



# SEDOS

## Bulletin 2012

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# EDITORIAL



Greetings of Peace and Joy as we welcome  
Jesus, the Prince of Peace,  
once more into our hearts and lives.



The last issue of the Bulletin of the year 2012 is very meaningful and very closely connected to the celebration of the great Mystery of the Incarnation. Fr. Franz-Josef Eilers, S.V.D., has developed one of the most important phenomena that are changing the face of the world. Indeed he is a source of inspiration for any student studying Social Communications. He is dealing with the theology of communication and in his article: "Social Communication and Theology – Communication Theology" he states that "the high point of God's communication is the Incarnation of his Son: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being..." (Heb 1:1-3). It is a tough challenge to learn how to communicate in the way Jesus did.

Fr. Benedict C. Nwachukwu-Udaku is developing an up-to-date topic: "Beyond Bureaucratic Bioethics: A Paradigm for a Construction of African Indigenous Bioethics". The very first requirement to reach this objective– the reconstruction of African Indigenous bioethics– you have to know "what makes the Africans who they are". There is a need to have a clear perception of the African worldview. This is a holistic view of reality that concerns the interrelatedness of concepts/ideas and a communitarian way of life that provides an important starting point for any ethical and bioethical reflection". Another important aspect is that "in the African holistic view of reality, it is evident that human realities such as life, health, religion, culture, morality, sickness, and death are conceived of and presented in a holistic fashion".

Fr. Charles PANACKEL, S.D.B., is a Formator, psychologist, etc. and he has a deep knowledge of today's youth. He is aware of their struggle to find a valid meaning in life, thus he presents Mary of Nazareth as the icon, as the Model for Today's Youth to follow. This is a very down to earth approach to Mary.

During the recent Annual General Assembly on 4 December 2012, SEDOS opened its doors to welcome the Lay Associations recognized by the Church. Pedro Fernandes, CSSp's research on: "Acoger al misionero laico en la perspectiva del que lo recibe" shows that: the lay missionary can play an active part in the Local Church, he/she has an experience of Christ, of life in the Church, and wishes to mature in this experience. They feel that they are called to carry out God's project in his Church and that they are sent by God to follow Christ, the exemplary missionary, on his unique mission.

We take this opportunity to thank all of you, dear Friends of SEDOS throughout the world, for your unconditional support and active contribution to SEDOS' mission. We know, as we continue in the Year of Faith, that "Today too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to the new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith. In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigour that can never fade away. Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy" (Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, n. 7), our deepest wish is that you too may live this experience.

**Merry Christmas!**  
*Merry Christmas!*

**Happy New Year 2013!**  
*Happy New Year 2013!*

Sister Nenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM,  
SEDOS Executive Director

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

# SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND THEOLOGY – COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY

This presentation has two major parts. At first we look at documents and approaches to theology in a more general way which is followed by a more detailed overview on the proposed field of Communication Theology.

## 1. The Concept of "Social Communication"

Any theological consideration of Communication should consider first the concept of "Social Communication" as introduced by the Vatican II Decree *Inter Mirifica* (IM). In a presentation at the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication 2003 on the occasion of 40 years of *Inter Mirifica* the late Cardinal Andrea M. Deskur, one of the key figures of IM and later also C+P, recalled the origin of this expression: The first draft of a proposed Council document on Communication always talked about the Mass Media and was internally heavily criticized with the argument that the first concern of the Church in Communication would not be technology but the human person. Therefore the expression Mass Media should be completely avoided. It was Fr. Enrico Baragli sj another key figure in the preparation of communication documents who then proposed to use instead the expression of Social Communication. This was accepted and later incorporated in a footnote of the final draft of the document submitted to the Council for discussion (cf. Eilers, 2012, 136 f.). It was this way accepted and became the Church expression also of all further documents on communication, though it was never extensively explained. Pope John Paul II, however, in his World Communication Day message (1992) indirectly referred to the field in listing the different stages of human communication starting from speech, hearing and sight before going to other 'media'.

"Social Communication" must be considered as the communication of and in human society. Academically speaking it is according to Giorgio Braga concerned about "the study as communicative processes within society and thus places communication at the center of the life of society." (1974, 17). This calls also for a deeper theological consideration which goes far beyond 'media' which are only one means of communicating. Social Communication includes all ways and means of human communication beginning with non-verbal and interpersonal communication, including all traditional means of communication of cultures like storytelling, theater, dance etc. up to modern technical means and to 'social media' or/and 'social networks' which after some 50 years still seem to prove the vision and inspiration of the social Communication of *Inter Mirifica* ...

## 2. Communication documents and Theology

### 2.1 *Inter Mirifica*

a. The decree *Inter Mirifica* (IM) was one of the first two documents of the Second Vatican Council together with the document on Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* published on December 4, 1963). This means that the text does not include and can not in any way reflect the theological considerations of the Council which followed in the years to come.

b. The existing decree is only a summary and adaptation of a much longer document with some 114 paragraphs, originally proposed to the Council. In the discussion of the longer text it was proposed to trim the original longer text "to the essentials of doctrine and general pastoral directives without losing the essential parts". Thus the council document of only 24 paragraphs is more an outline and directory than a deeper reflection and treatment of social communication. This is also reflected in the official title of "Means / Instruments" of Social Communication. This way the document continues to relate communication to instrumentality ("Media") rather than to do justice to the full meaning of the proposed new title of Social

Communication as the communication of and in human society with proper theological considerations.

c. Unlike other Council documents which were drafted and reflected by leading theologians of the time (cf. e.g. the involvement of Karl Rahner. In: Vorgrimler:2011, 137ff., 197-252) it seems that IM was elaborated by communications specialists ("Media") only without a greater inter-disciplinary involvement of leading theologians, which only later came into the field like Bernard Lonergan,, Avery Dulles, Carlo Martini, Bernhard Haering, Klaus Hemmerle, Gisbert Greshake and others.

d. Only the later Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio" (1971) which was demanded by the Council in IM (no. 23) has a section with theological considerations (nos. 6 to 16) which is based on the role of communication in Society ("Social Communication") though still influenced by the 'media' in society. Here the Trinitarian foundation of communication is addressed, redemption is seen as a communicative happening in Jesus Christ who is presented as the "Perfect Communicator" or as the German text says: the "Master of Communication" and the Eucharist is seen as "the most perfect, most intimate form of communication between God and people possible in this life". Communication now is defined as "giving of self in love" (11) which should be also the basis for any theological consideration and social relations of the Church in this world.

## 2.2 Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II criticized already as auxiliary bishop of Krakow in a written intervention the original proposal for Inter Mirifica for the missing the relation to culture and Communication. Later as a pope he developed especially this concern also in creating a Pontifical Council for Culture. In his Encyclical letter on Mission Redemptoris Missio (1990, 37c) he created a kind of paradigm shift in the approach to Communication when he states under the 'cultural sectors':

"The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communication, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a 'global village'. The means of social communication have become so important to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large..."

Here he talks about a "new culture" which is created by modern communications and he admits that "this is a complex issue, since the 'new culture' originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology." While IM and many other church documents in the past basically underline (1) the right of the Church to use media and to take care of (2) the proper moral use of these means is here a totally new shift to culture which has as well important implications on theology, especially practical theology.

Even with the last document of his life, the Apostolic Letter Rapid Development (January 24, 2005) John Paul II has not created a new communication theology as some authors pretend even without referring to the "Redemptoris Missio" text (Muggeridge 20??). Some theological approaches existed already earlier with the other Popes from Leo XIII, to Paul VI (cf. Eilers, 2011, 58 ff.). But beyond the paradigm shift of Redemptoris Missio John Paul II brought in a totally new dimension with his living communicative personality, a life starting as a poet, actor and developing in the whole manner of his life up to his public dying...a new personal culture based on a deep spirituality: He is in his whole personality social communication!

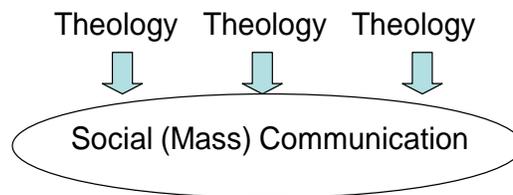
## 3. Communication approaches of Theology

There are at least three different approaches to theology and communication: 1. A Theology of Communication, 2. A communicative Theology and 3. A Communication Theology.

### 3.1 Theology of Communication

Over many years in the past there have been again and again attempts to develop a Theology of Communication which sometimes looked somehow like an initiative to 'baptize' the (Mass) Media and Mass communication to bring them into the flock of Christian faith. Such a theology of Communication tries to consider the fact of social communication as a theological imperative: God has given us these Media for the apostolate and therefore we have to use them like Jesus used all means available at his time for the communication of the message. When Inter Mirifica of Vatican II (1963) affirms the right of the Church to use these media it goes into this direction. One approach within this direction is also the emphasis of the use of media for the different ministries of the Church. Here the words of Pope Paul VI from "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (45) are frequently quoted where he says that "the Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect". But it might also be good to note that this quotation and section from "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (1975) on Mass Media is only number five in a listing of eight "means of Evangelization" (Nos. 40-48) which start with the "witness of life". This approach is already somehow changed in the follow up Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) which was demanded by Inter Mirifica (23). This instruction actually starts after a longer theological consideration not with the Church use of media but rather with the role of social communication in human society to be followed by the contributions of the Church to the field.

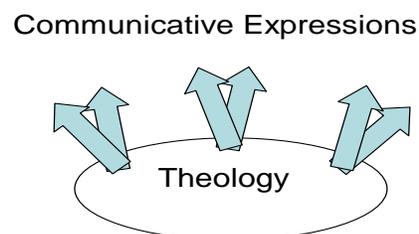
Graphically this attempt can be illustrated in the following way:



### 3.2 Communicative Theology

Another approach to Theology and communication aims at a Communicative Theology. It is the attempt to present and teach Theology in such a way that it can be understood more easily even by simple people. Words and expressions are used which are understandable also to the common and modern people because theologians use the language and concepts of the people of today to explain and transmit God's redemption. People in Public Relations and Advertising have a similar approach which listens to the needs and expectations of people of today and formulate their messages accordingly. Such a communicative Theology tries to give answers to questions and deep desires of modern people. It uses for example their longing for "wellness" to show God's goodness to be reflected and incorporated into our lives. This approach carries an important pastoral and evangelizing dimension which is reflected in a special orientation towards the recipients. Here also Public Relations and Advertising can come in.

Graphically, this attempt can be illustrated in the following way:



There are, however, also further recent developments under the heading of Communicative Theology which develop a special emphasis:

a) There are attempts in Austria and Germany (Innsbruck, Tuebingen) which extend the understanding of "Communicative Theology" as a theology which "reflects the communicative praxis of the communion of the faithful". It sees theology as a communicative action of the faithful in a living community. Its final ground is God's revelation as reflected in the communication ability of human beings: the God given 'communio' is reflected in a respective 'Communicatio' (Scharer/Hilberath 2003, 24 ff; 2007). This approach applies the 'theme centered interaction' of psychologist Ruth C. Cohn for theological purposes. The University of Innsbruck has developed a five semester special MA/Lic.theol program in this field ...

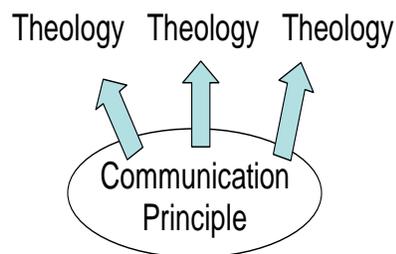
b) Related to this is a third approach to "Communicative Theology" inspired by Juergen Habermas' "Theory of Communicative Action" which studies and reflects the communicative expressions of society and religion and is thus related in a special way to Fundamental Theology. Religion is seen and studied as part of the 'communicative action' of society. Religious communities are communicative communities which act in responsibility before God. On these grounds Edmund Arens (2007) has developed a 'Communicative Theology of Religion" where he considers Religion as "communicative praxis' (210 ff); and lists as forms of this 'communicative action': 1. Storytelling and memory (220 ff), 2. Celebration and proclamation, 3. Testimony and proclamation (230 ff) and 4. 'Diakonia' as compassion, solidarity and justice (234 ff.). He also underlines the strong relationship to culture and emphasizes the intercultural dimension of this approach.

In the above understandings of 'communicative Theology" it seems that communication becomes somehow like an adjective to Theology which is viewed in a 'communicative' way. With a deeper understanding, however, and a further development this can also lead to a third approach and perspective which might be called Communication Theology.

### 3.3 Communication Theology

Soon after Vatican II, especially in the late 1990s a new and deeper approach to Communication and Theology slowly evolved, which brings Communication into the center of Theology. Here Communication is not any more something to be baptized or to be made understandable or to be seen as part of the 'communicative action' of society but becomes a theological principle in itself which has special repercussions on pastoral Theology. In this new approach, it is not Theology which tries to 'baptize' communication but rather the whole of Theology is considered under the perspective of communication. Thus Communication becomes a theological principle in itself. It is like a key which opens to a new understanding of Theology in the perspective of Communication which is especially important for pastoral and evangelizing Communication because God is taken serious as a communicating God and all His expressions are considered as communication.

This new approach can be illustrated in the following way:



Our academic Program on Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication at the 400 years old Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas in Manila is based on such a Communication Theology.

### 1.1 'Communication' as theological concept

It is the German theologian Gisbert Greshake who, probably for the first time in theology, shows in a convincing way that the mere word 'communication' is, right from its origin, a theological expression. He writes in the beginning of his presentation on the origin of the idea of communication (2002, 5-26): "My thesis which I want to unfold and prove in the following presentation is that 'communication' is from its origin a decisive theological idea which grounds in Christian revelation and has as its theme the center of the Christian understanding of God and the world." He shows that such a Christian theological concept of communication was prepared already in Greek philosophy and was finally realized in the Trinitarian and Christological dimension of the concept. "The God of the Christians is not a lonely Nomad, not compact almightiness, not a monarchic super father who lives somehow and somewhere – to speak with Schiller – 'above the stars'. The one and unique God is rather a realizing community, communion and communication in himself and in his relation to humankind... This faith in the Triune God is based on the experience that God has communicated himself totally and without reservation to humans, he communicated not something of himself but literally himself the way he is to humans." Greshake, who published an extensive study on the Holy Trinity (4<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2001), shows then how in the history of Christian theology already, beginning with the Council of Nicea, God is seen as a 'relational unity' who is in himself communication. This understanding of God's reality as relational and as being in himself communication of the early Church is continued in the Middle Ages. In quoting Richard of St. Victor, Bonaventure and others, Greshake shows how also Thomas Aquinas clearly teaches that God as a person is relationship and communication. The Trinity is here "the one divine substance as a communications happening of persons who receive, own and execute their proper oneness within the network of communication."

From here it becomes clear that humans who are created in God's image and likeness are constituted as persons in a similar way and are thus, also related to each other. Greshake quotes Richard of St. Victor in saying: "The completion of a person demands the community with other persons." Such a relationship between humans is further reflected in the whole of creation. All creation is a "connected communicative unity oriented towards a process of greater, mutual information and communication." It is from this that "the Church since the Acts of the Apostles understands herself as 'koinonia', as *communio* and *communicatio* (Cf. Acts 2,42), as life in community, exchange and mutual participation."

In view of modern communication theories and developments Greshake summarizes his findings and convictions in this way: "God himself is communication. He communicates himself to the world and enables her to be herself communicative so that creation in her communication becomes similar to Him and reaches closest communion with Him. In this view, it is essentially the concern of Theology to realize universal communication."

From all this, we can conclude that already the word and concept 'communication' is right from its beginnings a theological concept which does not need to be baptized in any way but rather is already in itself loaded with and in fact originates from Christian faith and Theology. A Communication Theology takes this fact and tries to unfold further within the different theological fields the communicative dimension of God's Revelation and the realization of his inner Trinitarian communication into this world. Thus, 'communication' becomes a theological principle which guides and directs the way we see, study and live our Christian Faith in a time where communication is central to human society. Communication becomes thus, a basic principle and essential dimension of any theology.

Willi Lambert (2006) shows in an extensive study of Ignatius of Loyola as communicator who presents and lives "communicative competence" in his writings and actions and how this is an essential part of spirituality.

### 1.2 The Biblical Message

Carlo M. Martini developed such an approach to communication in his pastoral plan for the archdiocese of Milan 1990. He sees any human communication originating in the mystery of

the Holy Trinity from where creation and existence comes: "from the Trinitarian communion of love and the uninterrupted dialogue originating from his love" (1990, 35). In creating human beings in his image and likeness (Gen. 1, 26; Ws 2, 23) God gave them also the capacity and need to establish communicative relations with each other. The dialogue, which God freely established with his beloved creature, is the basis for reciprocity and dialogue also between humans and "all pages of scripture deepen the event, the crisis and the reconstruction of this dialogue." God's gifts and special expressions of this dialogue are the covenant on Sinai and Pentecost. According to Martini, the gospel of Pentecost is the "gospel of Communication" because God is communion and communication: "He communicates himself to us and thus, enables us to enter into communication with each other and also remove everything which hinders our Communication" (36). Like the musical theme in a symphony is repeated in many ways, Martini says, this theme and fact of the communicating God is expressed in many motives, images and symbols in scripture like for example in Pentecost overcoming the confusion of Babel. The Holy Spirit of Pentecost in his "extraordinary communicative capacity" re-opens the communication channels closed since Babel, re-establishes the easy and authentic report between people in the name of Jesus Christ and thus, the Church emerges as "sign and instrument of communication with God and of the unity between men".

Biblical scholar Lucien Legrand mep (Bangalore) in a paper on 'Missionary Communication: A Biblical Perspective' (2004) gives an overview on the communication of scripture. He asserts that "the entire Bible is language and communication. The biblical God is a God who speaks. He calls and blesses the patriarchs. His word sends Moses on his liberative mission. The 'Ten Words' are given to Israel as a 'light on its way.' (Ps. 119:105) Again, God speaks through the prophets. His word is echoed in Wisdom. Finally, in a splendid worldwide insight, as a Prologue to the whole Bible, Gen. 1 presents the universe as a projection of God's Word into cosmic reality...To the perceiving eye, the universe is a maze of symbols, a polymorphic message proclaiming the glory of God (Ps 19, 2-5)...Coming to the New Testament, it is basically made of news, the 'Good News'. Jesus is eminently evangelizer, bearer of the Good News (Mk 1:14). He applies to himself the prophecy of Is. 61:1-2: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' ... (Lk 4:18-19)..He makes known his message through word and deed, through his way of life and his options, through sacrifice and death. He identifies totally with his revelation. He does not only proclaim the Word; he is the Word. (Jn 1:14). His departing words will be the Great Commission, the mandate given to the disciples to communicate to the whole world... Thus, 'communication' constitutes the golden trend that runs through the whole Bible. In God and in Christ, we find the deep nature of Communication. It is no mere technique of diffusion, marketing skill. It stems from the divine identity of a God who speaks, of a Messiah who is 'Word'. It is the continuation of the self-communication of a God who, through Creation and Incarnation, wants to share his deepest identity. It is the on-going echo, resounding in the world of the voice of the One who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness to the God of truth (Rev. 3:14; cf. Is. 65:16)."

### 1.3 The Role of the Holy Spirit

Karl Rahner's concept of God's self-communication as theological perspective is reflected in the Vatican II document on revelation "Dei Verbum" where the Council fathers stated, that "by Divine Revelation God wished to manifest and communicate both himself and the eternal decrees of His will concerning the salvation of mankind..." (No. 6, cf. 4) Pope John Paul II has taken up this line of thinking in his encyclical letter on the Holy Spirit, "Dominum et Vivificantem" (1988), where he in fact develops the basics of a theology of God's self-communication. More than 10 times he uses and illustrates this expression. According to him, the inner self-communication of the Triune God becomes also a self-communication to mankind: "God, who is infinite spirit, comes close to the visible world. The Triune God communicates himself to Man in the Holy Spirit from the beginning through his 'image and likeness'. Under the action of the same spirit, man and through him the created world, which has been redeemed by Christ, draw near to their ultimate destinies in God" (No. 64).

God communicates himself in the order of creation and grace and "the mystery of incarnation constitutes the climax of this giving, this divine self-communication... The 'fullness of time' is matched by a particular fullness of the self-communication of the Triune God in the Holy Spirit.

'By the power of the Holy Spirit' the mystery of the 'hypostatic union' is brought about, that is, the union of the divine nature and human nature, of the divinity and the humanity in the one Person of the Word-Son. When at the moment of the Annunciation, Mary utters her 'fiat': 'Be it done to me according to your word' (Lc. 1,38) she conceives in a virginal way a man, the Son of Man, who is the Son of God. By means of this 'humanization' of the Word-Son the self-communication of God reaches its definite fullness in the history of creation and salvation. This fullness acquires a special wealth and expressiveness in the text of John's gospel: 'The Word became flesh' (Jn. 1, 14).

This incarnational self-communication in Jesus Christ leads finally through the paschal mystery to a new dimension of God's self-communication. The paschal events "are the time of the new beginning of the self-communication of the Triune God to humanity in the Holy Spirit through the work of Christ the redeemer. This new beginning is the redemption of the world: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son' (Jn. 3, 16)". (No. 23; cf. 13, 14)

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the self-communication of God, which is "accomplished in Christ and witnessed by the preaching of the apostles, continues to be manifested in the Church, through the mission of the invisible Counselor, the Spirit of Truth..." (No. 7) The church has "proclaimed since the earliest centuries her faith in the Holy Spirit as the giver of life, the one in whom the inscrutable God communicates himself to human beings, constituting in them the source of eternal life" (No. 1). The Holy Spirit is seen as the ongoing expression of God's self-communication into all peoples and times. He is not only the agent of Mission and Evangelization as is said in Pope John Paul II's "Redemptoris Missio" (1990) and Pope Paul IV's "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (1975), but must be seen generally as the agent and fulfillment of God's self-communication to the church and mankind. It is the Holy Spirit, who is the personal expression of self-giving, of this being love (No. 10). Here lies the Trinitarian foundation for any communication as 'giving of self in love', as defined in the Pastoral Instruction 'Communio et Progressio' (No. 11). Our 'giving of self in love' as human in communication is based on God's self-communication as his own giving of self. The Holy Spirit is the ongoing expression and agent of this to all peoples and times. Pope John Paul II sees the Holy Spirit in this way as the "direct principle and in a certain sense the subject of God's self-communication in the order of grace" (No. 50).

#### 1.4 Communication Theology: Basic Elements

Bernard Lonergan saw in his "Method in Theology" (1971) communication as an essential dimension for all theology. It was Avery Dulles, however, who in "The Craft of Theology: from Symbol to System" (1992) applied Rahner's concept of God's self-communication to the whole of Theology. He concludes "that theology is at every point concerned with the realities of communication" (22). He unfolds this further in reference to fundamental theology, the fields of systematic theology like Christology, Creation, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, sacraments, and practical theology including missiology and pastoral theology. Concluding with the Trinitarian view, he calls Christianity "preeminently a religion of communication, for God in his inmost essence is a mystery of self-communication. The entire work of creation, redemption and sanctification is a prolongation of the inner procession within the Trinity..."

Communication theology can be considered in four steps or dimensions, the inner Trinitarian communication, Revelation and Incarnation which lead to the Church as the continuation of these three into the here and now of every people: "Church is Communication." (Dulles, 1971) These considerations can be summarized in the following way:

#### Holy Trinity

In the Trinitarian perspective, God is seen as a God communicating in himself. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are communicating with each other in their inner Trinitarian movements. Bernhard Haering (1973,155) has aptly described this inner communication in the following way:

“Jesus, the Word incarnate, reveals the divine life as communication, sharing. He prays, ‘All that is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine’ (Jn 17:10). His sharing of himself and of all the truth arises from the total sharing between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sharing, communication. ‘When he comes who is the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears...’ (Jn 16:13-15).

Communication is constitutive in the mystery of God. Each of the three Divine Persons possess all that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, but in the modality of communion and communication. Creation, redemption, and communication arise from this mystery and have as their final purpose to draw us, by this very communication, into communion with God. Creating us in his image and likeness, God makes us sharers of his creative and liberating communication in communion, through communion, and in view of communion.”

Why are we as human beings able to communicate? It is because this Trinitarian communicating God has created us in ‘His image and likeness.’ Because God is a communicating God, we are also able to communicate.

### Revelation

The Trinitarian God, however, stays not in himself but reveals himself and communicates with his creatures, to make them his partners. He reveals himself through creation and grace. The whole Old Testament can be considered as a report on God’s communication with Israel his people. In this, he uses all means and ways of verbal and non-verbal communication available in human culture.

It is fascinating to see how he masters the different ways of communicating from anger to enticing love, through earthquakes and silence, through storms and protection from enemies and natural calamities. He speaks directly to prophets and kings, ‘face to face’ with Moses, to groups of people and individuals. He calls Moses into his special service from the burning bush, which he probably approached more out of curiosity. God uses the need and sense for news of human beings to establish relationships and pass on his messages and concerns.

It is stories about God’s communication with Israel which we read in the First Testament: “ He blesses, liberates, saves, leads on dangerous ways, gives life saving advises (through Moses); he wants to live in the midst of his people but also confronts them in their sinfulness; he concludes a covenant with his people and lets them experience his forgiveness which enables ever again a new beginning...His promises are contained in a book, the Bible, which is the ‘book of the covenant’ (cf. Ex.24,7) in which God has bound himself as the God of truth and mercy with Israel” (Erich Zenger). God communicates thus in many ways verbally and non-verbally and finally his communication is presented, preserved and sealed in a book, a means of communication which is the proof of God’s communicative action.

### Incarnation

The high point of God’s communication, however, is the Incarnation of his Son: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. The son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...” (Hebr. 1,1-3).

And how does this WORD communicate? It is quite revealing to study the communication ways and methods of Jesus Christ:

- He speaks already through the circumstances of his life. The becoming flesh in the Holy Spirit, the birth in a manger, the hidden years in Nazareth, the 40 days in the desert, his suffering on Calvary and death on the cross, his resurrection. All these are expressions of his mission and commitment to the sending of his Father and the redemption of people.

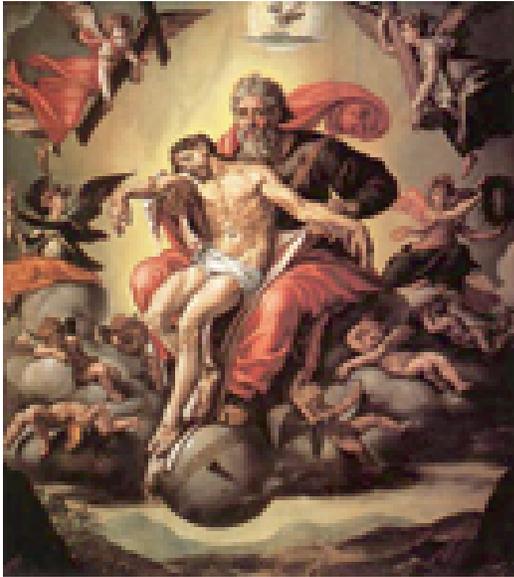
- The places where he preaches are manifold and almost everywhere: He is the itinerant preacher, who speaks in synagogues and private homes, in marketplaces and streets, on the sea and on the mountains... Wherever he goes, it is always in the service of his mission.

And how does he further communicate with the people of his time and place?

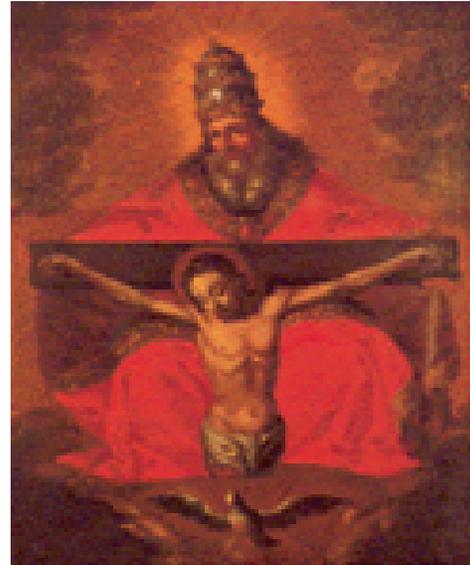
- All of his communication grounds in the sharing with the Father in prayer, especially at night.
- His speaking to people begins with their daily experiences and concerns, which he brings into the will of the Father. He never talks about himself but rather of the One who sent him. For this, he uses stories from daily life like the work of the fishermen, the sower, the experience of the widow searching for the lost penny, the one baking ...
- He speaks to big crowds as his audience but also small groups like his disciples and he reaches out to individuals in deep personal relations like with Nicodemus, the Samaritan women, Lazarus and others.
- His proclamation is embedded in the scriptures of the Old Testament but uses also parables, stories from daily life and even daily 'news' like the death of those killed at the tower of Siloah.
- His proclamation is not just simple entertainment. He asks questions – Hans Wijngaards counted alone in John's Gospel 164 of them. He demands decision-making. "If your eye causes you..." "Do you also want to go?" He even puts people into crisis to force them to make a decision.
- All of Jesus' healing is not finally meant just for the healing of the body but rather – as Carlo Martini says – to re-establish the communication line with God the Father. Before the blindness of the eyes is removed, the sins are forgiven. "Your sins are forgiven..." is more important than bodily health.
- Finally, Jesus' communication is not just passing on of information and message. It is more a deep personal commitment to the Father and his message, which demands the whole person. Jesus communicates with his whole being up to the death on the cross. He goes far beyond just 'talking' which finally leads him into the silence on the cross in the total commitment of his life. "Jesus did not speak about God; he reflected a deep filial intimacy. His was a powerful language because it was a language of authentic experience. Coming from the heart of a Son, Jesus' teachings were not theo-logy but theo-phany" (Legrand, 2004). This also shows how his communication is not finished in this life but points to a deeper reality beyond...
- Jesus' final mandate to his disciples is to communicate the "Good News" to the whole world with creativity and commitment. "Here, it is interesting to note that "the Gospels report the 'apostolic mandate' of the Risen Lord in different terms. Mk 16:15 refers to sheer proclamation ('Go..proclaim the Good News') in the style so to say of a Radio or TV pronouncer. In 28:19, Mathew has in mind the more elaborate and time consuming process of 'teaching', of training disciples ('make disciples'). Luke speaks of 'witnessing' through the life witness of fervent communities (Lk 24:48; cf. Acts 2:42-47). Spontaneously, in the light of their respective life contexts, the evangelists and the communities which they represent interpret the communication mandate dynamically." (Legrand, 2004)

#### The Communicating God: Mercy Seat

All communicating ways of the Trinitarian God are artistically synthesized in the so called "Mercy Seat". Already the 'Ark of the Covenant' in the Old Testament was called this way which Martin Luther translated into the German "Gnadenstuhl." In the New Testament, it is God the Father presenting his (crucified) Son in the Holy Spirit to his creatures. Carlo Martini calls it a "representation of the supreme act of Divine Communication" and an "unsurpassable representation of God's Communication" (No.24). In the history of Christian art there are, since the middle ages, several hundreds of such illustrations.



Pieter Coecke Van Aelst (1502-1556)  
Museo del Prado, Madrid



Sonntagsberg Pilgrimage Church,  
Austria

### Sending of the Church

From all this, the Church is called and sent to continue God's Trinitarian communication in Revelation and Incarnation into the here and now of all times and places. It is the Lord who sends: "Go to proclaim – communicate - the Good News to all nations and baptize them..." (Mt. 28,19)

This Church is born in the communicating act of God's Holy Spirit on Pentecost. This same Spirit changes the fearful disciples into courageous messengers. Everybody present from all corners of the world understood their language. Like Vatican II says in the document on Mission Ad Gentes:

"The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary, since according to the plan of the Father it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The plan flows from the 'fountain-like love' of the Father as the principle without principle from whom the Son is generated and from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son." (2)

The happening of Pentecost is further an impressive example of intercultural communication, the communication of God's coming to people of all cultures of that time – in one language and on one occasion (cf. Eilers 2012, 173 f.)

The whole book of the Acts of the Apostles is a report on the continuation of the sending and ongoing communicating of God's Holy Spirit in the beginning of the Church. It is revealing how even modern marketing people (Berger/Gleissner, 1998) discover in all this the essence of their own working principles when they talk about the "Paul-Principle." They refer to Paul's communication as the "most successful marketing strategy in the history of humankind." They say that the disciple not only fulfilled the four basic marketing principles of the great "P" – Product, Price, Placement, Promotion – but also the fifth one, which is the real key to success: Personality. These marketing people see apparently in Paul the greatest master of communication up till today.

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Benedict C. Nwachukwu-Udaku

# BEYOND BUREAUCRATIC BIOETHICS: A PARADIGM FOR A CONSTRUCTION OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS BIOETHICS<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

In the last four decades of the existence of bioethics, there has been a consistent and somewhat over-exaggerated emphasis on the relationship between medical personnel and the patient. This emphasis has been formed within a formal, systematic, rule guided and well-defined context of medical practice, regulated by ethical principles, framed and formulated within a milieu of liberal culture and its overwhelming influence on the Western world. It is irrefutable, in this era of globalization that defies distance and defines life that this seemingly one-sided attention constantly militates against the future of this interdisciplinary subject. In this study I intend to propose that the recognition of: the natural endowments, the basic narratives, cultural values, indigenous ethical principles, unsophisticated traditional wisdom, and basic identity, will help to provide solutions to those problems that underlie the African peoples' life in their own context (*ad intra*) and in their relations with others (*ad extra*). In bioethics the appreciation of local conditions and the social context of the African will effectively constitute and herald an unprecedented route in articulating an African indigenous bioethics.

To achieve this objective, I will insist that the traditional wisdom and indigenous cultural and human values that define the African continent must not be abandoned in the face of Western development because; if they are abandoned or discontinued there will be an irreparable loss in the people's self-understanding. Further, this intellectual exercise will show that the significance of bioethics is neither exhausted by interpreting human conduct from biological presuppositions (biologization of ethics), nor limited to elucidating the ethical judgment of the biological sphere (ethicization of biology); but the place of narrative and the consideration of the social location of the African people/s constitute a necessary condition for formulating an African bioethics. However, with relevant arguments, I will stress how the appreciation of the natural endowments and basic narratives that make indigenous bioethics possible should be protected from the danger of ethical and cultural relativism. Thus, there is an invitation to step out of one's self, one's reality, in order to re-connect and engage in objective and context-free arguments and judgements while preserving the dignity of one's respective culture and values under the rule of "gateless gates".<sup>2</sup>

To put our study into perspective, it is imperative to underline the origin and the features of bioethics in the Western world thereby indicating why the Western bioethical approach is considered to be somehow foreign to the African worldview, basic rationality and on-going praxis.

## 2. The Meaning and the Bi-located Origin of Bioethics

Bioethics, which is the study of ethical issues, related to medicine, health care, biotechnology, and biomedical research is said to have originated as an academic discipline towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, precisely in 1971, in the United States of America. The origin of this new discipline was occasioned by specific socio-cultural and political changes that marked the life of American society during the last century. Most of the pioneer works on bioethics suggest that this respected and interdisciplinary ethics<sup>3</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a bi-located birth. According to W.T. Reich, it took place in the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and in the University of

Georgetown, Washington, D.C., almost simultaneously. While Van Rensselaer Potter (1911-2001) was said to be a member of the academic community of the University of Wisconsin and the father founder of bioethics at the former, André Hellegers (1926-1979) was said to be the person responsible at the latter. While Potter, a reputable oncologist, circulated the meaning, nature and goal of the new discipline through various publications, André Hellegers, an obstetrician and avid investigator, brought bioethics to the medical field through the establishment of the first institution for the study of bioethics named: "The Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics" which was officially inaugurated on 1 July 1971. At present the institution is called The Kennedy Institute of Ethics situated in the prestigious city of Georgetown, Washington, D.C., United States of America.

The bilocated birth of bioethics gave rise to what most scholars regard as the double legacy of bioethics. The first legacy is attributed to Van Rensselaer Potter, and the second to André Hellegers. From these two classical, but Western oriented, legacies the meaning, character and goal of bioethics were formulated and disseminated.

In the legacy proposed by Potter, bioethics is considered to be a bridge between two cultures: the culture of biological sciences and the culture of humanities.<sup>4</sup> Bioethics is, therefore, regarded as "an interdisciplinary science that approximates ways and means for the survival of human species", not only in their individual character, but also in their communitarian character as a group of people in a particular culture or nation. The legacy proposed by Potter developed a bioethics that is classified as ecological.

The legacy André Hellegers proposed is significantly different from the one proposed by Potter in the sense that while Potter places bioethics on a global scale, Hellegers restricts the scope of this young and promising discipline to the field of medicine and its allied sciences and ethics. The bioethics of Hellegers is classically regarded as biomedical ethics.<sup>6</sup> However, the first decade of bioethics was shaped by a liberal culture where the major concern was the affirmation of people's autonomy. Individuals were more interested in being empowered to manage their own life and death. People were also incessantly concerned with issues relating to their personal sexual life, for instance, women wanted to have absolute control of their reproductive system.<sup>7</sup>

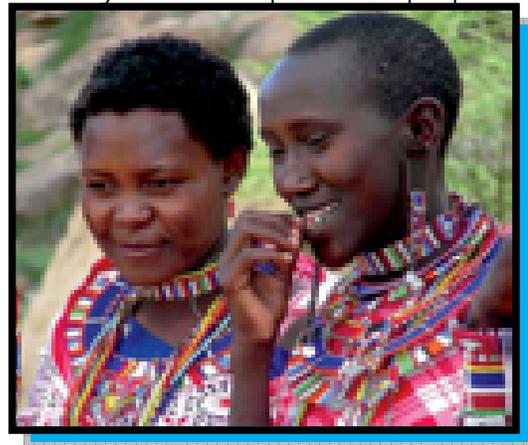
The second decade of bioethics according to Diego Gracia<sup>8</sup>, introduced a great change in bioethics and was concerned with the question of social justice. The need for justice is more urgent than the concern for autonomy. Thus, Gracia observed: "without justice which safeguards the basic equality of opportunities for all in social life, autonomy will become rhetoric".<sup>9</sup> This second decade placed bioethics in a global context, thereby making it relevant to all peoples, especially those who are faced daily with different types of injustice and the lack of fundamental human rights that make life worth living. The birth of the "globalization of bioethics"<sup>10</sup> is a fruit of this second decade. The globalization of bioethics should lead to the "globalization of social justice" and the "globalization of equality" as Jorge Ferrer has advocated. A critical consideration of these two decades will lead to a justification of the "prophecy" which states that "if the bioethical debate of the first decade was concerned with the defence of autonomy, the second decade should be concerned with justice".<sup>11</sup> While the first decade was founded on the principle of domination, the second decade was concerned with the principle of recognition, the ability to appreciate people's basic local context, values and worldviews with respect to bioethics which is the study of ethical issues related to medicine, health care, biotechnology, and biomedical research as we have already highlighted.

Our own humble proposition or sort of "prophecy" is that, if the liberal culture influenced the way of doing bioethics in the first decade, this second decade was highly influenced by indigenous communitarian culture. Since the question that regulated the modus operandi in the first decade was: what should we do to regain our autonomy as individuals, to be free from harm as autonomous individuals, and avoid paternalism in the relationship between the

medical personnel and the patient? The question that constitutes the *modus vivendi* in this second decade is: how should we act in order to create a more just world where our individual and collective dignity will be respected; who should a medical doctor be in order to relate fraternally with his/her patients; who should we be, so as to avoid different forms of injustice from being cultivated and promoted in the world. We could, therefore, affirm that while the bioethics of the first decade was a bioethics of thought, the bioethics of the second decade was a bioethics of praxis. Thus, the bioethics of the second decade is the one that can pave the way to the formulation of a bioethics that is indigenous and suited to the African people/s and their reality.

### 3. Why is it important to take into account the local situation and principles?

Taking into consideration the social location and value system of a particular people is important because these aspects reveal the considerable cross-cultural variation in the understanding of what constitute "reasonable", morally defensible, social practices. What may be interpreted as responsible, caring conduct within one community is sometimes regarded as callous and cruel behaviour by individuals brought up with different moral norms and patterns of social life. One example of norm conflict between health-care providers and members of various immigrant populations is the dispute concerning the provision of female genital 'circumcision' in the so-called Western oriented hospitals. What is a morally defensible, culturally significant rite of passage for the defenders of the many different practices labelled "female genital modification", is regarded by opponents as an act of mutilation, an assault on the bodily integrity of vulnerable girl children by adult members of patriarchal societies, and a violation of basic human rights.



Knowledge of the local context and its values constitutes a positive reference in resolving conflicts of an ethical nature and orientation because the variations in the understanding of moral practices can thus be explained. Current moral theories, like the four principles of biomedical ethics, continue to obscure such variations in communal understandings of moral practice, and foster idealistic de-contextualised moral reasoning that pay rather limited attention to the changing patterns of social life and moral experience.

Today, the patients who come for medical treatment bring to the clinic a host of different languages, moral norms, and attitudes towards health, healing, medicine, illness, suffering, dying, responsible decision-making and family obligations. So, to learn about a people's culture and its perception of reality is a *sine qua non* in medical practice and biomedical research that can only be achieved when indigenous ethical principles and praxis are taken into account. To understand and appreciate the local values of different cultures is a moral imperative today because individuals from quite different ethnic backgrounds, with distinct personal narratives and communal histories, may encounter one another in the different units of the hospital environment.

An appeal to the local context might serve to develop indigenous ways that could illuminate how moral reasoning and public policy-making proceed in neighbourhoods, public institutions, and other social settings where individuals with quite diverse understandings of moral practices live beside one another.

#### 4. Recognizing the True Image of Africa and the African People: A Locus for Indigenous Bioethics

The popular English dictum: "If you want to teach John Latin, it is not enough to know Latin but one must also know who John is", is both instructive and pertinent. I humbly acknowledge that most people in our world today are ignorant of the African continent. People generally associate Africa with poverty, disease, corruption, backwardness and the like. These situations simply describe what may apparently be happening in Africa. They do not tell us what makes the Africans who they are. A better knowledge of a person or a nation, or a continent should begin with who a particular person or nation is before considering the evils that may be besetting them. When the woes, evils and limitations are placed before the blessings that define their very life, the tendency to discriminate against that nation or continent is higher than usual. This has been the case with Africa. It is on this note that I wish to outline some of the features of the African worldview that are positive in our understanding and appreciation of the African people/s and their social context.

The African worldview is a holistic view of reality, inter-relatedness of concepts/ideas and a communitarian way of life and so it provides an important starting-point for any ethical and bioethical reflection. The African worldview provides the original basis, motivation and cohesion for moral action. In the African holistic view of reality, it is evident that human realities such as life, health, religion, culture, morality, sickness, and death are conceived of and presented in a holistic fashion. It is incorrect to separate the one from the many, the sacred from the secular, the natural from the supernatural, and the individual from the community.

The second significant feature of the African worldview is the inter-relatedness of reality. It is inconceivable for the African to deal with realities such as morality, religion, life, sickness, and death as separate entities. It is, therefore, incorrect to deal with the problem of sickness without taking a closer look at the environment and social context that influence a people's state of health. Thirdly, the communitarian way of life enables the African to appreciate the fact that in the event of sickness, the individual is not alone. The resources needed for taking care of the individual are community owned, community promoted and community protected.

We consider the African worldview a positive factor in our effort to develop an indigenous bioethics that will be essentially African and at the same time open to dialogue with ideas and praxis formulated in the Western "thought pattern and praxis". This consideration has further demonstrated that "something good can come from Nazareth". No culture or people are completely sterile. Every culture has something to offer to others (solidarity) and is capable of making present its blessings and values for the life of its members (subsidiarity). The primary motive of this paper is to consider the possibility of harnessing the African 'treasury of wisdom', encapsulated in stories, proverbs, narratives, virtues, myths, etc., to address the contemporary ethical dilemmas in the African context and in the global world. What can African bioethics offer to a world beset by increasingly sophisticated ethical quagmires?

#### 5. Some Basic Cultural Resources in the Development of Indigenous Bioethics

In this section, I wish to dig deep into the African culture to extract those natural endowments, basic narratives, and cultural values, indigenous ethical formulations that can serve to promote human life and at the same time facilitate dialogue with Western bioethics. Since the resources we are employing are essentially cultural and indigenous, they will provide less fashionable, unsophisticated, narrative, step-by-step efforts in addressing bioethical problems. The basic values to be considered include the African concept of human life, the African understanding of health and sickness, and the place of virtue in African people's medical practice.

### 5.1. The African Concept of Human Life

In Africa, human life is a concrete reality the people experience, and from this practical platform they necessarily perceive life as belonging, sharing, communion, hospitality, celebration, gratitude and participation. These different aspects of life explain why they view life as the beginning of who a person is (identity), of what he/she does (activity, achievement) and of what he/she has (belongings). This is shown, demonstrated and celebrated in different ways, for instance, through the names the Igbo of Nigeria give to children at birth such as Nduka (life is supreme), Ndudiri (let there be life), Ndukwe (if life permits). These practical considerations about life are embedded in proverbs, songs, folktales, stories, etc., which the African uses in day-to-day events and ethical formulations. These considerations show that life has a deep social dimension and that social conditions to protect and promote life should be assured.

Another important characteristic of life among the Africans that gives flesh to this holistic idea is that life is related to activity. Although they recognize that life is of ultimate importance and that every life should be respected, activity is what makes life more meaningful and more respected. It is on this note that questions, of the utmost importance to the community, arise such as: what value and what role does a particular person have in the life of the community? This explains why Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*<sup>12</sup> was regarded as a successful man: his life was full of dynamism and heroism. Okonkwo was able to transform resources that were given by Nature into possibilities that made him a prosperous and responsible person. He brought honour to his community when he defeated Amalinze the Cat in a wrestling contest. He received many titles and was respected as a wealthy man, whereas his father, Unoka, was lazy and wasteful. Unoka often borrowed money and then squandered it on palm-wine and merry-making with friends. He was not respected in Umuofia because he could not improve his social status and that of his family. He was unable to transform the cultural and human resources around him into possibilities for a better life and social change.

In the community Unoka was considered a failure and a laughingstock. He eventually died a shameful death and left numerous debts. The life he lived was not holistic because he refrained from any activity and praxis that would have improved the social condition of his family and the Umuofia community. Africans do not consider the life of the elderly as not holistic because, although they may no longer exercise physical activities, they engage in other kinds of activity on the spiritual level by being in constant relationship with the Ancestors. The role of the Ancestors normally brings change about in the social life of the community.

In Africa, as in its bioethics, human life forms the measure or the criterion for assessing and judging the morality of the actions of social, economic, and political actors, be they individuals or institutions.<sup>13</sup> Any discussion on bioethics that does not place the value of life as fundamental may jeopardize the essence of this interdisciplinary subject and such bioethics will be essentially inimical to the African way of life.

### 5.2. The African Understanding of Health and Sickness

In Africa, health involves human values which include ethical, cultural, religious and social resources. For a person to be healthy, he or she ought to preserve these values which are taken to be the common good of the community. Any medical personnel who neglects these values, cherished by the people within their culture and tradition, may cure the disease but not heal the entire person. For the African, what is important is healing and not the mere curing of sickness. While healing is holistic, curing is most often partial. While the cure could most often be achieved by technical skills, healing cannot be achieved by a technical skill alone. Healing is all-embracing and touches all aspects of life.

Healing is also an ongoing process. It involves the whole community. Here we could underline one of the basic differences between the idea of health in the African world and that in the Western world. In the Western world health-related questions seem to focus on the physical or emotional health of an individual considered apart from the other constituting elements of health; whereas Africans are interested in knowing about the health of the members of the family of the patient, the socio-economic and spiritual situation of the sick person and that of his/her immediate environment which also constitute essential components of health. Thus, sickness in most African communities is a sign that something is wrong with their interpersonal relations with God, with men (living and dead), with the rest of Creation and with the social context.<sup>14</sup>

It is on these grounds that the African does not conceive of health and sickness on the technological and biomedical dimensions alone. Most often, the biomedical model regards the body as a machine, disease as a consequence of the breakdown of the machine, and the doctor's task as the need to repair the machine. Modern medicine, by paying more attention to treating the body, overlooks the social inequalities in health, as well as such factors as poverty, environmental hazards and gender inequality, that result in disease.

For Africans a relationship exists between the biological individual and the social community which explains why health is seen as holistic because there is no gap between the health of an individual and the social conditions that promote it. HIV/AIDS for example is seen not only as a biological disease but as a social disease. To heal the sick, the social conditions of the people need to be improved and promoted. In health-related issues, everybody takes an interest and applies his/her own expertise. When a child has feverish convulsions, an educated kinsman sends for a doctor, his elder brother prefers to stretch the convulsing child over a fire made with fresh leaves, after which the skull of a monkey would be hung around the child's neck, while the grandmother may be in the "upper room" with a group of "prayer-warriors" interceding for the welfare of the sick child. Other members of the family might engage in cleaning the environment, providing pure fresh water and preparing more nutritious food.<sup>15</sup>

This collective responsibility is in line with African social anthropology which defines a person within his/her social context – "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am".<sup>16</sup> Through collective responsibility, the gap between the world of the sick and the world of the healthy is reduced if not eliminated because both the sick and the healthy share a common humanity, a common story and a common narrative. One of the most significant observations we could draw from this holistic understanding of health and sickness is that physical fitness is not the only parameter for measuring health in the aforementioned traditions. Health is de facto seen as a total wholeness of man taking into account his overall psychological, socio-economic, and cultural well-being, not simply the absence of a physical disorder. This definition is basically in tandem with the definition of health given by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1946 when it stated: "Health is a state of complete, physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".<sup>17</sup>

Another valid observation we could make with regard to this holistic interpretation of health is that the African perception of health is inextricably linked with African anthropology. The African understanding of man pre-dates the Cartesian dichotomy of man as *res cogitans* (the thinking self) and *res extensa* (the extended body) and presents the human being as a unified self, as a holistic being.

### 5.3. The Place of Virtue in African Medical Practice

The Igbo word for virtue in medical practice is *dimkpa*. *Dimkpa* comes from two Igbo words: *di* (husband) and *mkpa* (emergence, necessity) which literarily means husband of emergency, being able to have dominion over a given situation. This concept 'di', although it could be used

in a unique and autonomous sense, is also related to the Greek word for virtue 'aretē'. Aretē in Greek signifies excellence, victory, effectiveness and conquest. Unlike the Greek word 'aretē', the Igbo 'di' is not acquired through competition or acquisitiveness but through the continuous practice of a particular action within the community. Virtue has a communal dimension. Among the Igbo it is not enough to be a medicine man, the community expects the individual to be a master of medicine, namely di iba (where the word dibia – traditional medical personnel – was taken). Iba (fever) was a major disease that perplexed the Igbo for years in the past. It was, therefore, imperative for a medicine man to be a master of iba (fever). It was not enough to be a hunter, the community expected the individual to be a master hunter, namely, di nta (nta means animal).

Dimpka is a person who fights for the good of the community. He may come from an impoverished family (economically reduced), but he fights tirelessly for the welfare of his people (healing, protecting them). The importance of a virtuous life underscored by aretē becomes an issue the Igbo consider before they will bestow a daughter in marriage to a man, or confer traditional titles on their sons and daughters. It is important to note that people who give others practical help are also considered to be virtuous and they are called "omefuruonyeodiri" (helper of the helpless). So, virtue for the African is not only expressed in excellence and prowess but also in charitable works (caritas) which distinguish the life of the omefuruonyeodiri. An omefuruonyeodiri is not someone who is very rich but someone whose mode of being is giving. In African Indigenous Bioethics, there is a perfect reconciliation between the two aspects of virtue formulated by the Greek world and the Christian world; between aretē and caritas<sup>18</sup> encapsulated in the traditional virtues of dimpka and omefuruonyeodiri.<sup>19</sup>

## 6. Some Features of African Indigenous Bioethics

Our primary argument so far has been that indigenous bioethics is possible; it is a bioethics of the people, by the people, for the people and for the world. It is not a closed system but one that is always ready to dialogue with other currents of thought. It is a bioethics that is sensitive to people's socio-economic, religious and cultural context. The following constitute the features of African Indigenous Bioethics:

### 6.1. Sensitivity to the Social Context

The first feature of an indigenous bioethics is its consistent sensitivity to the social context that defines the life of the African people/s. It is a bioethics that is not solely preoccupied with the autonomy of the individual but one that seeks the good of the community. If Western bioethics started by affirming the principle of respect for autonomy, an indigenous bioethics has its terminus ad quo in affirming the place of social justice for the common good of all. To heal the sick, for instance, the social condition of the people needs to be improved and promoted. Thus, true healing cannot take place if the individual has been separate from the community.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, one could say that what has to be healed is not a disease, but the community. What need to be healed are the structures that expose people to all forms of health hazards. It is on this ground that we appreciate the insight of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria: their constant plea for the healing of the structures that continue to subject Nigeria to different pathological and social ills.

The themes of some recent Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria bear witness to this plea. Some of them are entitled: "Save the Nation" (1991); "Nigeria in Distress" (1993); "Healing the Nation" (1996); "Healing the Wounds of the Nation" (2002)<sup>21</sup>. In these appeals of the Nigerian ecclesiastical hierarchy there is a constant entreaty to God for socio-economic and political healing. Thus, it is not only the Africans' bodies that are physically sick

but also the socio-political and economic structures that affect the African people's life and existence.

Sensitivity to the social context demonstrates that bioethics should not be limited to the study of the great ethical conflicts concerning recent discoveries, for example, the human genetic, it should be known that those issues that form part of day to day life ought to be part of this intellectual commitment.

Bioethics is not only restricted to biomedical issues; it considers people and their respective contexts, values and convictions as a whole. In the face of a biomedical issue such as abortion, the emphasis should not be on "what should we do?", but on "who are we becoming as a people, what legacy are we leaving behind for the generations to come?". Contemporary biomedical issues require the recognition of who an individual is, as well as the identity of his/her community.

## 6.2. Dibia: The Wounded Healer Model of Medical Practice

Considering the inequality that underlies access to social health-care services and the social risk of disease, due to such causes as: poverty, environmental hazards and the great inequality that define the African health-care system, I wish to propose in this last part of my essay, a model of medical care that could be of immeasurable help to the African continent.<sup>22</sup> The proposed model of health-care is not fashioned to unveil what the African should do but who the African should be in the face of debilitating social situations.

The model proposed is the one described in the life and mission of the traditional healer, popularly called the Dibia in traditional Igbo society. The Dibia, whether as Dibia afa (diviner), dibia aja (priest) or dibia ogwu (medicine man), is considered a wounded healer because he has been affected by the poor economic situation of his people. He shunned all forms of affluence and the inordinate quest for material well-being since his compatriots were dying in abject poverty. He carried his healing bag (akpa ogwu onye dibia) around and was ready to assist at any time, at any moment, the umunna (his people) needing his attention. His presence brought healing to the people. While the others were feasting, eating and drinking, a Dibia would always be interceding for the well-being of his people, calling upon the Ancestors to protect them. He would supplicate the gods to intervene in any unforeseen atmospheric change, so that the people might continue their social and religious life. The Dibia would aspire to become less, so that the community might become more. He used the resources available in the community such as herbs, incantations, etc., to effect healing.

The wounded healer is one who can sacrifice himself for the sake of others, as in the case of Jesus who was not only a healer (medicus), but also the One who patiently bore our sins (cf. I Pet 2:24). In Deutero-Isaiah he was presented as a "suffering servant" who "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our inequities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:4-5) [RSV]. This model of medical care contributes to a bioethics that serves humanity in our present world order. It will help to influence the debate in the area of biomedical issues like heart and kidney transplants, where the need to die that others may have life is better expressed. Pregnancy for example ends with the birth of a child, whereas a heart transplant begins with the death of the donor; it is a gift of oneself to the other. The wounded healer model is an invitation to appreciate better such heroic actions in the area of medical practice.

The wounded healer model inaugurates a new mentality among medical personnel in Africa where the medical profession is fast becoming a 'status symbol' and a means of making money. Today, there is a commercialization of the medical profession, which some authors call

a business conception of medicine.<sup>23</sup> Medical doctors should be honest and at the service of their respective communities, knowing full well that the medical profession cannot be seen as an avenue to make quick money. They should not exploit the ignorance and social limitations of their people. Medical knowledge is a common patrimony because of the State's undeniable contribution to training medical doctors.<sup>24</sup>

The model of the wounded healer constitutes an invaluable resource in the area of sexual ethics like contraceptives, infertility, abortion, etc. In these important areas of our day to day life, the emphasis is not on how to dominate Nature, how to exploit the natural potential and possibilities irresponsibly, but on the ability to engage in a dialogue with Nature, the ability to engage in conversation with our bodies,<sup>25</sup> to know when and how to accept the truths of Nature responsibly, and be ready to give up certain inclinations for the good of others. Infertility then becomes an invitation to adopt the children of others in order to give them life and a purpose. A couple that adopts a child is considered a wounded healer, because the couple carries the wound of not having a biological child but at the same time is able to heal the wounds of another whose destiny would have been threatened except for the help of the adopting parents. The ability to save another life (pro-life) instead of shortsightedly imposing one's own will at all costs (pro-choice and its 'yes' to abortion).<sup>26</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

From our discussion and insights, it is clear that bioethics as an interdisciplinary subject has a home in all cultures therefore it is not limited to Western culture. The cultural and human resources of the African continent could enrich the way of doing bioethics in our present global world. Within the context of the African people/s, we have realized that bioethics, like every other ethical theory, is not only about formulating ideals; it is about putting them into practice. Bioethics as a social ethics pays attention to people in their concrete human situation.<sup>27</sup> It is only within a given context and among a particular people that we can talk about a bioethics of solidarity: poetic bioethics and inculturated bioethics.

Biomedical ethics could learn from the African context that the social aspects of a disease need to be taken into consideration. The majority of people in Africa are not only suffering from biological diseases but also from social diseases such as poverty, lack of basic resources like potable water, and other essential goods which constitute an undeniable terminus ad quo for any serious bioethical inquiry into, and thoughtful reconstruction of, health related issues and perspectives.

The communitarian proposals for the projection of indigenous bioethics have validated the claim that bioethics needs a context in order to be effective and meaningful. The African social context, for example, takes into account who Africans are and is sensitive to their holistic way of life. Moreover, the holistic modus vivendi requires a holistic modus operandi in the issues of life and praxis. Additionally, all the ingredients, which have been proposed as necessary for the development of indigenous bioethics, are framed in a holistic and communitarian perspective in response to the demands of the present context of the African people and their moral landscape.

An indigenous bioethics project will reveal that the prevention of some diseases like HIV/AIDS does not depend on merely technical solutions. A technical solution is always inadequate if the values that define life and existence in a given context are not taken into consideration. Today, in other fields of endeavour there are unrestrictive recommendations for integral solutions. For example, Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* has emphasized that technical formation which leads to a technical solution to problems is not sufficient but necessary in the

present circumstances of life. He therefore recommended other forms of formation like formation of the heart which complements technical or professional formation.<sup>28</sup>

The contribution of indigenous bioethics reveals how ethics could be re-enforced from the background by being sensitive to the social location of people and their pattern of thought. In a given context, ethical terms pick up a specific meaning whereby the same action may be interpreted differently depending upon the cultural values of a given people. Finally, it is important to highlight some of the problems that are associated when we overemphasize the use of indigenous resources in the construction of bioethics. For example, when cultural values and traditional wisdom are placed on a sacrosanct level in interpreting the human and existential reality, it may lead to a projection of a kind of perfect community where what is emphasized is only the good and the noble. In a community where everyone is expected to be a *di* (expert) in his profession and state of life, there may be a tendency to discriminate against the weak and the infirm. This mentality was what led to the disdain suffered by Unoka, Okonkwo's father, in *Things Fall Apart*. The fact that Unoka was considered a weakling paralyzed every opportunity to accord him any cultural status and when eventually he died, he was not buried in the family compound, a fact which signified a colossal expulsion from the community of his Ancestors. This attitude of the Igbos/Africans should be revised in the light of a deeper communal appreciation that vulnerability constitutes the basic human anthropology and a locus for bioethical research.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is a fruit of my reflection at one of the Concurrent Sessions during the World Conference for Theological Ethicist held in Trent, Italy, 23 - 27th July 2010.

<sup>2</sup> This expression has constituted a veritable object of study in sociology and studies in inculturation as seen in the work of Prof. Mark Nwagwu. See, M. Nwagwu, "Of Gateless Gates: Transforming Self, Transforming Ndi-Nguru", Nguru League Lecture Series - 2 (2004).

<sup>3</sup> In the 1st definition of Bioethics the interdisciplinary character is essentially present. The Encyclopedia of Bioethics defines Bioethics as: "the systematic study of the moral dimensions – including moral vision, decisions, conduct, and policies – of the life sciences and health care, employing a variety of ethical methodologies in an interdisciplinary setting". See: W.T. Reich, *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1995) xxi. This definition is important on three accounts: (i) the attention given to the medical and health profession, (ii) the interdisciplinary character of bioethics (iii) its pluralistic methodology.

<sup>4</sup> V. R. Potter, *Bioethics: Bridge to the Future* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1971) 205.

<sup>5</sup> V. R. Potter, "Bioethics, the Science of Survival", *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 14 (1970) 127-153.

<sup>6</sup> Reich, "The word 'bioethics'", 19-34. Some authors tend to separate bioethics from medical ethics. See, for example, P. Guinan, "Medical Ethics versus Bioethics (a. k. a. Principlism)", *The Rational Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 6 (2006) 651-659; also "Can Principlism Save Medical Ethics?", *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 2 (2002) 199-207.

<sup>7</sup> In this first decade discussions boarding on abortion, in vitro-fertilization, use of contraceptives, responsible parenthood, etc., were very much highlighted in the field of bioethics. These themes attracted the attention of most theologians who, today, are regarded as pioneers in bioethical discourse.

<sup>8</sup> D. Gracia, "De la bioética clínica a la bioética global: treinta años de evolución", *Acta Bioética* año VIII, n. 1, Organización Panamericana de la Salud/ OMS, Programa Regional de Bioética, 2002, 27-39.

<sup>9</sup> Gracia, "De la bioética clínica", pp. 32-33.

<sup>10</sup> M.A. Ryan, "Beyond a Western Bioethics?" in *Theological Studies*, 65 (2004) 158-177

<sup>11</sup> J.J. Ferrer, *Sida y Bioética: De la autonomía a la Justicia* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1997) 18.

<sup>12</sup> C. Achebe, *Things Fall-Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

<sup>13</sup> A.E. Orobator, "Caritas in Veritate and Africa's Burden of (under)development", *Theological Studies*, 71 (2010) 320-334; 323.

<sup>14</sup> B. Bujo, "What Morality for the Problem of AIDS in Africa?", in: M.F. Czerny (ed.), *AIDS and the Church in Africa* (Pauline Publications, Africa, Nairobi 2005) 55-60.

<sup>15</sup> B.C. Nwachukwu-Udaku, *Sida en África: Reflexiones Propuestas desde el Pueblo Igbo* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2009) 65.

<sup>16</sup> J. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1969) 108-109.

<sup>17</sup> A modern criticism of the definition of health by WHO is seen in D. Callanhan, "The WHO Definition of Health" In: S.E. Lammers - A. Verhey, (eds.) *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1998) 253-259.

<sup>18</sup> Prof. Julio Martinez has scholarly established the relationship between arete and caritas in: J.L. Martinez, *¿Caritas vs. Arete: La recuperación, macintyreana de la virud ante las propuestas ético teológicas de Hauerwas y Keenan*", *Miscelanea Comillas*, 59 (2001) 593-637.

<sup>19</sup> See also, B.C. Nwachukwu-Udaku, *Sida en Africa*, pp. 208-214

<sup>20</sup> In a recent study, Walter Ihejirika has seen the community and its socio-cultural space like the Aladimma as a melieu for genuine deliberation on matters of social development. See, W.C. Ihejirika, "The Locust in the Earthen Pot": A Metaphor for Participatory Social Development in the Nguru Mbaise Clan, A Lecture Presented to the Members of the Nguru League, Nov. 2010.

<sup>21</sup> All these communiqués are found in: P. Schineller, *The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on Issues of Faith and Life* (Abuja: Daily Graphics Nigeria, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> B.C. Nwachukwu-Udaku, "Medical Ethics in the Twenty-First Century: From Episteme to Techne in Medical Practice", *The Reach-Out Journal of Philosophy* 1, 8 (June 2009) 9-14.

<sup>23</sup> See: P. Cattorini, "AIDS, rifiuto d'assistere, rischi professionale e principio di beneficiabilità in etica medica", quoted from J.J. Ferrer, *Sida y Bioética*, 233-234.

<sup>24</sup> See: E.D. Pellegrino & D.C. Thomasma, *Virtues in Medical Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); F. Torralb *Filosofía de la Medicina: En torno a la obra de E.D. Pellegrino*, (Madrid: Instituto Bona de Bioética y Fundación Mapfre Medicina, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> See, John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media 1997); C. West, *The Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"*, (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2003); J. Gafo, "Juan Pablo II; Sobre el Cuerpo y la Sexualidad", *Sal Terrae* 68 (1980) 715-725; S. Mafague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); S. Salin & J. Butler, eds., *The Judith Butler Reader* (Indiana: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Julio Martinez has underscored how the paradigm of Pro-life and Pro-choice has influenced discussions on abortion in the United States of America. See, J.L. Martinez, "Moralidad y consenso publico: el debate sobre el aborto en la sociedad norteamericana", *Miscelanea Comillas* 57 (1999)39-78.

<sup>27</sup> The relationship between Bioethics and Social Science has formed the cardinal point in a recent study by Leigh Turner, "Bioethics and Social Studies of Medicine: Overlapping Concerns", *Cambridge Quarterly of Ethics* (2009) 36, 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 31.

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## MARY: MODEL FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

The author is a Professor of Sacred Scripture, and holds PG degrees in Journalism, Psychology and Counselling. He has been a very successful editor of the monthly magazine *DONBOSCO* published by the Salesian Provincial House, Chennai. This article attempts to present Mary as a model for youth. Formators of young people, especially parents and teachers, could find these insights useful in their own formative interaction with the young.

### From Veneration to Imitation

For the youth of today, particularly Catholic youth, relentlessly targeted by anti-Christian values, the person of Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus, serves as a veritable icon that inspires and challenges them. What messages has she to reform a youth culture that tends to be increasingly isolated, self-centred and solipsistic, focused on the here and now, with hardly any concern for the future? Is her life and example able to offer maternal correctives against the big "lie", namely, "I am happy and having fun, and that's all that matters", that rules their fast pace of life, with shallow relationships, mistrust and façades? Before the Second Vatican Council Mary Most Holy was presented primarily as "Full of Grace", "Mother of God", and "Queen", a distant person for Christian veneration, whereas later Church Documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, Ch. 8 (1969), the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (1974) of Paul VI, and the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (1987) of John Paul II brought to the fore the human image of Mary as a "woman among other women" for our imitation.



### Disenchantment with Today's World

The youth of today are indignant and angry at the world they have inherited from their elders, a world of social and economic exploitation, of increasing violence and terrorism, of rampant corruption, environmental destruction and of a nagging fear of a nuclear holocaust. At the religious level, they are angry with God too for allowing such a topsy-turvy world. To them God seems to be "the eternal bystander", doing nothing, allowing the powers of evil to get the upper hand. Losing hope in God, they are also at a loss as to how to translate into action their eagerness to bring about radical changes in all the spheres of life affected.

Mary, too, experienced a similar dissatisfaction with her own world. But, unlike the youth of today, she always harboured the hope that God would fulfill his promises. In the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55), she summed up and made her own the prophetic expectation of a new and just world. While God would surely do his part, she offered herself totally to the fulfillment of his plans through self-surrender and neighbourly service. She invites youth to walk in the ways of God as she did, leading them to look beyond present adversities and to trust in the saving intervention of a transcendent God, while believing in themselves and in their irreplaceable contribution to build God's Kingdom on earth. Like Mary, youth should trust in God, holding fast to the certainty of God's intervention that will culminate in the final victory of good over evil, offering at the same time their own action and transformative interventions.

### Facing an Uncertain Future

The feeling of restlessness that youth often express in word and deed is mostly the result of a distressing feeling of uncertainty about their own future in the bleak world they live in. Various sociological surveys confirm this fact. In Mary, however, youth can find a woman who courageously faced the uneasiness of an uncertain future. After her engagement to Joseph, probably when she was just 14 years old according to Jewish custom, an unexpected and unknown future was presented to her when she was asked to become the mother of God's Son!

From her "yes" on, an unknown and uncertain future lay before her. Later, at the Presentation in the Temple, she just surrendered herself to God when Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her heart. The Pieta, depicting Mary holding her dead Son in her arms, exquisitely captured in marble by Michelangelo, reminds us of the inimical world she lived in, as God kept leading her deeper into the unknown of his will. Indeed, Mary manifested heroic courage in so many circumstances that her life is an exemplar for all, especially for youth who experience life as a roller-coaster ride! They could whisper the words of the song: "Be with us, Mary, along the way, guide every step we take", and draw from her both inspiration and strength. When Mary appeared to Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico, some of the most beautiful words she spoke to Juan could well have been spoken to the youth of today: "Do not be afraid. Do not fear. Am I not your Mother?"

#### Desire for Self-Actualization

In Abraham, Maslov's "Pyramid of Needs", "self-actualization" tops the human's needs. While this is true of every person, we may say that self-actualization is the dream in particular of modern youth who are at the same time targeted by a plethora of deceptive promises aired by the consumer-market and life-style gurus. Youth are brain-washed regarding what to buy, what to wear, where to go and what to do, to become the "perfect" man/woman and feel "self-fulfilled". How many gullible youth fall an easy prey to such fallacious "mantras"! Without resorting to any such illusory crutches, Mary lived her full potential and achieved the purpose of her life without for once succumbing to any of the pseudo-promises of her time. Her joy was in God: "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (Lk 1:47) — not in the ephemeral things of this world — and her self-fulfillment was a God-and-she tango: "For the Almighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49). Her message to the young is that they can also realize themselves fully with God's help, through uncompromising fidelity to him, saying a definitive 'no' to the deceptive and passing pleasures of this world.

#### Searching for the Meaning of Life

To the youth who are bewildered as to the value and preciousness of human life, seeing it snuffed out by abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and abused by physical and psychological violence, paedophilia and prostitution, Mary offers the resoluteness of her struggle to carry, to give birth, to nurture and to protect the tender life to which she gave birth in Bethlehem. It was no easy task for her to conceive, which put her reputation at stake, and to protect her unborn baby from the wrath of the religious fundamentalists of Jewish society. After Jesus' birth, she preferred the life of a refugee in Egypt than to let her baby fall prey to the murderous schemes of King Herod. Mary thus sends a strong message to today's youth regarding the sacredness and value of every human life, theirs included. To the youth asking the fundamental question, "What is the meaning of life?", today's consumerist world offers an atheistic and materialistic package that plunges them into dark despondency and hopelessness from which they often seek to escape in drugs, drink, pornography, pre-marital sex, crime, violence and suicide. Mary was different. She did not find the meaning of life in the consumerist slogan: "produce or perish". She was born poor and she lived in poverty, as one of God's anawim. Unlike the Apostles (Mk 10:35-37), she never asked her Son for any favours for herself. She teaches young people to seek meaning in life in serving and giving, not in dominating and receiving, but to dedicate themselves to the service of God and neighbour as she did. Let youth contemplate Mary. They will discover that in her, human life reached perfection and that she lived life to the full. Next to Jesus, she is indeed the most fitting person to help them in their search for meaning in life. They will find the answer, not in the pages of scholarly books or in the thought of some philosophical school, but in the living encounter with a person, with Mary of Nazareth.

#### Making the Journey of Faith

At times one hears the sweeping remark, "Oh, today's youth! They are quite irreligious". True, today's youth tend to relativise: faith is valid only in so far as one's context is concerned, and truth is decided by what is convenient: "I do what I think best". Accordingly, some of them think that it is not wrong to be "sexually promiscuous, socially uninvolved, individually self-centred,

morally lax and spiritually negligent". However, a "2005 All-India Study" found Catholic youth to be by and large still religious, looking for spiritual points of reference to fall back on in moments of struggle and doubt, although they tend to question the relevance and validity of certain traditional religious practices. Granted, the journey of faith for most young people turns out to be a rugged experience of ups and downs, of belief and disbelief, of practice and non-practice.

Mary is able to help such young people in their effort to connect to God because she is so close to God and she is also their Mother. Mary, a historical person of flesh and blood, stands as the model of a truly free human being. Rather than close herself within her own little world of thoughts and beliefs, likes and dislikes, she let herself be guided by God's plans for her life. God alone was the content of her faith and she submitted wholly to the Creator's domain and sovereignty. Integrating faith and life, Mary opened herself to God's greater plans, shedding all forms of narcissism and self-will. She invites the young too to such self-surrender.

#### Call to True Freedom

There is no denying the fact that young people love freedom and they resist anything that prevents them from becoming the masters of their own destiny. Unfortunately, in their passionate pursuit of freedom, their own passions and selfishness often enslave and imprison them. They forget that true freedom is not a license to do anything, but to do only what is good. Mary always enjoyed a freedom that always let her be motivated by selfless love that gave priority to God's will and to her neighbour's good. She never let her will or fear or ambition or anything selfish to curtail her inner freedom. How she longs for every young person to follow her example!

True inner freedom expresses itself in freedom of expression and decision, a trait much treasured by youth. In Mary they can find a woman with a mind of her own. At the Annunciation, before pronouncing that momentous and consensual "let it be" to God's invitation, we see her in open dialogue with God's messenger and freely exercising her power of decision-making. We also see that, in the Jewish tradition of the time, her decision to remain a virgin for life was a courageous one. Besides, in the revolutionary social, spiritual and economic changes that are echoed in her Magnificat and in the unexpected, harsh and even life-threatening circumstances that surrounded the birth of Jesus, she stands before youth as a woman of true freedom, of courageous yet serene decision, and of childlike surrender to God's will.

#### Reaching Out to the Less Fortunate

The "2005 All-India Study of Catholic Youth" brought to the fore a quality generally associated with the young, namely, solidarity and communion with the oppressed and disadvantaged.

Many a People's Movement for freeing people from the shackles of oppression and injustice credit their success to youth-power. Among the exceptional women of the Bible: Ruth, Judith and Esther, all women who emanated love and had the courage to befriend and defend their own, stands Mary, who never expected to be waited on, because of her singular privilege as Mother of God. Rather, living her faith in action, she reached out to the needy in caring love: as a nurse caring for her aged cousin Elizabeth in her home during confinement; as a concerned friend, taking the initiative to elicit her Son's intervention to avert a terrible embarrassment for the newly-weds of Cana; as a loving Mother, solicitously tending the frightened and persecuted early Church, placed under her care by the dying Jesus. Youth and youth groups that promote love of neighbour in action will find in Mary a supreme example of solidarity and communion with the poor and needy.

#### Totus Tuus: "All Yours," O Mary

Dear Youth, Fr Bob Guste, author of *Mary at My Side*, recounts his visit to the family of Abraham Rafidi, a Palestinian convert, during a trip to the Holy Land. Fr Bob was happily taken aback when

the mother of the family threw her arms about him in welcome, saying, in her own language: "When I see you, I see my son". Yes, Mary welcomes every young person with the same words, with the same love with which she accepted and took to heart her own divine Son, and invites you to a deeper intimacy with Christ in whom alone is the fullness of life. How she wishes you would understand that entering into a personal relationship with Christ, her Son, is the single most important turning point in your spiritual journey! And should you find yourselves "lost" in the "temples" of a sinful world, she would come in search of you (cf. Lk 2: 41-50) and help you return to friendship with Jesus. On Calvary, thanks to the dying Jesus, she became the one the Fathers of Vatican II acclaimed, "Mother of the Church", the Mother of all, particularly of the young, represented by John, the youthful and beloved disciple (Jn 19:26). We also read that Jesus entrusted his mother to the care of young John (Jn 19:27a). Some Scripture scholars maintain that the words "the disciple took her into his own care" (Jn 19:27b) have a much deeper meaning than just providing a roof over Mary's head or taking her into his house. The words mean: he took her for his own, took her into his life, and made room for her in his heart. This is what you should do too, to the one Jesus also offered us as a personal gift: his mother. By cherishing her pervasive maternal presence in your life, it would be wonderful if you too were to make your own Blessed Pope John Paul II's motto: 'Totus Tuus' ("All Yours, O Mary". As St Bernard expressed it so beautifully: "Have Mary in your mind and Jesus will grow in your heart".

### A Theology of the Body

In the book with the above title John Paul II reminds us that Christianity is a body religion! The Incarnation is the centrepiece of our relationship with God. And yet, despite this obvious fact that the human body became God's Body in Jesus Christ [as celebrated on 25 March], we have had to wait many centuries until John Paul began to elaborate a Theology of the Body. To those who may have been wondering how the body could become the subject of theology, John Paul gave this forthright answer: 'The fact that theology also includes the body should not astonish or surprise anyone who is conscious of the mystery and reality of the Incarnation. Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology – that is, the science that has divinity as its object – I would say, through the main door'. When I meet young priests today who have never heard of John Paul's major contribution to the theology of the body I am left wondering whether the theology of the body finds the main theological door of some seminaries and colleges open to welcome it.

Jim McMANUS, in *The Furrow*, 53/2 (Feb 2012) 80.

(Vidyajyoti – Journal of Theological Reflection, Vol.76/3 March 2012, pp. 33-39).

Pedro Fernandes, CSSp.

## ACOGER AL MISIONERO LAICO EN LA PERSPECTIVA DEL QUE LO RECIBE

Originario de Portugal Pedro Fernandes es espiritano. Luego de sus estudios de Teología en Lisboa (1993), hizo un Masterado en Teología Moral en el Instituto Católico de París (1995), fue ordenado sacerdote en 1996. Enviado como misionero a Mozambique, ejerció en el norte del país (diócesis de Nacala) de 1996 a 2009. Desde 2010, y después de haber pasado un año de estudios en Porto (Portugal).

Durante varios siglos, los agentes de la misión de la Iglesia fueron principalmente los consagrados, con una especial preferencia por los ministros ordenados, los sacerdotes. La misión de primera evangelización, comprendida como responsabilidad de la Iglesia en general y como obligación particular de algunos monarcas o responsables políticos de Estados católicos, fue confiada a un personal especializado. Este personal era considerado como la élite de la Iglesia y necesariamente identificado a los que se acercaban al "estado de perfección", es decir, los religiosos o los eclesiásticos.

El siglo XX ha vuelto a acentuar la importancia del apostolado de los laicos en la Iglesia,<sup>1</sup> que ya antes del Concilio Vaticano II había encontrado una expresión particular en la Acción Católica. El Concilio, con su modelo eclesiológico que acentúa la comunión y el sacerdocio común a todos los fieles, ha permitido a la Iglesia el redescubrimiento de la comunidad y de su valor en todos los niveles: litúrgico, organizativo, y también pastoral. Por otra parte, el desarrollo de un cierto humanismo laico,<sup>2</sup> un acrecentado sentido de la justicia social y la evolución de una nueva ética que integra los desafíos de la globalización, han creado en las sociedades occidentales una gran sensibilidad frente a la responsabilidad común de la construcción de un mundo más justo y más solidario. Al mismo tiempo, en los medios católicos, la herencia de la posmodernidad ha hecho más difícil asumir un compromiso para toda la vida. En efecto, la radicalidad del compromiso se vive hoy con una nueva intensidad y un profesionalismo que se sitúan fuera de un compromiso para siempre.

Un modo nuevo de llevar la misión

Estos factores, como muchos otros, han contribuido a que surja un nuevo modo de llevar la misión cristiana. En este marco surge lo que comúnmente llamamos el voluntariado misionero. Laicos, jóvenes y menos jóvenes, se proponen colaborar en las tareas misioneras, frecuentemente en situaciones de primera evangelización o de precariedad socioeconómica. Por el momento, una gran parte de estos compromisos misioneros se realizan integrándose en las estructuras y los equipos misioneros clásicos que han hecho sus experiencias desde hace algún tiempo; estos equipos misioneros están compuestos, en su mayoría, por sacerdotes y religiosas. Ésta es una experiencia relativamente nueva para la Iglesia y también ciertamente nueva para la vida personal y comunitaria de los que están llamados a acoger e integrar a estos nuevos colaboradores. Representa un desafío para las dos partes: los misioneros laicos se ven súbitamente insertos en un medio humano relativamente exiguo y lejos de los centros de interés de su mundo de origen. Por otra parte, los sacerdotes y las religiosas que los acogen, frecuentemente por primera vez, descubren la necesidad no sólo de trabajar en colaboración con ellos sino también la de compartir sus vidas con personas que tienen otra opción y otro estilo de vida, con códigos de comportamiento muy diferentes.

Es cada vez más claro que esta nueva realidad del voluntariado misionero es un verdadero don de Dios. Un signo de los tiempos y una gran oportunidad de renovación de la actividad misionera de la Iglesia y de las comunidades religiosas invitadas a abrirse a una nueva calidad de relación.

### Los espiritáneos en Itoculo

Los misioneros de la Congregación del Espíritu Santo fueron enviados a Mozambique a fines del año 1996, para abrir dos misiones en dos diócesis diferentes. Se trataba de comunidades de religiosos espiritáneos que fueron enviados para trabajar con las comunidades religiosas de la Iglesia local. En Netia, en la diócesis de Nacala, encontramos una comunidad de religiosas combonianas con la cuales constituimos nuestro equipo misionero, que brindaba asistencia al conjunto de las comunidades de la parroquia de Netia y a los dos tercios de las comunidades cristianas de Itoculo. Esto representaba un vasto territorio de la diócesis donde, en esa época, ningún misionero residía. La inserción en ese medio nos llevó a reorganizar nuestra presencia y, ocho años más tarde (en 2004), entregamos esta parroquia a un sacerdote diocesano de Nacala. Aprovechamos para organizar, por primera vez, un equipo misionero de residentes en la parroquia de Itoculo. Las hermanas espiritáneas nos han acompañado en la apertura de este nuevo campo misionero y residen actualmente con nosotros en Itoculo.

El trabajo en este vasto campo de comunidades cristianas nos enseñó lo que es la vida misionera y nos hizo comprender los desafíos reales de la misión. Miles de niños sin escuela, decenas de pueblos sin hospital, ninguna posibilidad de acceso a cualquier tipo de asistencia médica, una masa de agricultores que vive bajo el umbral de la pobreza absoluta, sin caminos para transportar sus productos. Visitábamos las comunidades donde se repetía cada vez el mismo ritual: desde nuestra llegada el primer punto del día era siempre los "hiali" (las novedades), salpicados de relatos de sufrimiento, de dificultades vividas cotidianamente y difícilmente imaginables para nosotros europeos. Nuestro carro estaba frecuentemente cargado de enfermos que transportábamos a los hospitales más próximos, a veces a 70 u 80 kilómetros de distancia. Sin nuestra ayuda esas personas hubieran permanecido entregadas a su suerte. El refrán que escuchábamos era siempre el mismo: "Padre, denos medicinas".

Nuestras primeras experiencias de trabajo con la población local fueron vividas en la fragilidad y en la impotencia. Para nosotros, vivir en la precariedad era una experiencia importante: no teníamos a nuestra disposición soluciones hechas y la gota de agua que representaba nuestro trabajo en ese océano de problemas nos invitaba a reconsiderar el sentido de la misión más allá de la multiplicación de nuestras actividades o de la utilidad de nuestros servicios. Ahí descubrimos que la vida misionera es, ante todo, una experiencia de comunión con el Cristo misionero. La autenticidad y la fecundidad interior de esta comunión son totalmente diferentes de las actividades de una ONG, aunque fuera confesional: somos testigos de una vida nueva y de una esperanza que se viven en la gratuidad del compartir el amor y la fe, y no bajo el registro de lo cuantificable.

### Los misioneros laicos en Itoculo

La ampliación de este horizonte humano ha arraigado nuestra vida misionera en la experiencia de Dios y nos ha renviado, por lo mismo, a una profunda experiencia de fraternidad en la fe.

La misión llega así a ser una verdadera espiritualidad y una experiencia de Iglesia: un testimonio de una vida nueva en Jesucristo resucitado. Esta experiencia de Iglesia vivida en este contexto particular nos ha llevado a asumir posiciones concretas frente al clamor de los pobres. Ahí estaba la misión para nosotros. El inmenso trabajo al que teníamos que responder no era exclusivo de nosotros, debíamos compartirlo con ayudas específicas y competentes. Competencias que, como sacerdotes y religiosos (religiosas), no poseíamos necesariamente. En concreto, habíamos descubierto que los misioneros sacerdotes o religiosos no estaban llamados a hacer el trabajo de los otros, sino más bien a asumir su contribución propia en la diversidad de funciones y de servicios misioneros en la Iglesia.

La profundización de este descubrimiento nos ha conducido a repensar nuestro proyecto misionero a partir de un equipo plural en el cual se integrarán los misioneros laicos. Junto a sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas habrá también laicos de la comunidad cristiana local como también otros que vengan de fuera para trabajar más específicamente en los servicios eclesiales y sociales. Así, para compartir la responsabilidad, vinieron voluntarios de Europa y se unieron a nuestro equipo. El primero que se unió a nosotros, cuando todavía estábamos en Netia, fue Christophe Haveline, un joven francés enviado por la DCC (Delegación Católica para la Cooperación). Se encargó de la coordinación de un servicio de asistencia médica itinerante que teníamos entonces en Netia e Itoculo. Después de un tiempo de aprendizaje del idioma portugués, realizó un apasionante trabajo durante sus tres años de presencia entre nosotros. Después de él se sucedieron otros voluntarios, no siempre enviados por la DCC, sino por los espiritanos portugueses. Todas esas personas se integraron en los sectores ya existentes de la acción pastoral y social de la misión como la salud, la educación o la dirección de algunas construcciones. En los últimos años, su trabajo se realizó preferentemente en el dominio de la educación: la formación de animadores de comunidad, la enseñanza de la lengua portuguesa y de ciertas disciplinas escolares en las escuelas locales, el funcionamiento de redes de escuelas comunitarias dirigido por la Iglesia y el apoyo escolar a los estudiantes. Últimamente, gracias a la competencia profesional de Ernestina Falçao, se ha podido organizar el acceso a una biblioteca escolar y a un servicio de formación informática.

### ¿Qué decir de los misioneros laicos?

Los laicos misioneros son a la vez laicos y misioneros. Son bautizados, animados por la fe y por la respuesta que quieren dar a su vocación cristiana. Esto les hace vivir en corresponsabilidad en la misión y los invita a ofrecer libremente un cierto tiempo de su vida para el trabajo apostólico de la Iglesia en su misión ad gentes. Son personas que se sienten parte activa de una Iglesia local, personas que hacen una experiencia de Cristo, de la vida en Iglesia y que desean crecer en esta experiencia. Son laicos, su forma de vida es laica, tienen una familia, una vida profesional, una inserción en la sociedad, proyectos personales.

Estos laicos misioneros son personas de buena voluntad que han decidido ser solidarias en la construcción de la justicia y de la paz en un mundo injusto y violento; pero, no son simples voluntarios de una ONG filantrópica, porque su proyecto de solidaridad nace de una motivación profundamente cristiana. No son voluntarios que parten para una misión por su propia cuenta, son misioneros enviados al servicio de un proyecto que les sobrepasa, el proyecto de Dios en su Iglesia.

Por esto se sienten enviados por Dios, en seguimiento de Cristo, el único misionero. Las motivaciones de fe no son una simple añadidura al voluntariado misionero son, ante todo, su alma, su razón de ser. Sin esta motivación fundamental, no hay laicos misioneros, sino simples voluntarios.

En Itoculo, los voluntarios que queremos y que recibimos son los laicos misioneros. Ciertamente debemos permanecer abiertos al diálogo y a la colaboración con todas las personas, aun con las no cristianas, los agnósticos, los miembros de otras religiones, las mujeres y los hombres de buena voluntad. Esta disponibilidad es necesaria, forma parte de la apertura y de la hospitalidad cristianas y lleva muchos nombres: diálogo interreligioso, trabajo en colaboración, apertura cultural.... Pero no hablamos de esto cuando hablamos del voluntariado misionero. En el voluntariado misionero, el laico misionero es un hermano, una hermana de la misión en Cristo; no es un simple "partenariado" de trabajo en un proyecto social. Un misionero es un enviado, un testigo de Jesucristo, un miembro de la Iglesia de Jesús al servicio del Evangelio y del amor, al que acogemos y con el que compartimos en la fe y en la

Iglesia. La relación con el laico misionero es, pues, una relación de comunión en la Iglesia, en la diversidad de sus servicios y ministerios y no simplemente una combinación de buenas voluntades.

Los laicos misioneros no son religiosos, son laicos: tienen una identidad propia que no debe confundirse con otras vocaciones y que debe tener su visibilidad propia en la misión. No son turistas, sino "mártires": son testigos del compromiso en una misión que les precede, que perdurará después de ellos y a la cual habrán ofrecido una contribución tangible.

Los misioneros laicos no son aventureros, son servidores humildes: no buscan la emoción egocéntrica de una experiencia radical de frontera, no quieren probar nada ni a sí mismos ni a los demás, no se buscan a sí mismos, son peregrinos de Cristo presente en el hermano al que tratan de servir en el amor y por amor. No vienen en misión en búsqueda de soluciones para sus propios problemas, ellos buscan realizar una vocación cristiana; no son "cajas de respuestas", sino personas humildes a la escucha de Jesucristo, saben que la misión es una vida en el Espíritu.

Los laicos misioneros no son los "maestros", sino, ante todo, los discípulos. Frecuentemente encuentran en sus lugares de trabajo situaciones de extrema pobreza económica, social, cultural y espiritual. No llevan en ellos ninguna superioridad: su única riqueza es Jesucristo en quien creen y en cuyo nombre se han unido a la misión. Por esto, sus diversos valores personales (competencias profesionales, cualidades de liderazgo, capacidad intelectual...) los ponen al servicio del bien común, en la humilde óptica del que sabe que en esta vida hay más para aprender que para enseñar.

¿Qué aportan de nuevo a la misión?

Estos laicos misioneros aportan a la misión una enorme riqueza personal, espiritual y eclesial. Esta manera de ser misionero es relativamente nueva, el pueblo está acostumbrado a



identificar al misionero con el sacerdote o la religiosa; no ha tenido la oportunidad de estar frente a frente a laicos misioneros. Por esto, sin hacer mayor diferencia con los sacerdotes y las religiosas, se los llama frecuentemente "Padre" o "Hermana". Cuántas veces los voluntarios y los laicos misioneros han tratado de justificar su estatus sin verdaderamente lograrlo. Por otra parte, nosotros, los religiosos, corremos el riesgo de alimentar la idea de que la misión ad extra es hecha sólo para especialistas, los que están "más cercanos a Dios" y que, por tanto, el

laico misionero es un candidato natural a la vida religiosa... Los misioneros laicos nos hacen comprender esta "novedad" de que la misión no está reservada a "especialistas" sino que es el privilegio de todo bautizado. Su carácter eminentemente laico le confiere una calidad misionera propia, un espacio de testimonio que le es específico. Son laicos en medio de laicos y sus testimonios tienen ese impacto profundo de ser realizados por "personas iguales a los demás".

El laico misionero lleva en sí la fuerza de un testimonio bautismal que hace de él una enseñanza viva sobre cómo es posible a un laico, con su familia y una profesión, ponerse de cuerpo y alma en seguimiento de Cristo y al servicio de los hermanos. Es hermoso ver cómo parejas de laicos misioneros viven su vida familiar, la educación de sus hijos y el ejercicio de su trabajo en plena simbiosis con una sociedad y una Iglesia que los acoge; o, también, ver a esos misioneros jóvenes solteros, "¡iguales a los otros", que se insertan con sencillez y espíritu de servicio en una comunidad humana y eclesial.

No hacen voto de obediencia, pero organizan su vida articulándola a un proyecto comunitario de una Iglesia y de un equipo misionero que integran; no hacen voto de pobreza, pero asumen un estilo de vida sencillo y pobre, renunciando a la comodidad y a muchas facilidades que podrían tener en su medio de origen; no hacen voto de castidad, pero viven con mucha responsabilidad cristiana, y, como cristianos, su estado de celibato o de persona casada. Son, por lo mismo, un testimonio extremadamente precioso de la vida cristiana.

Los laicos misioneros son responsables, en gran parte, del trabajo misionero, proporcionado por el equipo misionero del que forman parte. Su compromiso es un compromiso de profesional en la educación, la salud o en otros campos de la pastoral, para los cuales los laicos tienen una preparación específica y una competencia técnica. Aportan al equipo misionero la habilidad necesaria a la calidad de nuestra obra.

Frecuentemente, las comunidades misioneras de religiosos o religiosas encuentran los problemas propios a su estilo de vida, problemas que fragilizan el mensaje evangélico. En muchos de estos casos, la presencia de los laicos misioneros constituye un soplo de aire fresco en esos ambientes pesados y complicados entre religiosos: los laicos aportan la sencillez en las relaciones, desclericalizan las relaciones y los temas de conversación para abrirlos a verdaderos desafíos culturales. Por otra parte, a causa del secularismo ambiente, el estilo de vida de las comunidades religiosas se limita a un testimonio misionero frecuentemente frágil. La oración y el sentido de lo espiritual pierden su peso y su ardor, el "sentir con la Iglesia" se debilita, el celo misionero y el espíritu de sacrificio se reducen a lo mínimo y la actualización de las personas está a menudo distante del Evangelio y del proyecto misionero de la Iglesia. Es curioso constatar que, con frecuencia, son precisamente los laicos misioneros los que ayudan al equipo misionero a reencontrar su aliento espiritual y evangélico gracias a la calidad de vida espiritual que ellos, viven como laicos. Su diaria experiencia de oración personal y su vida sacramental son una interpelación permanente, tanto para los religiosos de la comunidad como para los demás laicos de la parroquia. Al mismo tiempo, hay numerosos laicos que testimonian un gran celo misionero y obligan a sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas, a rever sus propios ritmos y superar ciertos intereses egoístas. La generosidad, fruto de un profundo arraigamiento espiritual, es en sí una fuente de renovación para los otros misioneros.

En este sentido, podríamos decir que los laicos misioneros, viviendo en profundidad su vocación de laicos, nos ayudan a nosotros, sacerdotes o religiosos y religiosas, a vivir con más autenticidad nuestra propia vocación de consagrados, que son un fruto precioso y nuevo en el campo de la misión.

¿Qué les aporta la misión?

Lo que la experiencia de la misión ad extra aporta de nuevo a la vida de los misioneros laicos no es esencialmente diverso de lo que ella puede proporcionar a un misionero religioso. El contacto con un pueblo y con una Iglesia diferentes aporta la alegría de una inesperada ampliación de nuestros horizontes, la novedad de la diferencia de los otros cuestiona nuestros modos de ser y nos invita a profundizar nuestras motivaciones. Por otra parte, llegar a un país

nuevo, con una realidad radicalmente nueva, es con frecuencia difícil y doloroso. Los misioneros religiosos, enviados para algunos años, se benefician de un tiempo para integrarse y vivir con calma sus crisis; para los misioneros laicos que parten por pocos años, todo se vive intensamente y, a menudo, no es fácil atravesar el desierto de la integración cuando solo se dispone de un poco de tiempo, y se siente fuertemente presionado. Cultura diferente, lengua diferente, expresión eclesial diferente, aislamiento y soledad, ausencia de amigos y de la familia, desarraigo, exigencia de trabajo en una situación nueva... todo eso puede ser vivido con traumatismos.

Para que esta experiencia de cambio sea asumida de manera positiva, es fundamental que el resto del equipo misionero sepa acoger, posea serenidad y paciencia en los momentos de espera y suficiente presencia de espíritu para acompañar a los nuevos en cada una de las etapas de la integración. Esta primera etapa de la aculturación y de la inserción, este primer impacto, puede ser una ocasión extraordinaria de superación y de crecimiento personal, de mejor conocimiento de los propios límites y de las causas que revelan capacidades hasta entonces inexplotadas. Puede ser la oportunidad de profundizar y de purificar las motivaciones, de crecer en relaciones humanas y de vivir el desafío de la fraternidad, de desarrollar aptitudes de trabajo en equipo y de intensificar el sentido comunitario. La riqueza espiritual y personal que puede desprenderse de esta experiencia es enorme y marca a la persona por el resto de su vida. Esta experiencia consolida a cada uno en su vocación: sacerdotal y religiosa para los unos, laica para los otros.

La presencia de los laicos misioneros, un desafío

Aunque en un lejano pasado haya habido experiencias de misiones cristianas laicas, esta experiencia es vista hoy en los medios misioneros católicos como nueva y llena de desafíos. En estos últimos años, todos hemos tomado conciencia de que se trata de un verdadero signo de Dios, un camino de renovación que el Espíritu abre a su Iglesia. Las misiones han acogido y desarrollado esta novedad ensayando nuevos caminos, enseñando nuevos modelos y haciendo madurar ciertos proyectos. Pero los desafíos y los riesgos inherentes son reales y forman parte de este enriquecimiento misionero.

Misioneros religiosos y misioneros laicos

Uno de los primeros desafíos es la articulación entre la presencia y el trabajo de los laicos y el trabajo de las comunidades religiosas presentes en el dominio de la misión.

Se han concebido algunos modelos y se han puesto en evidencia dos extremos que se deben evitar: la proximidad excesiva y la distancia excesiva.

La proximidad excesiva se daría donde el espacio entre religiosos y laicos no sea respetado y contribuiría a una pérdida de identidad. Los laicos enteramente integrados en la vida de una comunidad religiosa deberían tener los mismos derechos y deberes que ella. El laico misionero sería entonces reducido al estado de hermano o de hermana durante su tiempo de servicio en la misión. En el otro extremo, se encuentra una actitud defensiva en la cual los laicos están totalmente distantes de la comunidad religiosa y solos. El proceso de aculturación puede ser difícilmente vivido en la soledad. La existencia de un espacio reservado a los laicos, con la acogida y la hospitalidad de la comunidad religiosa, vivido simple y naturalmente, puede ser el camino del equilibrio. Este espacio reservado comprende no solamente un espacio físico como tal, sino un "espacio existencial" incluyendo la autonomía de los medios de transporte, el tiempo personal, los ritmos de vida, la oración, etc.

En numerosos casos, los misioneros laicos asumen su proyecto misionero en el seno de sus comunidades laicas, formando con la comunidad religiosa de la misión un verdadero equipo misionero. Éste es el camino de la madurez. En este modelo, los laicos no son los "aprendices" de la comunidad religiosa sino verdaderos sujetos de la misión, con un proyecto específicamente laico, un modo de vida, una espiritualidad y un programa de trabajo que les son propios.

En las comunidades de laicos misioneros se da el mismo desafío para establecer una relación equilibrada con la comunidad religiosa vecina: no estar ni demasiado próximos para no ahogarse ni demasiado lejos para no aislarse... Pienso que la mayor parte de los fracasos y del malestar de los misioneros laicos que he conocido en Mozambique se debían a un cierto nivel de desequilibrio en el dominio de las relaciones con las comunidades religiosas. Para que el equilibrio sea eficaz y que todo tipo de trabajo misionero sea fructífero, el servicio de la autoridad y la coordinación del Cura de la Parroquia son muy importantes. Su aporte importa mucho para que los esfuerzos combinados se traduzcan en felicidad para las personas y en eficacia para las obras.

#### Las relaciones entre los misioneros laicos

Es importante recordar otro desafío: el de las relaciones de los misioneros laicos entre ellos. Las comunidades de misioneros laicos se constituyen alrededor de una identidad espiritual común y de la pertenencia a una familia espiritual a la que también se integran otras comunidades religiosas. Los laicos están en situación de misión después de un largo tiempo de preparación en su propio país de origen, donde han tenido la oportunidad de hacer un profundo discernimiento sobre el tipo de trabajo y la vida que les espera y sobre los desafíos que deberán afrontar.

A pesar de toda la preparación y de la madurez requeridas, permanece el desafío del equilibrio en las relaciones entre ellos y con las comunidades de la misión. Como en todo grupo humano, las características de la personalidad de cada uno juegan un papel importante. También hay que tener en cuenta el equilibrio sicoafectivo, la madurez humana y cristiana, la edad, la rectitud de las motivaciones misioneras, las diferentes visiones y modelos de Iglesia, las sensibilidades diferentes sobre la forma de organizar la comunidad y sus culturas de origen. Es necesario administrar y equilibrar todos estos elementos para que una comunidad misionera se transforme en un lugar de vida y de testimonio de fraternidad. Los fracasos en este nivel son reales, pero, curiosamente, menos frecuentes en las comunidades religiosas que en las comunidades laicas. Como el desafío subsiste, es necesario que, desde la preparación a la misión, se les enseñe a anticipar estas situaciones y se les ayude, antes de que partan, a controlar sus emociones y a examinar su capacidad real de vivir una vida comunitaria equilibrada.

#### La repartición del trabajo

Cuando los recién venidos llegan a la misión y encuentran un universo cultural tan diferente del suyo, es frecuente que, ante una realidad desconocida, se desencadenen mecanismos de ansiedad y de miedo. El temor de caer en el vacío, de no saber qué hacer y cómo hacerlo, el dolor de encontrarse sin ninguna referencia, sin ningún espacio, sin ningún tiempo ni lugar propios, les puede conducir a la impresión de que van a perder su tiempo... De ahí la necesidad de buscar desde el comienzo algo para hacer y de constatar que el tiempo esté ocupado, que la vida tenga un sentido y que la llegada a ese nuevo lugar esté al servicio de un proyecto "que me necesita". Desde el primer impacto de la llegada, las personas necesitan sentir que la vida no se les escapa, que aun si han dejado atrás su mundo conocido y seguro, no han dejado atrás ni su vida ni su alegría, sino que tienen ahí un lugar para ellos, que allí

son "sujetos", agentes de la pastoral, que se cuenta con ellos. Para los que vienen de países occidentales, toda esta experiencia, que tiene un carácter particularmente emocionante, es todavía más fuerte, porque la densidad y la calidad de vida del occidente, con razón o sin ella, está identificada con la productividad, la acción y el dominio sobre los acontecimientos.

Por todas estas razones, es muy importante que los misioneros laicos, desde su llegada, sientan y sepan que ahí tienen un lugar y que, en el contexto de las numerosas obras de la misión, hay algo que les está reservado, un trabajo que los espera. La experiencia me ha enseñado que, desde el primer contacto, muchas experiencias han tomado una dirección negativa, porque las personas han tenido el sentimiento de que verdaderamente no había ahí un lugar para ellas y de que su llegada y su presencia eran más bien un obstáculo que una ayuda. Si esta primera impresión negativa se confirma más tarde en el curso de la vida y de la inserción misionera, toda la experiencia misionera será sentida como un fracaso. Es curioso anotar como, en ciertos casos, los misioneros que reciben laicos a fin de asegurar una parte del trabajo que estaba mal encuadrado por falta de personal competente, no llegan a compartir responsabilidades o a remitir la obra en manos de los laicos. Estos últimos son entonces dejados a un lado, como simples espectadores, como aprendices o, mejor, como ayudantes subalternos que no tendrán jamás la voz en un Capítulo. Por esto, la comunidad de misioneros laicos, como cada persona considerada individualmente, tiene necesidad de un proyecto de trabajo propio, con su espacio propio, para dar un verdadero sentido a su presencia.

Otro desafío es el exceso de trabajo. Conozco muchos misioneros laicos que han terminado su tiempo de misión en Mozambique totalmente agotados, física y emocionalmente. El trabajo que les había sido confiado (o que ellos buscaron por su cuenta) había sobrepasado efectivamente sus capacidades reales. Aquí también se necesita un esfuerzo de discernimiento y de delicada atención a las personas.

Ante todo esto, es esencial que el equipo misionero que acoge pueda ayudar al misionero laico a tomar el tiempo necesario para integrarse, para aprender, para ponerse a la escucha de Dios y de la realidad local, y para asumir el trabajo progresivamente, de manera responsable y reflexionada. Para que esto se produzca de manera verdaderamente apostólica, es importante que, evitando un activismo ansioso y destructivo, se ayude al misionero a descubrir el sentido espiritual y profundo de la misión, a sobrepasar un cierto funcionalismo, que siempre es una tentación. Abriéndose a la gratuidad del testimonio y a un servicio sereno y humilde, el misionero hará la experiencia de que el anuncio de la Palabra de Dios siempre sobrepasa al que lo anuncia.

#### La cultura, el pueblo y la Iglesia local

Los misioneros laicos son extranjeros configurados por su cultura y su historia. Su llegada a África representa un gran esfuerzo de aculturación y esto es otro desafío. Aun sin quererlo, tenemos todos prejuicios, positivos o negativos... los hay también en las gentes que nos acogen, y en este marco debemos entrar en relación con las personas, con delicadeza. Dándose los problemas culturales y sociales que percibimos en lo inmediato como una intrusión, la arrogancia cultural y los complejos de superioridad pueden traducirse en la tentación, frecuentemente disfrazada de compasión y de paternalismo, de querer hacer todo y resolverlo como si todo dependiese de nosotros. A la inversa, puede nacer en nosotros la tendencia de querer sacralizar la cultura local, sin espíritu crítico, lo que a menudo se expresa como un apuro "por ser como la gente" y "estar con la gente". Esta actitud, puramente ideológica, puede llevar al misionero a una aculturación artificial en la cual intentará adoptar,

de manera forzada, comportamientos que no son suyos y que conservarán siempre un carácter inauténtico.

El gran desafío que encontramos en todo esto, sobre todo al llegar, es el silencio: ver sin inquietud lo que está a nuestro alrededor, evitar la precipitación y tratar de aprender el nuevo lenguaje cultural que permitirá una comunicación constructiva entre las personas que son diferentes y que deben permanecer diferentes. La forma de vestirse, la manera de intervenir en los debates, de hablar y de estar con la gente, son con frecuencia los sitios de evidente divergencia cultural. Ahí se encuentra uno de los primeros desafíos para los misioneros laicos que vienen a la misión por un período corto. Dado que, en la mayoría de los casos, los misioneros laicos vienen por uno, dos o máximo tres años de presencia, es fácil caer en la tentación de no tratar de aprender la lengua local ni de conocer en profundidad la cultura, pues, se dice, no es posible aprender todo esto en un tiempo tan corto. Se trata de una actitud comprensible... sin embargo, es importante hacer un verdadero esfuerzo de comunicación, de aprender a hablar la lengua de la gente y de familiarizarse con las referencias culturales que la gente conoce. Este esfuerzo es ya la expresión de la decisión de comunicarse. Avanzando en este camino se crece en la relación con el otro y se expresa un verdadero interés por las personas y por su cultura.

Al mismo tiempo, el misionero extranjero encuentra a la Iglesia local en su propia historia; con sus métodos, con su propia sensibilidad, con su identidad. Por más que le parezca que no hay similitudes con su Iglesia de origen, el misionero debe saber detenerse, escuchar y aprender, a fin de servir a la Iglesia que lo acoge, manifestando un verdadero respeto hacia ella y tomando en cuenta la pertinencia pastoral que da sentido y utilidad al trabajo emprendido.

#### Desafío económico

La cuestión económica está lejos de ser secundaria. Ella determina en gran parte la vida y las preocupaciones del voluntariado misionero, tanto con relación a los proyectos que son confiados a los misioneros laicos, como con relación a los medios materiales de subsistencia de los mismos laicos. Algunas comunidades misioneras laicas en Mozambique se han disuelto efectivamente por razones económicas. Si los misioneros religiosos vienen en misión financiados de manera segura por sus institutos, no es siempre lo mismo para los misioneros laicos que, a veces, deben soportar una parte de los gastos. En numerosos casos, los misioneros laicos dependen financieramente de los institutos religiosos a los que están ligados. Esta dependencia contradice la naturaleza misma de la vocación del misionero laico que es en sí coherente e independiente. Por su propia vocación, esta autonomía debería traducirse de una manera práctica por una autonomía efectiva en el seno de la misión. Esto debería ser verdadero tanto con relación a sus proyectos como a sus programas de trabajo y a los medios de su subsistencia personal.

Es necesario igualmente tomar en consideración que la mayoría de los misioneros laicos se compromete por un tiempo limitado y debe enseguida regresar a su país, retomar la vida profesional que a veces ha abandonado, sin ninguna garantía de volverla a encontrar a su regreso. Éste es un problema mayor que dificulta la realización de verdaderas vocaciones misioneras y pesa grandemente sobre los laicos una vez que regresan a su país. Hay todavía mucho camino por hacer para asumir mejor la seguridad económica de los misioneros laicos y la estabilidad de sus proyectos.

### La formación previa

El éxito de un proyecto de misioneros laicos en un lugar no depende solamente de la formación previa. Ésta, a veces excelente, no puede prevenir la falta de cumplimiento debido a otros factores. Sin embargo, es cierto que, sin una formación sólida, amplia y profunda, las oportunidades de éxito en la inserción misionera se verán seriamente reducidas.

Mirando los diferentes tipos de comunidades misioneras laicas en Mozambique, es interesante ver cómo la solidez de la formación determina enseguida la solidez de los proyectos misioneros emprendidos. No se trata solamente de enseñanzas sucintas que incluyen un mosaico de temáticas misioneras sino de un largo proyecto de maduración que hace brotar la vocación laica misionera. Este discernimiento espiritual deberá ser respaldado por la profundización de importantes campos, tales como la misiología, la antropología, el acompañamiento psicológico y espiritual, la transmisión de informaciones sobre el destino de la misión. Es más importante todavía que esta formación próxima e inmediata para la misión pueda hacer brotar la integración a una comunidad de pertenencia (a un movimiento, a un proyecto misionero común, a una familia de misioneros laicos que prepare y que envíe), de suerte que la experiencia en misión sea madurada de antemano. Esta maduración resulta posible en la medida en la que la persona ha crecido en una profunda intimidad con Dios y en un profundo amor por Jesucristo y a su Iglesia. En efecto, a partir de tal experiencia, se descubre la urgencia de responder a este Dios que nos invita a partir.

### Los misioneros espiritanos: soñar el porvenir

Algunos misioneros laicos han venido a Mozambique individualmente, invitados con frecuencia por una comunidad religiosa que los acoge y los asocia a su trabajo. Estas experiencias son siempre puntuales, sin mucha certeza de continuidad, sin viabilidad ni identidad claramente definida. Sin embargo, las experiencias más interesantes y más durables son realizadas en las comunidades laicas, sólidamente fundadas sobre un proyecto definido con una espiritualidad común. Estas comunidades comparten con los religiosos una espiritualidad y un carisma (lazaristas, combonianos, jesuitas, hospitalarios...), disponen de un marco jurídico apropiado; su adhesión no es institucional sino espiritual. Ser laico o religioso no es un detalle, sino algo esencial, constitutivo; y, si la interdependencia es muy real y necesaria, ella es percibida como algo muy diferente, casi opuesto a lo funcional que conduciría inexorablemente a una desfiguración y a una pérdida de identidad que sólo podría perjudicar a la misión.

En Itoculo, si bien existe una residencia construida específicamente para los misioneros laicos, no siempre hemos acertado a conducir a la madurez la creación de una comunidad misionera laica estable. Sin embargo, a ello tiende todo el esfuerzo de los espiritanos para lograr un voluntariado durable. Para los misioneros laicos, su comunidad debería estar fundada sobre una identidad espiritual, un espíritu de servicio de la comunión y de la misión. Nuestro trabajo trata de consolidar y de desarrollar esta experiencia de colaboración con los misioneros laicos. Nuestro sueño es dar cada vez mayor valor a esta vocación, colocándola claramente en una comunidad de misioneros laicos que tengan: una identidad más definida, un claro sentido de pertenencia comunitaria, un proyecto propio, un presupuesto autónomo, un cuadro jurídico específico, y, claro está, mucha proximidad y una estrecha interacción con las otras comunidades misioneras presentes en Itoculo (una comunidad de espiritanos y una comunidad de espiritaras), formando así un equipo consolidado al servicio de la misión.

La larga experiencia que ya tenemos nos hace pensar que esto vale la pena. Creemos que es un verdadero don de Dios y, al mismo tiempo, un desafío. Como congregación, nos esforzamos

por responder con fidelidad a este llamado misionero, uno de los primeros entre todos nuestros desafíos.

## NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> Es decir, los miembros del Pueblo de Dios que no han sido ordenados ni han emitido votos de religión. En este artículo, el término laico está utilizado en el sentido que le atribuye el Decreto sobre el apostolado de los laicos del Vaticano II (ndlr).

<sup>2</sup> Humanismo secular, agnóstico.

(Spiritus...Hispanoamericana, Año 53/1, N° 206 Marzo de 2012)

Traducción por: Sor María Fernanda Villacís Proaño

## ABSTRACT

PEDRO FERNANDO, CSSp, from Portugal, has worked in Mozambique as a missionary in the Parish of Itoculo. The mission was started in 1996.

It is becoming ever clearer that the new reality of voluntary mission workers is a God-given gift.

It is a sign of the times and a great opportunity to renew the Church's missionary outreach and that of religious communities, all of whom are invited to embrace this new type of relationship, as it favours a deepened sense of identity in the shared faith.

The lay missionary is at once lay and missionary, but not a religious. The lay missionary has been baptized and is enlivened by faith which is felt to be a response to the Christian calling. He/She agrees to live co-responsibly on the mission and is prepared to give a period of his/her life to the apostolic work of the Church in its mission ad gentes. Such a candidate is someone who plays an active part in the local Church, has an experience of Christ, of life in the Church, and wishes to mature in this experience. As a lay person, this candidate may have a family, exercise a profession, foster a personal project and play a role in society.

Such lay missionaries are well disposed and wish to contribute humbly to building a more just and peaceful world in one that is violent and unjust. However, they are not simple volunteers of a philanthropic non-profit organization because their motivation is profoundly Christian. They do not leave of their own accord but are sent out at the service of an immense project: God's project in his Church. Therefore they feel sent by God to follow Christ, the exemplary missionary, on his unique mission.

The men and women religious who receive them, often for the first time, discover they have to work and share their lives and views with people who hold different opinions and may have very different lifestyles and standards of behaviour.

The Congregation's broad experience confirms that this cooperation is worthwhile as it endeavours to respond to the call of the new evangelization.

## SEDOS ANNUAL REPORT 2012

*“The Church as a whole  
and all her Pastors, like Christ,  
must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life,  
towards friendship with the Son of God,  
towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance”  
(Benedict XVI, Homely at Installation Mass, Sunday, 24 April 2005)*

### Introduction

The Congregations who are Members of SEDOS always strive to send their missionaries out to the whole world so that they may lead out of the desert those they meet and journey with and lead them to the place of life, life in abundance. In keeping with the vision of the Founders of SEDOS, we are carrying out an on-going study of global mission. This study seems to be of the outmost importance given the changed missionary scenarios of today. These changes call for more creativity, new forms of expression and new methods so that the transmission of the Christian faith may be more effective: reach life itself and help those who receive the Word to experience the joy of living with Christ. It is when we come together to celebrate the beauty of being Christian, the beauty of responding to the call as Missionaries, that we draw new spiritual riches, new sources of energy, that enable us to face the future and bring hope.

The Year 2012 has entered the Archives of the Church in a particular way. Indeed this year 2012 has been punctuated with very significant events that will be remembered for ever. From 7-28 October 2012 the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops took place in Rome with the theme: “The New Evangelization For the Transmission of the Christian Faith”. I had the grace and the privilege to participate in it as one of the Auditors. On 11 October 2012 the Church celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on 11 October 1962. It was so moving to recall John XXIII’s words regarding the surprise of convoking the Ecumenical Council:

*“The decision to hold an Ecumenical Council came to Us in the first instance in a sudden flash of inspiration. We communicated this decision, without elaboration, to the Sacred College of Cardinals on that memorable January 25, 1959, the Feast of Saint Paul's Conversion, in his patriarchal Basilica on the Ostian Way. The response was immediate. It was as though some ray of supernatural light had entered the minds of all present: it was reflected in their faces; it shone from their eyes. At once the world was swept by a wave of enthusiasm, and men everywhere began to wait eagerly for the celebration of this Council”* (Pope John XXIII – Opening Address at the Second Vatican Council – 11 October 1962).

SEDOS office played an active part in the remote preparation of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Second Council Vatican. Since October 2011, we have been publishing in the SEDOS Bulletin articles on the Second Vatican Council, our purpose was to renew the interest of the SEDOS Membership and Readers in that momentous phenomenon, “the most important even in the history of the Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation” (Komonchak, a Protestant Missiologist); Fr James Kroeger, MM, speaks of the Second Vatican Council as: “*A Marvelous and Generous Gift*”. Blessed Pope John Paul II considered the Second Vatican Council as a “*sure compass by which to take our bearings in the vast ocean of the third millennium*” (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, nn. 57-58). In his Spiritual Testament Blessed John Paul II noted: “*I*

*am convinced that it will long be granted to the new generations to draw from the treasures that this twentieth-century Council has lavished upon us...". And he confirmed his determination to put the Second Vatican Council Documents into practice. "With the passing years, the Council Documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance" (n. 57), indeed, their teachings are proving particularly timely and relevant to the new situation of the Church and the current globalized society. SEDOS also organized a workshop which Paolo SUESS, from Brazil, conducted. He took the participants on a journey through the meanders of the Important Decrees of Vatican II; it was indeed a very enriching "trip".*

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI chose 11 October 2011 to call for a YEAR of FAITH to start in 2012. *"We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden (cf. Mt 5:13-16). The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. Jn 4:14). We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples" (cf. Jn 6:51), which must feed our faith (Porta Fidei, n. 3, 11 October 2011).*

The eleventh of October 2012, was also the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

### **Members for the Year 2011-2012**

The year was full of activities and we were able to accomplish them thanks to the active and close collaboration of the Members of the Executive Committee. They accompany the Executive Director by putting their gifts, talents and wisdom at the service of the universal Mission. As the year 2012 is drawing to an end I take this opportunity to say a big 'thank you' to each member of the Executive Committee.

### **New Membership:**

The Executive Committee warmly welcomed a new Constitutive Member and expresses deep gratitude to Sister Asuncion CODES, STJ, and the General Coordinator of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus:

### **Thanks to you, dear Friends!**

We accompany with prayers and gratitude those members of the Executive Committee who have been called to a new mission within their congregations. Before we parted we came together and celebrated the gift that they were among us:

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

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

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

Special thanks go to Sr. Josephine BUENCAMINO, FMM, and Treasurer of the Mother House of the FMM, elected as the Treasurer of SEDOS in 2010. She has had to resign because of the actual demands of her commitment in the Mother house.

### **New Members of the Executive Committee:**

Last May 2012 following the example of Mary, the first disciple and model of every disciple, Most Reverend Brother Emili TURÚ, FMS, Superior General of the Marist Brothers, graciously accepted to serve as Vice-President of SEDOS.

We thank the Superiors General who have sent us new members to continue the journey started some years ago, they are:

Fr. Raphaël MUKENDI KADIMA, CICM, General Secretary  
 Fr. Gaetano MAZZOLENI, IMC – Consolata Missionari  
 Fr. André SCHAMINÉE, MAFR, General Secretary

### **Still on the board**

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

Sister Filo HIROTA, MMB, newly elected Superior General of the Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz, elected to the Executive Committee in 2008. Was excused.

President: Sister Georgeanne Marie DONOVAN, SMSM, Superior General, was excused.

Sr. Marina CASSARINO, SCM, General Councillor of the Comboni Sisters: 2011, was excused.

Sister Gisela SHREYER, MSOLA, the Web Site Master of the MSOLA, 2011

Fr. Arlindo PEREIRA DIAS, SVD, General Councillor of the Society of Divine Word Missionaries: 2011.

**New Treasurer:** I am in dialogue with a congregation, and another one has made some bright promises.

Vacant

### **STATUTES**

Thanks to the advice of Sister Mary Wright, IBVM, who is a Canon Law lawyer, we were pleased to send you the up-dated SEDOS Statutes. We thank everyone for their helpful suggestions. We shall vote on the modifications on 4 December 2012.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

The Executive Committee expresses its special thanks to the members of the Society of the Divine Word for their commitment and generosity as year after year the Society continues to generously offer the premises to house the SEDOS Office. This contribution is a blessing that cannot be repaid but by the Blessing of the Lord.

We very warmly thank the Brothers of the Christian Schools for offering their premises to host all the SEDOS Conferences for just a nominal fee, a contribution that makes it possible to continue offering this service.

We would like to thank those of you who have kindly sent us material for the Documentation Centre, especially the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, who always make sure SEDOS receives copies of the new titles published by ORBIS Books and the Editrice Missionaria Italiana (EMI).

### **SEDOS Staff**

Meantime Sister Celine KOKKAT, JMJ, the Librarian and Administrator, is still busy scanning the old Bulletins and facilitates the work of uploading them on the Webpage. 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. Mr Bernard Perez is continuing to come to train the members of the SEDOS Staff. We are deeply appreciative of the different services Bernard provides.

The office is carrying on the plans of modernizing, and updating the ways and services provided to the members and to all. We are happy to announce that the work launched last year by Sister Josephine BUENOCAMINO, FMM, and Mrs. Ilaria IADELUCA to review the number of SEDOS' Bulletin Subscribers has come to an end. Mrs Ilaria IADELUCA, the SEDOS Secretary, was invited to take her turn and present to the General Assembly this result and she gladly explained the results as follows:

**SEDOS BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTION 2012-2013**

Subscription Type	Abbreviation Code	Printed Edition	Digital Edition
Members	ME	58	16
Complimentary	CO	22	4
Exchanges	EX	52	5
Paying Subscribers (Annual Payment)	PS	58	
People requesting the digital version since 2010	EC		163
		<b>190</b>	<b>188</b>

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Total Subscriptions registered **613**

\* Subscriptions requesting the Digital or Printed version **378**

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SEDOS has sent an official letter to each subscriber, to enquire whether he/she is still interested in receiving the digital or the printed version of the Bulletin, or both. This is the total number of people who have replied to our request.

Subscription Type	Abbreviation Code	Both Printed & Digital Edition
Members	ME	22
Complimentary	CO	2
Exchanges	EX	1
Paying Subscribers (Annual Payment)	PS	10
		<b>35</b>
Total Subscriptions registered		<b>613</b>
* Subscribers requesting the Digital or Printed version		<b>378</b>
* Subscribers requesting both the Digital & Printed version		<b>35</b>

We wholeheartedly thank Mrs. Ilaria IADELUCA for carrying out this work.

**Subscriptions:**

The Subscription for 2013 has not changed. The fee is still Euro 30.00 for Europe, and Euro 45.00 (55,00 US\$) for outside Europe.

**Homepage**

We are glad to say many people are visiting our Homepage. Some articles had more than 2,000 visitors. The less visited number 170 - 250.

**Highlights of the Activities of the Year 2012**

In February 2012 we welcomed at the office Sister Joyce Meyer, PBVM, the former Executive Director of the Hilton Fund for Sisters, and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Fox. He was the former Editor of

the National Catholic Reporter. They had just attended the meeting of the Confederations of the Conferences of the Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar (CO.S.M.A.M.) which took place in Uganda and they were on their way back to the USA. Tom Fox wanted to learn about SEDOS and was happy to discover that the NCR and SEDOS came into being in the same year, 1964. He suggested the possibility of studying and planning the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of our two entities together.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue organized a Seminar for the Diocesan Directors of IRD and Major Superiors of Religious Congregations/Institutes in Nigeria: from 20-23 March 2012. It took place at the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus Conference Centre in Lagos. The main theme was: "Interreligious Collaboration in the Spirit of *Africae Munus*". And the President, Jean-Louis Cardinal TAURAN, invited SEDOS to contribute to it as one of the principal Speakers. I addressed the participants in the Seminar on the topic: "Formation of a Missionary to Work in an Interreligious Context".

Another important visitor, in June 2012, was Dr. Annemarie MAYER, the Catholic Consultant of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. She has succeeded Dr. Maria ARANZAZU AGUADO. In her message she wrote: "I am serving my church there working for the World Council of Churches, CWME. The CWME is preparing for the Tenth Assembly of the WCC in Busan, Korea, in 2013. On 2 October 2012, Dr. Annemarie forwarded to SEDOS the new Mission Statement of the WCC, the version approved by the Central Committee. Dr. Annemarie has asked for our opinion on the New Mission Statement. We will try to be ready when she comes to Rome from 11-13 December 2012.

SEDOS is trying to widen its scope of collaboration in order to meet, in a very adequate way, the challenges put forward during the SEDOS Residential Seminar from 8-12 May 2012: "How SEDOS can contribute to the Formation for Mission of the African, Asian, and Latino American indigenous/local Congregations that are now sending their members to the universal mission?". On 2 June 2012, I received an invitation from the Association of African Men and Women serving at their respective Generalates as General Councillor or as General Secretary. I talked about SEDOS and its perspectives for the future and the possible areas of collaboration with them.

Another field of cooperation is opening up for SEDOS from Africa: Sister Anne FALOLA, OLA, Mission Secretary, Department of Mission and Dialogue, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, wrote saying that she was working on a proposal for SEDOS and that may be with the help of a funding Agency it would be possible to hold a missionary formation/seminar in Nigeria. It is a great need. She was thinking of focusing on religious and *Fidei Donum* priests (diocesan priests on mission). Sister Anne needed some suggestions from us. SEDOS is open to this new type of cooperation. If SEDOS goes to Nigeria our members will meet a large number of missionaries and be able to offer a good contribution.

By 5 July 2012, I received confirmation of my participation in the Synod of Bishops as one of the Auditors. I shall always give thanks to the Holy Father for the grace to live the experience of the strong communion among the Bishops and all of them with the Successor of St Peter. The Synod also appeared to me to be "a particularly fruitful expression and instrument of episcopal collegiality" (John Paul II). When the Presidents of the Conferences presented the challenges and opportunities for the New Evangelization on every continent, I realized how fortunate I was to serve at SEDOS. All the short inputs were very familiar to me; I did not really see any novelty on each continent. SEDOS seemed to be a High Institute of Applied Missiology. At SEDOS we learn a lot about the mega trends of Mission today during the Seminars and public Conferences.

After the Synod of Bishops I received invitations to share my experience: Fr Francis-Vincent ANTHONY, S.D.B., asked me to join the team with other participants at the Synod for the Department Day. The Students assembled at the Pontificio Collegio Spagnolo, Via di Torre Rossa, 2, 00165 Rome, where I went to meet with them. His Excellency Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, was the first to speak and I concluded the talk by answering pertinent questions from the students. La

"comunità carmelitana del Centro Internazionale Sant'Alberto, in Via Sforza Pallavicini, 10, 00193 Rome, has asked for an Advent retreat on the Synod – a challenge. I was curious to know what they meant by that, very simple, just to highlight some important aspects of the Synod and to them to enter Advent with new insights.

SEDOS wishes to pay a special tribute to Sister Josune ARREGUI, CCV, and to the General Secretary of the UISG. She introduced me to the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops. Sr. Josune also invited me to the "Council of 18" to present a reflection on: "the Evangelical Counsel of Consecrated Chastity as lived in Africa: Lights and Shadows".

We continue our cooperation with the USG/UISG JPIC. This year, Ilaria IADELUCA, the SEDOS Secretary, spoke about SEDOS at the Workshop organized by the JPIC from 22 - 25 November 2012. Sister Teresa DAGDAG, the Co-Secretary, asked me to give a woman's perspective of the Synod of Bishops on 21 November 2012.

## **SEDOS PUBLIC CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOP:**

### **1. Advent- Workshop November-December 2011**

SEDOS held two very interesting residential Advent-Workshops conducted by Fr. Pio ESTEPA, SVD, at the "Centro *Ad Gentes*:

The first for the English Speaking group: 25-27 November 2011

And the second for French and Spanish Speaking groups: on 2-4 December 2011.

The theme: The Gospel in a Postmodern Key. Fr. Pio spelled out the aims as follows:

- to let the participants reflect together on secular narratives (e.g., films and adverts) abounding in today's e-media
  - with the help of a socio-cultural approach to the *lectio divina*, and
  - in view of hearing and heeding the Gospel in dialogue with *postmodernity*;
  
- to help the participants to enhance each other's skills at audiovisual e-production
  - through these Softwares commonly available (mainly PowerPoint and Movie Maker),
  - and through sharewares downloadable for free from the Internet.

Even though the number of participants per group was to be limited to 15, given the pertinence of the theme, we were more than 15 per group. All the participants wanted to continue exploring this area but the preparations for the General Chapter of his Society prevented Fr. Pio from meeting our expectations.

**Workshop: 10 November 2012.** At the General Curia of the Brothers of the Christian School: Theme: "**For a Church versus populum: "Memory and the Project, a missionary proposal of the Vatican II revisited on the 50th anniversary of its opening"**". By Paolo SUESS, from Brazil. Many Portuguese speaking attended the workshop. Paolo is really excellent and his PowerPoint. conveyed so clearly and beautifully the message from the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. He took us through *Lumen Gentium*, *Ad Gentes* and the other fourteen Decrees. We were really immersed in the Vatican II documents.

## **SEDOS PUBLIC CONFERENCES:**

Conference combined with Prof. Juan Valenzuela of the Gregorian University: "The Role of the Laity in the Church and in the World, by Fr. Paolo Cesar Barajas Garcia....

Saturday, 31 March 2012, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 at the Curia of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: "The Role of Women in the Church and Society", by:

- 1) Dr.ssa Flaminia GIOVANELLI, Segretaria della Commissione Pontificia di Giustizia e Pace.
- 2) Sister Toni HARRIS, OP., is the International Promoter of JPIC of the Dominican Family

Friday, 13 April 2012, 15:00 – 17: 30 at the Curia of the Brothers of the Christian Schools:

- 1) *Africae Munus*, "The Challenges to the Principal Agents of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace", by Sister Helen MWAPITI AMWAANDAGI, MSC.
- 2) «*Africae Munus* et les Enjeux de la Mission pour l'Eglise-Famille de Dieu en Afrique», by Fr Richard KUUIA BAAWOBR, MAF, Superior General.

### **SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR:**

The **SEDOS Residential Seminar**, held from 8 to 12 May 2012 at the Centro "*Ad Gentes*" in NEMI, (RM), focused on "The Spring of Poor"? – Latin America and the Caribbean – from Medellín to Aparecida. And one hundred and thirty-seven attended it, and three in daily base. The SEDOS Residential Seminar was such a life-giving event that we cannot fail to thank its very committed and creative Ad Hoc Team: Sister Maria Soledad SAENZ RICO, SMC – Comboni Missionary Sisters, Fr. Luiz Alberto NAHUELANCA, OFM, Jorge GALLARDO, FSC, and Arlindo PEREIRA DIAS, SVD. Bro. Jorge Gallardo was the incomparable Facilitator, while the Executive Members took turns to act as Moderator each day.

The majority were Latino Americans or missionaries working in Latin America who refreshed the SEDOS Membership and Guests by bringing to life the Pilgrim Church's missionary journey in Latin America and the Caribbean since the Second Vatican Council. The Speakers were:

Luis Alberto Nahuelanca Muñoz, (Student, Rome): "La Iglesia latinoamericana y Caribeña y sus conferencias generales". *Una visión panorámica*

Dr. Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, (Brazil): "Teología, Mujer y derechos de los pobres". ( una lectura del recorrido latinoamericano

Dr. Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, (Brazi): "From Medellín to Aparecida" – Some reflections on the role of lay people and women

Ms. Emilia Robles Bohórquez (España): "El papel de los laicos en la Iglesia y la Sociedad"

Fr. Nicanor Sarmiento Tupayupanqui, OMI, (Cochabamba, Bolivia): "The Emergence of the Indigenous Peoples in Society and the Church"

Sr. Theresa Lowe Ching, R.S.M., Ph.D., (Jamaica): "The Role of Caribbean Women in Society and in the Church"

ArulMary Durairaj, FMM, (Chile): "Mi Experiencia Misionera de Mujer Trabajando con Mujeres"

With the financial support of MISSIO Aachen, the SEDOS Executive Committee was able to invite and subsidize the expenses of three African Sisters Missionaries working in Europe and in Latin America; one Asian Sister Missionary in Chile and one African Sister from Nigeria to share their experiences during the Residential Seminar of 2012. We extend our special thanks to MISSIO Aachen, MISSIO München, MISEREOR and THE HILTON FUND FOR SISTERS for their important financial support this year. The Seminar was a tremendous learning process; the Africans were surprised to learn that the ritual of reconciliation with Mother Earth in Peru is the same as in Africa. The presence of these young African and Asian missionaries, especially those from the indigenous Congregations, now sending some of their Sisters abroad, attracted our attention because they represent a new field of interest for SEDOS. They have put their reflection in writing and so it is not necessary to dwell on it here.

Hna. Maria KAMPORORO, SMSM,  
De Rwanda  
Misionera en Colombia

Sr. M. Bennet Azuka Ezeokoli, IHM,  
PMS Director  
Onitsha Archdiocese, Nigeria

Sœur Evelyne BASUNGA,  
Sœur de Saint Thérèse  
de l'Enfant Jésus de KINSHASA  
La République Démocratique du Congo.

Sœur Béatrice NTUMBA,  
Sœur de Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus  
de MBUJIMAYI  
La République Démocratique du Congo.  
(now working in Italy)

ArulMary DURAIRAJ, FMM,  
From India on Mission in Bolivia (8 years)  
and 10 years still in Chile

## **Looking to the Future: some of the Recommendations from the last and life-giving Open Forum:**

On Saturday, 12 May 2012, the last day of the Seminar, some concerns emerged during the evaluation of the Seminar:

1). "How can we, as SEDOS, accompany the emerging Congregations with Missiological insights for formation and evangelization. On the same lines is the following statement: there is a need to bring on board local Congregations and the diocesans (who are also missionaries). We need to think how we can help them from a missiological stand point".

*We are planning to write a Mission Handbook for 2014: for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of SEDOS.*

2). "There is a need to give more space to the Laity".

3). "*To be taken into consideration in the near future but we are already collaborating with some Ecumenical Movements*": Thus, SEDOS Seminars need to have:

- An ecumenical face
- An inter-Religious face

4). The last Open Forum of the Seminar asked SEDOS to produce an Index of all the articles published in the Bulletin for the Houses of Formation. The work is being done by Sr. Colette AUGER, Sisters of the Presentation of Mary.

The translation of the text of the Seminar is very expensive. This year we paid over € 11.000,00. So the Executive Committee suggests that SEDOS ask the members if they could co-operate by sending Sisters who can translate for us at the meetings. We will pay them half the fee we pay the Agency. A Congregation has offered to translate from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish.

We thank all the participants of the Seminar 2012, and in a special way those who were in charge of the liturgy for their meaningful preparation as this facilitated the integration of what we were learning every day. We are looking forward to meeting you again in NEMI.

**SEDOS Residential Seminar: 23-27 April 2013:** The focus will be on: "*New Wines in New Wineskins*", "*New Evangelization*": *Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. At the Centro "Ad Gentes", NEMI, (RM).*

**SEDOS Conference:** 19 January 2013, 9:00am- 12:30; at the Brothers of the Christian Schools, via Aurelia 476. **Theme:** "*Discerning the signs of today's missionary service: Insights and Reflections of a Ugandan Comboni Missionary in Germany*"; **by Fr. Roberto TURIAMUREEBA, MCCJ**

Respectfully,

Sister Nenzili MBOMA, FMM,  
Executive Director