La proximidad de los sistemas religiosos, el flujo de personas y concepciones del mundo, la necesidad de enfrentar problemas comunes a la humanidad, todo se vuelve debate y el diálogo entre las religiones es prácticamente inevitable. El diálogo interreligioso va a colocar a toda la teología tradicional cabeza abajo, comenzando por la noción de verdad, de revelación, de elección divina de un pueblo o una persona, de salvación, de mediación entre Dios y los hombres. No hay cómo huir de tales temas, que son puestos por el avance de la conciencia humana en relación al hecho de que participamos de la misma raza; que todas las religiones tienen dignidad propia; que somos interdependientes y ligados por una compleja red de lazos genéticos, culturales, económicos y ecológicos.

6. Lo que es la "religión".

Un nuevo concilio no puede tratar solamente de la misión de la Iglesia en el mundo, sino que va a necesitar debatir una cuestión todavía más fundamental: ¿qué es la "religión". Las religiones están en proceso de movimiento y desubicación, se vuelven independientes de sus contextos geográficos

y culturales de origen. Nuevas religiosidades mezclan elementos de muchas religiones al mismo tiempo. Pueden ser las primeras señales del surgimiento de una "religión básica global que va a convivir al lado de las religiones tradicionales. Además de esa desubicación surge otra cuestión más profunda e insidiosa: lo religioso pasa ser difundido por instancias sociales que asumen papeles y funciones que antes eran de las religiones, como producir sentido para la vida, generar encantamiento y éxtasis, crear experiencias de lo sublime, determinar *valores*, normas y la felicidad. En ese escenario movedizo encontramos el mercado, el complejo mediático-cultural, la publicidad, el cine, la moda.

### 7. La irrupción de la humanidad en cuanto actor y grandeza colectiva.

La experiencia del mundo como "un único lugar" (R. Robertson), la percepción de que formamos parte de la misma familia humana y compartimos el mismo planeta, ahora terriblemente amenazada por la acción del propio ser humano. Esta cuestión desafía no solo a la Iglesia católica, sino a todas las comunidades religiosas del mundo. Y tiende a volverse un desafío agudo. Finalmente, ¿cuál es la contribución que las religiones mundiales están dando para la paz, para la convivencia con el diferente, para el afrontamiento de cuestiones fundamentales, como la social, la degradación ambiental, los derechos humanos? Afrontar esas cuestiones exigirá un trabajo conjunto entre diferentes tradiciones religiosas.



la misma familia humana y casa de toda la biosfera, por la acción del mundo. Y tiende a aceptación de la el afrontamiento de pobreza y la exclusión

### Conclusión

Nosotros hijos, nietos y biznietos del Vaticano II, si queremos ser fieles a él, no debemos fijarnos de forma obsesiva en el concilio o en la teología de la liberación, como hacen sus enemigos y difamadores: simplemente posicionándose siempre en contra. Debemos dejarlos de lado, en modo de espera (*stand by*). En cierto sentido necesitamos estar dispuestos a romper con ellos para poder recomenzar de cero, aunque de hecho nunca se recomienda de cero. Usando una alegoría, yo diría que la piedra de Sísifo rodó y se encuentra nuevamente en la base de la montaña. El concilio, y todo lo que trajo, nos sirve de memoria y estímulo de que la subida es posible, y de que necesitamos otra vez llegar a la cima.

### NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> Este artículo es parte del número colectivo de revistas latinoamericanas de teología animado por la Comisión Teológica Latinoamericana de la ASETT/EATWOT.

<sup>2</sup> A. Moreira, M. Ramminger, y A. Soares (orgs.), *A Primavera Interrompida. O projeto Vaticano II num impasse — La primavera interrumpida. El Vaticano II en un impase*, libro digital bilingüe, disponible en los libros digitales Koinonia: <http://servicioskoinonia.org/LibrosDigitales> Impreso fue publicado en Alemania: *Der unterbrochene Frühling: Das Projekt des II. Vatikanums in der Sackgasse*. Münster, ITP-Kompass, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Entre los buenos trabajos acerca del concilio y su recepción, cf. G. Alberigo y A. Melloni (orgs.), *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*. 5 vols., Bologna, Peeters/Il Mulino, 1995-2001. F. A.C. Catao, O perfil distintivo do Vaticano II, recepção e interpretação, en P. S. Gonçalves y V. I. Bombonato (orgs.). *Concilio Vaticano II Análises e perspectivas*, São Paulo, Paulinas, 2004, pp 95-115. A. Lorscheider, J.B. Libanio, J. Comblin, et alii., *Vaticano II: 40 anos depois*, São Paulo, Paulus, 2005. G. Routhier, *Vatican II: Hermeneutique et Reception*, Montreal, Fides, 2006. J. W. O'Malley, *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?*, Roland Bainton Lecture, Yale Divinity School, 26/09/2006. Disponible en: [http://www.yale.edu/divinity/video/omalley\\_text.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/divinity/video/omalley_text.pdf). S. Schloesser, Against forgetting: memory, history, Vatican II, *Theological Studies*, junio 2006. D. Schultenover (org.), *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* J. W. O'Malley, J. A. Komonchak, S. Schloesser y N. J. Ormerod. Nueva York, Continuum Press, 2008. K. D. Whitehead (org.), *After Forty Years Vatican Council II's Diverse Legacy*, St. Augustines Press, 2007. M. Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change*, Princeton, PUP, 2007.

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## A CALL TO CHARACTER FORMATION

*A Prophetic Icon to Interpret the Community Life in the Indian Context*



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### Introduction

We live in a time in which excellence and perfection are much sought after when it comes to material things, but are rather ignored when it comes to spiritual things. The modern times seek a perfect body, wealth, prestige and power. To be physically attractive is constantly put in front of us in advertising images. Power and position seem to be touch-stones for many to evaluate life. Added to this, the Church faces acute crisis with various kinds of scandals, sexual scams, child-abuse and other moral lapses. Lack of real motivation and laxity in consecrated life and spiritual leadership has brought the Church into a credibility crisis.<sup>1</sup> There are, however, a good number of innocent and committed priests, consecrated people and spiritual leaders, who in humility suffer under the stigma of suspicion. What is our role as consecrated persons in the shaping of our society, especially in a time when the old is being torn down and a new social and ecclesial fabric is being knitted? Can we consider ourselves worthy to uphold any spiritual leadership? Can we embrace consecrated life relying only on our own human powers? Where do we place ourselves in this time of economic, social and religious re-construction and change?

This article is an attempt to analyze and evaluate the significance of our religious communities in the post-modern theological era. It simultaneously seeks to reflect on how relevant our formation programmes are: do they suit the needs of the Church and the Society in the modern world? The groups noted below may serve as a basis to understand consecrated life in our day. They are paradigms that explain our experiences and ideas regarding the dynamics of community life. The aim of the article is self-evaluation leading to transformation and renewal of community life, and thus to help the church at large to grow in her evangelization through our faith and witness. It is offered as a tool to help our spiritual growth. Our intention is to offer constructive criticism.

### Analysis of the Religious Communities

Generally four main groupings seem to be found in religious communities: they may be called *the Providential group*, *the Political group*, *the Poetic group* and *the Prophetic group*. The particular characteristics, history, trends and strategies of a community define its nature, and also reveal its strengths and weaknesses. Of course we cannot make a hard compartmentalization, because trends and people overlap. At times, groups amalgamate or new ones come up. The group which dominates in the community usually gives it its characteristics. The article is to invite readers to look at their own commitments and know the goal and meaning they find in religious life.

### The Providential Group

This group is in favour of the *status quo*. Its members want to conserve, keep, guard, and live in

the existing system. They do not want to make radical changes. They consider that community is primarily a personal affair in the realm of the '*spiritual*'. They long for a modern 'Christendom'. They feel closely allied to the hierarchical governing body of the Church, and desire liturgical purity and rubrics-controlled worship. They tend to advocate prayer as the solution to everything. Asceticism, fasting, and external discipline are for them the marks to identify true religious life. The religious habits play an important role in their witness to their faith.

This theological orientation advocates in fact the preservation of the external status quo of the congregation, and opposes radical and substantial changes. Their votaries subscribe to philosophies that favour traditional values; for them tradition refers to religious, cultural and nationally defined beliefs and customs. At times, individual interest may be sacrificed for the sake of common goal and values. Common prayer, common meals and common recreations are important parts of their daily routine; at times, they may ignore personal differences and strengths. They hold the principle that everyone should adhere to a community schedule. Standing next to each other in common work or worship is an important factor for their witness. Interpersonal relationships suffer to a certain extent, for everything is institutionalised and clearly defined. There is certain rigidity in their life and a certain anonymity. Charism has a unifying effect on the members. They live a consecrated life primarily as a witness.

This 'providential group' needs to understand that common meals are meant to foster a sense of oneness in Christ, that recreation should be a sincere attempt to share, and participation in the common prayer and liturgy is an opportunity to listen to the Word of God together so as to nourish mutual love. They are not simple routines to bring the members together. Seldom such people may use silence as an escape from communication.

### **The Political Group**

In this group, the sense of identity, purpose, and companionship comes from belonging to a particular culture, language, rite, organization, or work. For its members the religious community is a voluntary organization. Community is seen as a planning agency to facilitate the movement of individuals from institutional to communitarian activity. Religious life is oriented to nurturing the potential growth of each individual, so that all live with freedom and dignity in a favourable environment. This is achieved by the members being accountable. The individuals are given support and opportunity to choose their activities. They are interested to provide both residential and vocational programmes, social and developmental activities, and services to a wide range of people, and thus meet the living expenditure of the community. They stand together as an organization with an infrastructure and philosophy that allows the members the opportunity to balance the advantages both of a large and a small society. They have experimental agendas, contacts, personality-development programmes, multiple resource-managements designed specifically for individuals. Their programmes are arranged in such a way as to suit the benefit of a minority of leaders and sub-leaders in the group. They have access to mass-communication media and other resources.

This type of 'service philosophy' provides its members the opportunity to become leaders in innovative activity, which allows them to grow in their potential. They offer support to the members who supplement and complement their own services. This helps the process of identifying aspirations and preferences, enabling members to build up their strengths. The leadership identifies environments for living, working, education and recreation to achieve their goals. Management skills and effective monitoring support the members to ensure the success of the individual. The manifesto would be to defeat their 'enemies' and eliminate 'non-supporters' from the congregation. The individual's changing needs and aspirations are key themes that guide the group. All uphold group-values but with a hidden individualistic agenda. The accumulation of wealth is an important issue.

There is here a great deal of conflict to understand the mission of consecrated life. They reduce the teachings of Jesus Christ to a moral guideline, and in practice they proclaim that anything is okay as long as 'it does not hurt someone else. In other words, morality is built on the

'pleasure-pain' principle. As long as it feels good and does not hurt anybody, it is okay. For them, Jesus is a moral teacher, and religious life is a charitable non-profitable organization. Their conversations and interactions show mere peripheral relationships. They love to have some outings, group picnics, special dinners, and executive meetings to create a social rapport to the large group of people and to announce their actions and activities. Birthdays, feasts and jubilees are important for them because they are the occasions for them to 'establish contacts', renew their web of relationships, and show others their position and roles in the community.

It is important that this group learns that a religious community is not made up of 'haves and have-nots', rulers and ruled, but of equals. The bond of love brings all the members together among whom the 'superior' stands as one who serves. All have to be given a role in Government; all can contribute toward creating community. There should be as few secrets in community as possible. Degrees of membership should be abolished.

### **The Poetic Group**

This group obviously holds a middle-of-the-road position. They want to have some structures and resources but consider themselves '*above politics*', assuming roles of referee or mediator between opposing factions. They see justice as one aspect of faith, but not really a central one in the integration of faith and life. While they support relief work and charity, they do not want dirty their hands in the political arena. They try to advocate value-oriented behavioural patterns to solve problems; and they stress the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. They presume that conflicts can be resolved by the opposing parties admitting their respective faults, so that all are equally guilty.

They want to look spiritual, but do not give sufficient stress on the interior formation of character. Practicing virtues are important for them; however, they rather speak of Gospel values to show that they are 'pious' and 'devout'. For them charism, spiritual renewal, etc., are the task of the 'superior', and those in administration should be always models by their commitment. Their own life, failures and flops are always compared with the weaknesses of those in responsibility, and they try to escape from the 'reality of life'. They view community living as housing, management, and programmed work. They are involved in the pastoral ministry with an attitude of 'touch-me-not', safeguarding their identity in the locality. They are not much interested in celebrations, but they do participate in them to show others that they also 'belong'. There is a certain kind of lack of clarity in their precepts. The value of prayer, devotional practices and spiritual welfare diminishes.

It is important to help those who have such 'neutral attitudes' to turn their interior resources towards dynamism and a positive desire. They can evaluate their religious commitments on the basis of the evangelical counsels and mission. We have to encourage them to become more active members of the community through interrelations and participation in the common good of the community.

### **The Prophetic Group**

This group is characterized by its conscious attempt to be faithful to the charism of their particular religious congregation. The members are committed to radical structural, personal and interior changes. They believe in a closer integration of faith and life, and they stand for truth at any cost. They believe that reconciliation is not possible without justice and vice versa. In fact, justice is possible only when one acts according to it. Therefore, the prophetic group is a strong advocate of '*praxis*': doing the truth in love. They hold a broader definition of a community which is inclusive and embraces diversity. Love is the motivating force for them: "As the Scriptures teach, the 'prophet' first listens and contemplates, then speaks, allowing himself to be totally permeated by that love for God which fears nothing and is even stronger than death."<sup>2</sup> The goal of the prophetic group is to support its members in a way of life that is responsibly independent and effectively interdependent; thereby, fostering the self-empowerment into a meaningful life in community with others.

For them, relationship with God is the centre of all human development. They cherish relationships which affectively unite the members; and discover value and mission in them. Every person needs a place for living and working guided by freedom and choice to the greatest degree possible. To ensure the effective mission of the individual, they support creative living environments. They encourage each individual to live with dignity and to thrive as a fully participating member within their community: "The authentic prophet, therefore, is not concerned so much to accomplish works, which undoubtedly are important but never essential. Above all, he tries to be a witness of God's love, seeking to live it among the realities of the world, even if his presence can sometimes be 'uncomfortable' because he offers and incarnates alternative values."<sup>3</sup>

Such 'prophets' cultivate apostolic commitment; and their commitment gives a real guarantee of effectiveness in their pastoral ministry. They help the members to grow in their understanding and loving acceptance of each other's differences; and encourage each person to reach out and share as much beauty and love as possible. They foster sufficient silence and solitude which help persons to be themselves. Cultivating a listening attitude is a help for insuring 'space' for oneself and others. However, they have to learn to be more realistic and practical in daily life.

### **Challenges to Consecrated People**

To whom do we belong? Where is our home? Self-sacrifice and discipline are the price for creativity, for personal growth, and for transformation. The great artists, poets, musicians and spiritual leaders give testimony to this. Just as excellence in physical beauty comes at the cost of sacrificing certain foods and drinks, and dieting, along with painful exercises, so spiritual progress depends on our attitude of loving God, dedication, determination, discipline, prayer, practice of virtues and doing sacrifices. Our intellectual capacities grow only through self-sacrificing times for disciplined study as well as through practical exercises. How can we expect otherwise when it comes to formation and spiritual growth?

Consecrated life is an ongoing formation, and it implies continuous effort and discipline. It is the church's offer of a wide range of opportunities for individuals to dedicate themselves to a life of prayer and service. We cannot treat spirituality as if it comes naturally. Consecrated commitment goes beyond simply being 'nice' and 'feeling good'. Formation implies certain kind of discomfort, embarrassment, humiliations or even pain, and we cannot simply opt for a quick-fix solution that does not cost us anything in terms of time and commitment. The dedication of one's life makes consecrated life significant and relevant.

Formation in consecrated life is significant and meaningful only if it is linked to the life and experience of Jesus. Jesus had to suffer and die in order to release God's transforming power into humanity. The real thrust of the life of Christ points to the paschal mystery: suffering is the high cost of transformation. Among all the great founders of religions, Jesus Christ is the only one who enters into suffering, loss, pain, the *kenosis* experience and even death itself in order to lead us with him through pain and suffering into the resurrection and Life in its fullness. Challenges have formative value. Pope Benedict XVI in his message for the World Day of Prayer urged us: "To respond to the Lord's call means facing in prudence and simplicity every danger and even persecutions, since 'a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master' (Mt.10:24). Having become one with their Master, the disciples are no longer alone as they announce the Kingdom of heaven: Jesus himself is acting in them."<sup>4</sup> Transcendence comes only through death and resurrection. The consecrated life is the continuation of Jesus' life and ministry in today's world.

Any analysis of the human realities runs the risk of making caricatures. The first thing to be noted in this analysis of consecrated life is that the groups described above overlap. Each consecrated person, in fact, exhibits to a certain degree some elements of all those groupings. My aim is to extend an invitation to reflect on our commitment: Where do we situate ourselves? Do we put ourselves dominantly in any group? Can we evaluate the way in which we internalise modern liberal values? This article should lead to a self-examination of our commitments in the present-day context and challenges. With the 'providential group', do I try to hold on to the 'glorious past'? With

the poetic group, do I try to sweep injustice under the carpet? With the political group, do I seek only convenient positions and prestigious titles to show off our institutions? With the prophetic group, am I faithful to our charism in spite of sufferings and inconveniences? Or do I stay out, on the periphery, or just float in my existence? What am I for? How do I give witness to my consecrated commitments?

There may not be any simple 'yes' and 'no' answer to these questions. Basically, it all depends upon what I really want. The price which I am willing to pay depends on my personal values and commitment. In a world that grows fast into indifferentism and irreligious outlook, we are called to make firm decisions: to move away from merely being comfortable and to accept the real cost of discipleship. Of course, there will be few like Herod (Lk 23:11-15) who only play 'political games' to please friendships; or like Pilate (Mt 27:24; Mk 15:15) who wash their hands to keep away from the truth and to 'satisfy the crowd'; or others who like Herodias (Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:14-29) wish to eliminate prophets and those who stand for truth. To our surprise, we may possibly encounter similar characters even in the consecrated life, and among those who are in leadership roles. But if we stand for Christ, then we can give witness through our religious consecration. St Paul affirms such commitment: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Spirituality cannot be reduced to acquiring something, but is primarily a giving, and doing the will of God in a specific given vocation. We have to overcome difficulties and challenges, at times painfully, yet we can be dedicated prophets and surmount them.

### **Character Formation of a Consecrated Community**

Do you enjoy the way the community members interact with each other? Do you feel comfortable in your relationships with others? Do you like to be with them? Do you share your experiences with them? What is your personal experience of praying with them? How often, do you spend your time and energy with them? Do you try to contact the community member sincerely and lovingly? Do you have primary friendships with them? Do you seek company only from outside the community? Do you feel at home in the community? Do you feel often a 'stranger' and an 'alien' in your own community? Although the answers are complex, they may point at the depth of Our commitment and love.

The question of character is of prime importance when we evaluate life in a consecrated community. The character of the consecrated person is the foundation of commitment; it is more important than its institutional structure. Doctrine, spiritual leadership, and organization are important, but character and adherence to the charism are more significant and necessary. A community might have a leadership structure that is politically fitting and psychologically healthy, but if it does not have good character, and biblically and theologically a sound discipleship pattern, it may not be viable. If the leadership structure follows the dynamics and pattern of Jesus Christ, the community will gradually become prophetic. For Christ has taught us the real meaning of leadership: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). A question that arises over any issue will not cause crisis or division in a community which possesses prophetic characteristics.

We are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). God is community and has created human beings to become community. That "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18) does not refer only to marriage relations. We are designed to relate to God and to others, to the world. It is in our relations that the authenticity of our characteristics is displayed. The depth of our commitment depends on our character; and it is authenticated primarily in the way we relate with the dear and near ones, as well as with the significant others, i.e., with all those with whom we live: "Consecrated life is a strong expression of God's and man's reciprocal search for one another... Consecrated people, by the very fact of their existence, represent a kind of 'bridge' towards God for everyone they meet..."<sup>5</sup> The community is made up of God's people living and growing in society. However, our lives feel also a centrifugal force: a pull toward the outer edge rather than the centre. We tend to like being on the perimeter so as not to get too close or too involved. God does not

want us to live in that way. Attending meetings, conferences, seminars and organizational charts may not help our character to grow if we do not relate with the members of our community. "Life consists not in holding good cards, but in playing well those you do hold" (Josh Billings).

We are faced with a choice either to integrate our lives with those of others, or to isolate ourselves from the main stream of the community. We must choose either to be part of the community or to remain outside the community. Integration may not seem natural to us, but it is what we really desire and we are created for. It was John Donne, an English clergyman and poet (1572-1631), who said: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece a part of the main.... Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee."<sup>6</sup> Everything that happens in a community affects directly or indirectly the entire society; and it affects God who designed us to live in community. Character formation is not simply imagining pictures of light, success and better life, but making the darkness conscious, taking struggles as stepping stones of growth, and transforming challenges into strength. We cannot be ardent religious without a vigorous asceticism that sustains us; and vice-versa. We have to pay an exorbitant price for that fascinating and priceless treasure by forming our character for values and commitments.

### **Formation: A Call to Become Stewards of Faith**

Faith constitutes an integral part of consecration and commitment. To develop, faith needs to be proclaimed, taught, and cultivated. That is why the activities associated with formation are so essential to the faith experience. Our mission is fulfilled and complete only with evangelization and a well-developed faith-formation. Pope John Paul II affirms in his *Apostolic Exhortation*: "The mission consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. This is the challenge; this is the primary task of the consecrated life."<sup>7</sup> In fact, in consecrated life formation is more than religious education and cannot be simplified to attaining knowledge about consecrated life. Formation should make a radical impact on a person.

The transmission of faith needs the best efforts, well-organized programmes, a personal witness of faith, and encouragement and support from those who are willing to assist us in sharing our faith. Pope Benedict XVI, gives a valuable advice: "What is asked of those who are called, for their part, is careful listening and prudent discernment, a generous and willing adherence to the divine plan, and a serious study of the reality that is proper to the priestly and religious vocations, so as to be able to respond responsibly and with conviction."<sup>8</sup> Formation helps us to accept the will of God, what the Lord wants from each one of us: "Not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). The constant challenge is to be faithful.

In the multi-cultural and multi-religious settings of India, it is necessary to find new ways to make Jesus Christ known, especially to those with whom we have daily contact: "The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in the world for the salvation of all."<sup>9</sup> The church needs the contributions of consecrated people to provide a proper methodology of faith experience. We have to give an authentic witness to Christ to meet the challenges of post-modern inter-cultural society. Firmness in our faith and active participation in the community life will strengthen our mission to stand against the risks of modern secularisation. Pope Benedict XVI gave us a meaningful message: "May it be your prime concern, to help [others] to seek Christ above all else and to place themselves generously at the service of the Gospel. Take every possible care in the human, cultural and spiritual formation of the persons entrusted to you, so that they are able to respond to today's cultural and social challenges. Be the first to set an example by fleeing commodities, comforts, convenience in order to bring your mission to fulfillment. Share the richness of your charisms with those who are committed to the one mission of the Church, which is to build the Kingdom".<sup>10</sup>

The Pope exhorts the consecrated persons to give a witness by our way of life. God's life in us expresses itself in love of the others (1 Jn 4: 7-21). The community thus becomes for the individual religious the sacrament of God's presence.

## Witness and Community Life

The community life is one of the fundamental features of consecrated life.<sup>11</sup> It implies that the consecrated people seek both sanctification and apostolate in the context of community life. From the viewpoint of personal growth, this approach is healthy. Growth into personhood is attained by outgoing love, and the interaction of the group is the atmosphere in which such love can prosper. The charism is embodied in the relationships of the community members with God, with each other and with the world around them. In order to understand the significance of our charism, we need to know and experience how the people live it in a particular community. The particular charism enables community life and is a witness to others through love relationships. The community knitted by adult dialogue, genuine communication, and true fraternal love gives witness to the commitment of each member.



In a consecrated community, we can find a balanced synthesis of asceticism and activity, vision and mission, commitment and companionship. In a letter, Pope Benedict XVI brings a similar idea: "It is necessary to overcome the dispersive effects of activism and foster the unity of spiritual life by acquiring a deep mysticism and a solid asceticism. These qualities nourish apostolic commitment and are a guarantee of pastoral effectiveness, and they must imbue the journey to holiness."<sup>12</sup> The sanctity of consecrated life consists in the ascetical relationship with God. The high cost of perfection consists in giving witness to others by our community life. A prophetic community enables each person to develop his or her own prophetic word and to respond to what it demands. Do you have the same longings for our world as the faith that is in you? Does it seem that your community members can help you to grow into all that God has in mind for you? Are you receptive to the ways that they call you to grow? We value prophetic leaders and movements: our challenge is to become prophetic as a group and as a community. We need to find out a significant methodology and action plan for our times to embody compassion and justice in our life: in the ministry, in the community and everywhere. Faith means staying alert to societal challenges as well as internal challenges. It invites us to be open to engage ourselves to the will of God. We must avoid power-struggles. We need to discern what actions will produce a truly loving and creative situation.

Does the heart of your community match with what is going on in your heart? If you feel an excitement stirring inside of you in your relationship with them, you are experiencing the call to this particular community. Consecrated people commit themselves to a concrete family with its own physiognomy of organization, structure and goals. Each community is a portion of the body of the church itself. Although it is 'not the hierarchical structure of the church', religious life 'belongs to the life and holiness' of the church.<sup>13</sup> A true community performs a prophetic function by witnessing in its very being to the reality of the redemption in Christ. The external ministry incarnates the love of Christ and neighbour, which is one.

## Conclusion

"Someone ought to do it, but why should I? Someone ought to do it, so why not I? Between these two sentences lie centuries of moral evolution." This famous saying of Annie Besant inspires us to understand the relevance of our prophetic vocation to be consecrated people in the modern world. The challenge of forming a meaningful community has a significant value. It is a call to transform the various groups mentioned above into one prophetic community. As prophets, consecrated people see something that needs radical change, name it, invite others to examine it in the light of faith, and then challenge them to respond with some kind of action. The action cannot be left as a responsibility of only a select few, but it is the task of each and every one. In this perspective, Hans Küng has a relevant message for us: "Everyone can do something for the renewal of the church within his own sphere of influence, be it large or small. Many of the great achievements that have occurred in individual parishes and in the Church at large owe their origin to the initiative of an

individual or a small group."<sup>14</sup>

This analysis of consecrated life is an invitation to renew our efforts to show the merciful love of God by becoming more faithful to our consecration. This attempt to seek personal transformation is more important than just having theological information on life. The emphasis has to be laid on the personal divine encounter and personal experience (*anubhava*)<sup>15</sup> rather than on learning theoretical reasons and pedagogies. Each spiritual experiment is different. Despite our unrelenting realism about our short-comings, we cannot live like helpless victims of the situation. Consecrated life and commitment become more significant when we begin to trust in God's unconditional and merciful love and compassion towards us. Our relationship with God definitely influences the formation of our characteristics. However, it also invites us to extend tenderness, gentleness and patience towards one another as well as to ourselves. We can avoid being judgmental in our relationships; as well as being over-anxious about our spiritual progress. We can make genuine progress through vigilance and trust in God's grace.

The more mature we become, the more wisely we deal with our failings; and the more we become aware of our imperfections, the more we understand God's merciful love. Consecrated commitment is a deepening of our love of God: "Consecrated life is a testament to the superabundance of love which stimulates us to 'lose' our own life in response to the superabundance of the love of the Lord, who first 'lost' his life for us."<sup>16</sup> We are human beings, not angels. By the formation of our character, we will be able to witness more credible signs of God's love and ensure that we become the hope of the Church and society.

Any community can be special when it decides to live our community life in a more meaningful way. Any religious congregation can be special when it makes its charism relevant through the lives of its members. We can choose to make it so. The smallest, the most ordinary moments can bring the biggest, the most extraordinary rewards in life. It is all a matter of how we react to our reality. The day can be bright, whether the sun is shining or not. The only thing that happiness requires is a choice. It is a choice that We make at all times, and in all places. There is no need to wait for conditions to be perfect. We can fashion a wonderful community out of whatever conditions we come upon. Let us go ahead and see what we can make out of our own community.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hans Küng, a contemporary theologian and author, wrote an "Open Letter" to all Catholic Bishops and the Pope (on his 5<sup>th</sup> papal anniversary), April 16, 2010. He stated that "the church is in the worst credibility crisis since the Reformation." Küng was a colleague of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, in Tübingen University, Germany. Küng's 'Open Letter' was criticised for its inaccuracies and for being a vitriolic attack on Pope Benedict, whose credibility as a leader is appreciated. See George Weigel's critique at: <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2010/04/an-open-letter-to-hans-kung>. Although I do not support Hans Küng, his letter as well as the critique of George Weigel can be an eye-opener for us to understand better the modern church crisis.

<sup>2</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the International Union of Superiors General*, Rome, May 7 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, *ibidem*

<sup>4</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, "Vocations at the Service of the Church on Mission," Message for the 45<sup>th</sup> world day of prayer for vocations, Rome, April 13, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 14<sup>th</sup> World Day of Consecrated life*, Rome, February 2, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> John DONNE, *Meditation XVII*.

<sup>7</sup> Pope JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 25 March 1996, in AAS 88 (1996) 72.

<sup>8</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, "Faith in the Divine Initiative - the Human Response," Message for the 46<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Rome, May 3, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Pope JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the International Union of Superiors General*.

<sup>11</sup> *The Code of Canon Law*, 607, §2-3. The meaning of community life is reflected more fully in canons 608 and 665.

<sup>12</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, "Unity of Spiritual Life," Letter on the occasion of the General Chapter of the Salesians

of Don Bosco, Rome, March 1, 2008.

<sup>13.</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, in *AAS* 57 (1965) 44. For a detailed study of the relevance of community life, see, John SANKARATHIL, OSFS, "Religious Community: Towards a Theological Reflection on Genuine Relationships?" *VJTR* 72/5 (2008), 356-69.

<sup>14.</sup> KÜNG, "Open Letter."

<sup>15.</sup> The Sanskrit term *anubhava* has a deeper meaning than the English term experience. Etymologically *anubhava* points to a certain union with or touch with reality (embracing), attaining something which was not within reach earlier, a coming into being (realisation) and perceiving and understanding (a new knowledge) as a consequence of which there is fruition, enjoyment. See, Antony MOOKENTHOTTAM, "Anubhava: Religious Experience in Hindu Scriptures," *Indian journal of Spirituality* 4 (Dec. 1992) 436.

<sup>16.</sup> Pope BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 14<sup>th</sup> World Day of Consecrated Life*.

**(Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological reflection, Volume 75, No.7, July 2011; Pp. 532 – 547)**

## **SEDOS ANNUAL REPORT 2011 ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

As the year is drawing to a close it is time to step aside and see in retrospect where the Spirit of the Lord has led us and where he is leading us today and tomorrow. The year two thousand and eleven has gone by so quickly leaving in its wake a year rich in events bringing many changes which deeply affect the life of SEDOS.

Several General Chapters took place during the year and have introduced new faces among the Congregational Leadership Teams, Members of SEDOS. We wish them a warm welcome and we look forward to new insights, fruit of lived missionary experiences that are so important in our search to deepen our mission perspectives and promote collaboration and networking. We express our deep gratitude and appreciation to those who have stepped aside after years of total self-dedication to the service of love in their Congregation and for their active participation in the SEDOS' missionary activities. We will never forget them and we pray the Lord of History to guide them along the new paths He is opening ahead of them.

We also went through a time of trial in bidding goodbye to our loved ones whom the Father was pleased to call to himself. We remember:

Fr. Padhraic O'Loughlin, SSC, 77, an Irish missionary, who worked in the pastoral apostolate: Fiji, USA, Ireland, Peru and Italy, especially with students. In 1993 he was appointed Superior of the Columban House on Corso Trieste, Rome, and from 1995 he served as Procurator General of the Society of St Columban until his sudden death on 19 October. He was a Delegate for SEDOS and many of you will certainly remember his supportive interest.

Fr. Fausto Tenorio, of the Pontifical Foreign Missionary Institute (PIME), 59, an Italian missionary, was working to promote the rights of the Indigenous people in the Philippines. His mission was cut short when he was shot on 19 October. He worked in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Arakan Valley, North Cotabato. His death was the "ultimate sacrifice in the service of God".

Sr. Amelia Kawaji, MMB, 68, died on 14 November 2011. Sister Amelia who was of Spanish origin, worked as a missionary in Japan and she became, as Saint Paul would have said, "a Japanese among the Japanese". She also took Japanese nationality. Sister Amelia served as Superior General of her Congregation. From 2007-2008 she was President of the UISG. Sister Amelia was a very committed, dynamic and happy Sister whose loss we all mourn. The SEDOS' Membership extends its sympathy and condolences to their respective Congregations. May the Lord reward these religious for their generous service, as all the good they did will live on.

Now that they are contemplating the face of the Living God may they continue interceding for all the missionaries who are going through a difficult time, whether on account of health problems or due to persecution because they are committed to the cause of the least among us.

If we stand here in front of you with a feeling of assurance it is because we draw strength and a sense of purpose from your continual support. We SEDOS Members have embarked on a very exciting journey in the vineyard of the Lord. Each of our Congregations has received gifts and talents from the Spirit of Lord for the life and the growth of the universal Church. We have found ways and means to cultivate these talents; and the commitment of each congregation member has contributed to the happy outcome of SEDOS' activities in this year two thousand and eleven.

When we, at SEDOS, look around and see what is going on concerning the rent of the house, we are dumfounded and we fail to find the right words to express our gratitude to the Society of the Divine Word for their generosity. Since 1964 the Society of the Divine Word has continued to offer the premises to house the spacious office of SEDOS. We also thank the Brothers of Christian Schools who host the SEDOS Conferences, Workshops and Christmas Party and all for a nominal

fee. As we keep on telling to our visitors, the SEDOS Library is teeming with brand new and up-to-date books and magazines on Mission; and also on different themes of worldwide interest related to the life of the Church. We especially thank the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers who always make sure that we get copies of the new books published by ORBIS Books and our deep gratitude also goes to the Editrice Missionaria Italiana (EMI).

### **Executive Committee Members for the Year 2010-2011**

We express our gratitude to the members of SEDOS Executive Committee. Despite their responsibility within their own respective congregations; they not only made time for SEDOS, but they also put their gifts, talents and wisdom at the service of the Mission entrusted to SEDOS. We thank our President and Vice-President who since 2007 have alternated their roles:

**Fr. Edouard TSIMBA, CICM**, Superior General of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was the President until 2009 when he then fulfilled the role of Vice-President up to the year 2011.

**Sr. Maria Pilar Benavente Serrano, MSOLA**, was the Vice-President from 2007 - 2009. Then in 2009 she became the President of SEDOS until 2011.

Both have ended their mission as the Congregational Leaders this year. We really miss them in all aspects of our organization. We keep them in our prayers and wish them God's blessings.

We also say a big 'thank you' to **Sr. Inés María Gutiérrez, SUSC**, who was elected to the Executive Committee in 2005, and who has completed her term. We will miss her wisdom and open-mindedness.

Sister **Felicia HARRY**, Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles, was elected to the Executive Committee in 2009.

Sister **Filo HIROTA**, MMB, General Concillor of the Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz, was elected to the Executive Committee in 2008.

Bro. **Stephen TUOHY**, FSC, Administration of the Brothers of Christian Schools, elected to the Executive Committee in 2010.

Fr. **Roland RIVARD**, CSSp, General Concillor of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, was elected to the Executive Committee in 2010.

Bro. **Téofilo MINGGA**, FMS. Secretariat for Mission with the Laity of the Marist Brothers was elected to the Executive Committee in 2010

Sr. **Josephine BUENCAMINO**, FMM, Treasurer of the Mother house of the FMM was elected as the Treasurer of SEDOS in 2010.

We would normally introduce the:

New President (male if we find one)

New Vice-President: Sister **Georgianne Marie DONOVAN**, SMSM and in the case there is no male President, she will take the place of the President.

And New members of the Executive Committee:

Sr. **Marina CASSARINO**, SCM, General Concillor of the Consolata Sisters,

Sister **Gisela SHREYER**, MSOLA, the Web Site Master of the MSOLA,

Fr. **Arlindo DIAS Pereira**, SVD, General Concillor of the Society of Divine Word Missionaries

### **SEDOS Staff**

The office is carrying on the plans of modernizing, and updating the ways and services provided to the members and to all.

Mrs. Ilaria IADELUCA, the SEDOS Secretary, is in charge of the general administration, of the publication of the Bulletin, and of the uploading articles on the Homepage, resumed her work in the office in October 2011 after having the joy of giving birth to their first-born boy: Giuliano, in March 2011: Her working hours now have to leave room for little Giuliano. With the advice of Bernard Ilaria has undertaken a painstaking research. She is still trying to figure out the number of SEDOS' Bulletin Subscribers: how many still want the hard copy, and how many prefer the electronic Bulletin. Sister Josephine too, has carried out this plan in a very systematic way, letters have been sent to all Subscribers, existing or virtual, and both are hoping to shed some light onto this intricate issue.

Sister Celine KOKKAT, JMJ, has the full responsibility for the Documentation Center and the Library. Ms. Philippa Wooldridge continues providing the technical expertise as a meticulous proof-reader. On a part-time basis, Mr. Bernard Perez is in charge of the SEDOS Webpage maintenance, updating and development. Actually Mr. Bernard and Sr. Josephine BUENCAMINO, FMM, were able to obtain the license for all the computers in the office. Mr. Bernard Perez, offers advice and training to one or another member of the SEDOS Staff when required. We are deeply appreciate the different services Bernard gives to the Staff.

### **A Quick Glance at the Year'S Activities:**

We made it a point of honour to carry on strengthening SEDOS' relationships with different groups and Institutions committed to global mission, whether Catholic or from other Christian denominations. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity offered Sister Celine KOKKAT, JMJ, and I the opportunity to participate in the "Ecumenical Celebration of the Word" which was organized on Thursday, 20 January 2011, by the Centro Pro Unione. The theme was: "One in the Apostles' Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking of the Bread and Prayer (cf. Acts 2:42). These four elements are the column and tower of strength of the life of the Church, and of its unity. The 2011 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials were originally prepared by Christians in Jerusalem, who chose the above-mentioned theme. It *"is a call for inspiration and renewal, a return to the essentials of the faith; it is a call to remember the time when the Church was still one"* (cf. Booklet for the Celebration). Prior to the celebration we also greeted the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Rev. Dr Olav FYKSE TVEIT, after his address on: "Renewed Mission of the WCC in the Search for Christian Unity".



I had the privilege to represent SEDOS at the Seminar on: "Theology of Religious Life: Identity and Significance of Consecrated Apostolic Life", which took place in Rome from the 8-12th February, 2011. It was prepared and carried out by the General Secretaries of the USG and UISG. The Seminar gathered twenty Superiors General, and thirty theologians, evenly divided between women and men. The theologians came from the five major areas of Asia, Europe, North and South America, Africa and Oceania. The purpose was first to discern what the Spirit was bringing to birth in Consecrated Life today, then, how to meet the challenges of

our time in the process of building up the Kingdom of God? It was very beautiful and striking to see these men and women theologians involved in a reflection to identify the vital issues that are emerging and affecting consecrated religious life today: its identity, credibility and visibility. The Seminar did not aim at finding a solution but at opening new avenues for dialogue and inspiring

further research. I feel very grateful to Sister Victoria Gz de Castejón, RSCJ, Sister Josune Arregui, CCV, (UISG), and Fr. David K. Glenday, MCCJ (USG).

I also took advantage of being in that august assembly to speak to those who required information about SEDOS' Identity, Aim and Purpose, including the different activities we offer to our Membership.

SEDOS received an invitation from Mr. Chandler H. Im, PH.D (BILLY Graham Center at Wheaton College). Mr. Chandler, the newly appointed Editor for a Global Diaspora & Mission volume, asked for Catholic theologians or Missiologists to send him their contribution. Three members of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists accepted to be part of the project.

1911-2011 marked the Centennial of the Foundation of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. We took part in the Eucharistic celebration at Santa Susanna Church on 8 September 2011. The main celebrant was Archbishop Fernando FILONI, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

### **We introduced SEDOS to the Board of the Hilton Fund for Sisters.**

My involvement as a Member of the Sisters Committee of the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters helped me to discover the "Many faces of God's Mission". Conrad N. Hilton passed on to the younger generations his passionate disadvantaged. Conrad N. Hilton devotedness of Catholic Women creativity and determination to bring liberation to the poor. He therefore Religious his motto and an important We met three times every year to Grants from Religious. Once a year, Executive Director, used to invite a different constitutive dimensions of me to introduce SEDOS to the for Sisters on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011. a lively debate on the new was at work and we discovered that we were also participating in God's mission.



love for the poor and the deeply admired the work and the Religious across the world for their the Good News of justice and bequeathed to the Catholic Women endowment to support their mission. study hundreds of requests for Sister Joyce Meyer, PBVM, the Speaker for an update on the Mission. Sister Joyce Meyer asked Board Committee of the Hilton Fund Questions from the floor led us into understanding of Mission. The Spirit

We are in the process of creating awareness about the upcoming SEDOS Residential Seminar in 2012 on Latin America and the Caribbean. We had the opportunity to introduce SEDOS to the Portuguese-speaking and Hispanic people gathered at the Collegio Brasilano on 27 November 2011. We hope that some lay people will attend the Seminar in 2012.

We carry on the existing collaboration with the JPIC/USG/UISG and SEDOS, and whenever possible SEDOS took the opportunity to attend the JPIC Commission meetings, workshops or seminars. I appreciated the invitation to take part in the reflection on "The Naked Now" by Richard ROHR. And we were delighted to have Sister Teresa DAGDAG, MM, Co-Secretary of the USG/UISG/JPIC, on the panel at the SEDOS Residential Seminar 2011; and we are looking forward to more of this kind of collaboration. I hope that we can combine our activities for the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. SEDOS will soon also start preparing to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which is in 2014.

The Board of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists met at the Salesian University to prepare the Annual Conference, which will take place in Africa in 2013. They organized a Symposium on: "*Missio Inter Gentes*", Mission to and from All Peoples and Nations". Fr. Godefroid

MANUNGA, SVD, and I presented the “*Missio Inter Gentes* in Africa”. Many students actively participated in the Symposium.

### **Seminar, Conferences and workshops:**

If we were able to organize different activities during this year it is thanks to the collaboration of different groups. In 2011 we gave priority to workshops because the focus has been on: “The ICT Culture and the New Evangelization”. As we know, the aim of SEDOS’ activities is on the one hand to ensure the ongoing formation of SEDOS Members and, on the other, to enable its Membership to be prophetic and dialogical while participating in God’s Mission. The mission approach should take into account the situations in which we live; that is to say we need to do theology contextually, given that today we live in a multicultural, multiple-religions “global village”, a vulnerable global village.

In recent years we have planned the Seminars with the aim of responding to the Prophetic challenge of the Churches in Africa, in Asia and next year, in Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore we have selected a group of outstanding Speakers from Asia, whether originally from Asia, or missionaries in Asia or working with Asians.

I have still to find ways and means to receive the generous collaboration of the SEDOS’ Funding Agencies MISSIO AACHEN, MISSIO MÜNCHEN. MISEREOR has been positive in responding to our application for Funding. I acknowledge that the rhythm of correspondence is not yet regular, nevertheless I have found the way out.

### **SEDOS Residential Seminar**

SEDOS Residential Seminar 2011:

The Executive Committee appointed an *Ad Hoc Committee* to prepare the Seminar:

Sister Filo HIROTA, MMB

Sister Monika Lita HASANNAH, OSU

Bro. Stephen YUOHY, FSC

Fr. PIO ESTEPA, SVD, coordinator and Secretary of the group

Sr. Nzenzili MBOMA, FMM, Executive Director

The SEDOS Annual Residential Seminar was held at Ariccia from 17 to 21 May, 2011.

The theme, “The Asians Among Us. Opportune and Challenging Trends for *Missio Inter Gentes*”, attracted many participants from Asia. Sister Filo HIROTA, MMB, was the Facilitator. Sister Maria Pilar BENAVENTE SERRANO, MSOLA, presided. All the interactions during and after the input, the sharing of lived experiences in mission, contributed to reinforcing the bounds of friendship and mutual support on our journey.

“I see SEDOS Seminar as a platform where many of us can come and share, listen and learn. It is a venue for sharing reflections, experiences, updating on the latest developments in Missiology, Theology, etc. It helps Religious Institutes, Congregations, Organizations to clarify their vision and evaluate their ministry to serve better” (from the evaluation of the Seminar 2011).

Next year the Seminar will be held at NEMI, in the second week of May, 8 - 12, 2012, and the theme for research and discussion will be: “The Spring of the Poor”? “¿**La primavera de los Pobres**”? – América Latina y Caribe, desde Medellín hasta Aparecida.

### **Workshops:**

During the year 2010 we held conferences around the theme: “Intergenerational Dialogue with the Postmodern Youth alienated from the institutional Religion”. The main challenge was how to reach them, since they spend all their time navigating through the Internet? They only establish virtual relationships which do not really require concrete and lasting commitment. Today, the Church is

challenging us to be more creative in this period of the New Evangelization! We have to equip ourselves.

In this year 2011 **the first workshop** was open to all :**Sister Pina RICCIERI**, FSP, on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011, animated the workshop at the Brothers of Christian Schools on: "Abitare un Continente Digitale, Opportunità e Sfide per l'Evangelizzazione". The young generations are born with the technology and they are wizards, we seem "to be immigrants in that domain of social Communications". To enhance our skills in this modern domain that is of the utmost importance, we organized the SEDOS Advent Live-in Workshop.

**The SEDOS Advent Live-in Workshop** on: "The E-Gospel in a Postmodern Key" was held in two weekends at the 'Ad Gentes' Center in NEMI. Fr. PIO ESTEPA was the animator. The aim was to examine and answer the double question: (1) How to discover the Gospel hidden and present in the images the secular creations of our time lavishly offer us. (2) How to restore the narrative use of persuasive images as Jesus did in his time?

The English speaking group had the workshop on 25-27 November 2011.

The French and Spanish speaking groups on 2-4 December 2011.

The relevance of the workshop is, on the one hand, a reflection together on secular narratives with the help of a sociocultural approach to *Lectio Divina* in view of hearing and heeding the Gospel in dialogue with Post-modernity, and on the other, to let participants enhance each other's skills at audiovisual e-production (cf. Flyer of the Workshop)

On 5 December 2011 we will have the SEDOS Annual General Assembly, and as usual, we are having a conference for all SEDOS Membership on: "Evangelizing Mission of the Church in the Context of Fundamentalism" by Fr. **INDUNIL JANAKA KODITHUWAKKU**, Prof. at PUU. The second part of the afternoon is devoted to the activities of Annual General Assembly, reserved to the Superiors General or their Delegates.

## SEDOS Publication

The publication of the SEDOS Bulletin remains the principal activity of all the office personnel. We are now publishing articles in English, French and Spanish.

Even though our databank on subscriptions was updated in 2007 and the On-Line subscriptions have started, Mr. Bernard Perez and Sister Josephine BUECAMINO, FMM, have initiated the updating of our Database so as to allow the SEDOS Members to pay their contribution through the Internet. Mrs. Ilaria continues to provide the new subscribers with a password so as to be able to access the Bulletin on-line.

The subscription for 2012 has not been changed; it will still be Euro 30,00 for Europe, Euro 45,00 (55,00 US \$) for outside Europe.

We have asked the Congregations who are members of SEDOS to send us articles on Formation, and we have received a few and we will publish them in the last issue of the year 2011. This year we made it a point to publish articles reminding us of the great event that has transformed the life of the Church, I mean the Second Vatican Council. And we request SEDOS members to look around and try to find theologians, missiologists who could offer us reflections or send articles concerning the impact of that Ecumenical Council not only on the Church, but also on the other Christian Denominations. We would appreciate your help very much.

## **SEDOS Homepage**

According to the echoes we receive SEDOS WEBPAGE is constantly being visited, mostly by students of Missiology or those writing a thesis on Interreligious Dialogue, very interesting. The SEDOS Webpage is in the process of improvement. Sister Celine has posted and continues updating the catalogue of the Library.

## **Documentation Center**

Sister Celine is busy updating the Library and entering the many magazines SEDOS receives. The SEDOS Library and Documentation Center has welcomed students from the Pontifical Urban University and the Angelicum. Most of books are in English that is why English-speaking students make use of the Library. Some of them are discovering with joy the rich documentation contained in the EDOS Library. We have also received articles from Students for publication thanks to Prof. Fr. Paul STEFFEN, SVD., is also sending many interesting articles for the Homepage and the Bulletin.

## **The Prophetic Role of SEDOS: The Lord has led the SEDOS Membership and He will continue to lead IT**

SEDOS came into being in 1964 during the Second Vatican Council. The nine founders were all Superiors General who made a significant contribution to the Decree *Ad Gentes*, they were charismatic. At the last meeting of the Executive Committee, on 18 November 2011, we raised the question: "how can SEDOS continue to play its prophetic role?". We better see what SEDOS' Members understand this role. To begin with I will not use a ready-made definition of SEDOS, but I will write it up from the answers to the fifth question of the evaluation of SEDOS Annual Live-in Seminar, 2011. "The Asians among Us. Opportune and Challenging Trends for Mission *Inter Gentes*". The evaluation affirms the relevance of SEDOS and its prophetic role.

The aim of SEDOS' activities: to enable SEDOS Membership to be prophetic and dialogical in participating in God's Mission. The mission approach should take into account the situations in which we live; that is to say we need to do theology contextually, given that today we live in a multicultural "global village" which is a vulnerable global village with multiple religions. In recent years we planned the Seminars with the aim of responding to the Prophetic Challenge of the Churches in Africa, in Asia, and next year in Latin America and the Caribbean. We invite Speakers from the continent we are dealing with.

***To the question: What is SEDOS? I drew the definition from the answers to fifth question of the evaluation of 2011:***

- SEDOS is a prophetic voice, going beyond the doctrine of the institutional Church.
- SEDOS is a "**Mission Resource**" **Forum**, a **Formator** in our understanding, our outlook in living out our mission of making God's Reign of love and Peace present in our world.
- SEDOS is a **Resource Center**/ *Event through which one can encounter people, have access to materials, and share mutual experiences for the sake of mission. This should continue. I feel a responsibility to share with my Sisters and others what I have experienced through SEDOS.*
- An important learning and supportive group of people
- I see SEDOS as a platform where many of us can come and share, listen and learn
- *SEDOS is a venue for sharing reflections, updating on the latest developments in Missiology, Theology,*
- *It helps religious Institutes/Congregations/Organisations to clarify their vision and evaluate their ministries to serve better.*

- *Its future will depend on the commitment of personnel and participants.*
- *I am not sure I can be an active protagonist but I can make suggestions to the leadership of our Congregation.*
- An excellent way of bringing us together from every corner of the earth and of opening the mega issues which form the contexts of our ministry.
- A great opportunity for conversion of mind and heart provided by the insightful Speakers, as well as by the small group sharing, plus Open Forum.
- SEDOS opens our vision to new areas; gives direction for mission and fosters relationships.
- SEDOS is an excellent opportunity for enrichment. It offers a real education on other cultures and views with people who are on the ground in those countries.
- SEDOS is a source of strength to the Church, religious congregations. *It gives us a good education and enlightenment on how to live our lives with our poor and marginalized. SEDOS also helps us to learn how to accompany suffering people in order to bring about Justice and Peace.*
- *Invite as many as possible, the leadership teams of different Congregations, both men and women, to participate in SEDOS' initiatives.*
- SEDOS is God's blessing to me personally and to us corporately as Missionaries in the Church. My one concern is that there should be more people from Africa and the South Pacific so that their presence might be felt – with the growing number of African/indigenous missionary Orders who are now going out to other countries/continents. How might SEDOS extend a hand to them? I am not sure what their particular difficulties are in terms of their inability to attend SEDOS Seminars, such as this beautiful yearly one.
- Concerning “Mission”, not much inspiration can be hoped for from the official Church at this moment. So the Religious Institutes themselves have to keep up the Spirit, living their missionary charisma. Here, SEDOS has an important task: to animate and to facilitate on the level of the Congregational Leadership Teams as SEDOS is doing now. I pray that you may go on in this way, also in the coming years. God bless you!

Respectfully presented by

NZENZILI Lucie MBOMA, FMM  
Executive Director

James H. Kroeger, M.M.  
**VATICAN II : GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT  
COMPENDIUM OF RESOURCES**

### Introduction

Thousands of documents and resources exist, which give insight into the pivotal event of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). This modest presentation, compiled for the fiftieth anniversary of the commencement of the Council, provides a selective, yet very broad-based, resource guide to key materials for understanding and appreciating Vatican II. The items are arranged under several categories so as to facilitate identifying and finding specific materials. The compiler, who has both written and lectured about the Council, hopes to have captured some of the best materials available. From experience, he believes that the more one explores Vatican II, the deeper one's faith becomes that the Second Vatican Council was a unique and special gift of God's Spirit to the Church and, in fact, to all humanity. Hopefully, this compendium will facilitate your discovery of the treasures of Vatican II. Exploring the resources of the Council always proves to be an inspiring and enriching faith experience.

### I. ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

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**Flannery, A.** (ed). *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Inclusive Language Translation). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company and Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1996.

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**Trouvé, M.** (ed). with introductions by D. Bushman. *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*. Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1999.

**Note:** Complete texts of the Vatican II documents are available on line in several locations; two are provided here:

**EWTN:** [www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/vatican\\_ii\\_docs.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/vatican_ii_docs.htm)

**Vatican:** [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm)

### II. INDEXES, BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES

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## VII. VIDEO AND MEDIA RESOURCES (random listing)

**Vatican II: The Faithful Revolution.** (Thomas More: 300 min.). This series of five one-hour presentations includes: **I. Genius of the Heart, II. Inspired Awakening, III. Human Dignity, IV. A World Transformed, V. The Dynamics of Hope.**

**Third Millennium: Vatican II: "A Civilization of Love."** (Hallel Communications: 270 min.). This series of nine thirty-minute presentations includes: **I. Vatican II in History, II. Liturgy, III. Laity, IV. Evangelization, V. Ecumenism, VI. Religious Freedom, VII. The Word, VIII. Mary, IX. After the Council.**

**Concilium Vaticanum II.** (Vatican Television Center: 60 min.).

**Author of Reform: The Cardinal Suenens Story.** (Journey Films: 60 min.).

**John Courtney Murray: American Theologian.** (Hallel Videos: 30 min.).

**Sister Mary Luke Tobin: A Woman's View of Vatican II.** (Inner Growth Videos: 30 min.).

**Tradition: The Latin Mass with Gregorian Choir.** (Jack Cashill and Video Post Productions: 60 min.).

**Many though One: Rites in the Catholic Church.** (Maryknoll World Productions: 30 min.).

**John XXIII: The Pope of Peace.** (Ignatius Press: 200 min.).

**The Good Pope John XXIII [Il Papa Buono].** (IMDbPro: 180 min.).

**I Would Be Called John: Life of Pope John XXIII.** (PBS: 85 min.).

**Paul VI: The Pope in the Tempest.** (Ignatius Press: 200 min.).

**Pope John Paul II.** (Ignatius Press: 180 min.).

**John Paul II: His Life, His Pontificate.** (Vatican Television Center: 100 min.).

**Have No Fear: The Life of Pope John Paul II.** (Pauline Audiovisuals: 85 min.).

**John Paul II: The Millennial Pope.** (Frontline: 150 min.).

**Pope Benedict XVI: A Love Affair with the Truth.** (Ignatius Press: 60 min.).

**Bernardin: The Life and Legacy of Cardinal Joseph Bernadin.** (Journey / Frost Productions: 60 min.).

**Destination Vatican II: An Interactive Exploration of the Second Vatican Council.** PC:CD-ROM from Resources for Christian Living (Allen, TX).

### VIII. INTERNET SOURCES (random listing)

[vatican.va/archive/hist...](http://vatican.va/archive/hist...) This site contains the complete documents of Vatican II in several Western, Asian, and African languages.

[stjosef.at/council/search](http://stjosef.at/council/search) This site provides a fulltext search of all Vatican Council II documents.

[vatican2voice.org](http://vatican2voice.org) Here one finds good commentaries on the Council.

Lectures by the Vatican II historian John W. O'Malley are available on you-tube; for "What Happened at Vatican II," see Vanderbilt University (73 minutes) and for "Vatican II: A Historical Perspective," see Boston College (85 minutes).

Two important papal speeches of the Council in text form are available from different sources; available are the opening speech of John XXIII to the Council and the closing speech of Paul VI to the Council.

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Forwarded through the Internet by Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM, the author.

**We are happy to let our Readers know that the SEDOS Residential Seminar on Latin America and the Caribbean : 8-12 May 2012, is almost fully booked.**  
**Thank you all for your interest in SEDOS annual activities. Looking forward to meeting you at the Center Ad Gentes, NEMI/ ROME.**  
*From the Editor.*

Teofilo MINGA, FMS  
**NEIGE MA SOEUR!**

**Neige ma Sœur!**

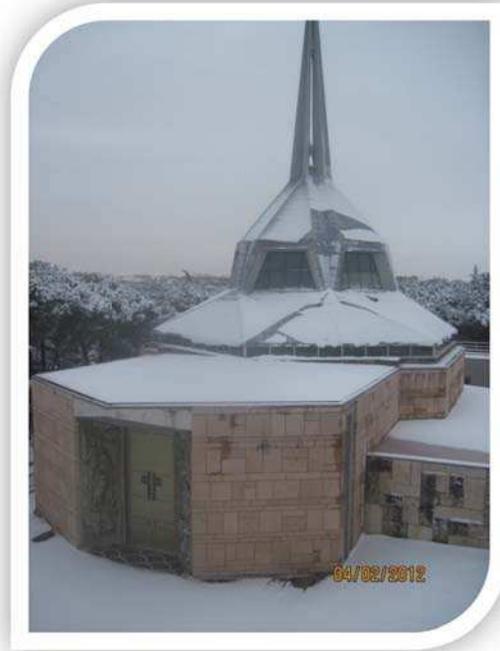
Rome éternelle, ville de foi  
Blanche, après une nuit si obscure,  
En nous tous s'éveille la joie,  
En te regardant si légère, si pure !

Tu es là, ici tout près, à côté de moi,  
Tu envahis mon âme et mon cœur  
Tu arrives, et je t'accueille dans la joie  
Tu me dis de Dieu et sa lumière.

Un amour qui vient de loin,  
Des montagnes de mon pays natal  
Aujourd'hui, dans d'autres horizons,  
La même beauté, neige de cristal.

Branches soulevées vers le ciel  
Elles t'accueillent comme un don..  
Et nous, les cœurs reconnaissants,  
Nous nous amusons comme des enfants.

Sur ce sol de blancheur fine.  
Et nos cœurs chantent sans fin  
Un chant où notre regard s'illumine  
Devant ce don simple et divin



Dans les arbres, tout est une danse...  
Un flocon de neige s'égare et tombe...  
Voilà des souvenirs de mon enfance,  
Des moments de joie vraie et profonde.

Puis le soleil s'ouvre sur cette blancheur  
Toujours simple, belle et attrayante...  
En moi s'épanouit le désir d'une prière  
Pour ce que je vois, et mon âme chante !

Merci, oh mon Dieu pour cette beauté...  
Je sais, elle est un don de ta grâce,  
Neige qui tombe en toute simplicité,  
Don du ciel que j'accueille et j'embrasse !

Toute belle elle me dit Ta présence  
Que j'accueille sur la route de mes pas  
Comme la neige, sans le poids d'une offense  
Que je te dise, Seigneur, dans la joie !

Teofilo MINGA, FMS  
Rome, le 4 février 2012 (Ce jour-là une neige  
magnifique est tombée sur Rome, ce qui est  
plutôt rare. Que Dieu en soit loué !)