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**SEDOS**

**“New Wines in New Wineskins”:  
“The New Evangelization”  
– Europe, the United States of America,  
Canada, Australia and New Zealand –**



**23- 27 APRIL 2013  
Venue: At Centro “Ad Gentes” - Nemi (Rome)**

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# Editorial

Mission is an act of dialogue because God's inner nature is dialogical: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1-3)*". New Evangelization, asserts Sister Lydia, of the Medical Mission Sisters, is "A Journey of Mutual Transformation' is for me a much better expression for what we can achieve together today. I can learn a lot from my fellow citizens and it is up to me to discover in their commitment to people and situations what binds us".

The SEDOS Residential 2013 Seminar which was held at Centro "Ad Gentes" in NEMI (Rome) 23-27 April, welcomed 124 participants, one of them was Ms. Avtzi KURYAKI, from WCC.

We welcomed as gift from the goodness of the Lord, these four days of prayers, reflection and conversation around the very energizing topic on "New wine in New Wineskins", New Evangelization in Europe, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. We have been fully engaged in a process of mutual transformation, guided by very astute and faith-filled Speakers: Fr Giulio ALBANESE, MCCJ, Sr Susan SMITH, RNDM, Fr Noel CONNOLLY, SSC, Sr Agnes LANFERMANN, MMS, Fr Guylain PRINCE, OFM, Sr Mary MOTTE, FMM and Br Enzo BIEMMI, FSF. We made space to the Spirit and allowed Him to open our ears to hear with greater clarity his gentle promptings from within: 'Mission should be built on relations'. The closing address of Sr Georgeanne M. DONOVAN, SMSM, and the President of SEDOS has captured so well the essential of the whole process of 'mutual transformation'.



Some expressions strongly resonated within me: "Why do alone what we can do better together"? And so I gratefully make space to Sr Filo HIROTA, MMB, encapsulated some of fundamental attitude required for a successful commitment to evangelization today and she graciously accepted to offer her insights to the SEDOS' Friends and Readers.

The most important and relevant message I have been hearing since yesterday and this morning is that Mission is about relations and that we are called to go deep into our own humanity to understand who and what we are in a new way. We have been hearing different expressions that talk about the relations/attitude: to be humble, respectful, open, contemplative, personal, dialogue, collaboration, inclusion and mutuality. We are talking about the importance and need of these relations among equals.

This truth means a call to a radical change in our way of being a missionary congregation in today's world. I very much appreciated the vision given by Agnes of Mutual Transformation. It is not that we missionaries are the ones to proclaim the Good News but we are called to enable relations among equals that are life-giving and hope filled so that together we become the Good News to each other and to others.

We live in a world whose structures and policies do not prioritize the life of the entire creation and the dignity/rights of every single human being. It is a world that excludes the majority. The challenge posed is: can we be a community with others as an oasis in the desert? Let us ask the same question in two different ways.

Are we capable of being a community of men and women which is radically inclusive, welcoming and celebrating all kinds of diversity?

Can we be sensitive and attentive to the concrete reality of people so that the experience of community for them be truly that of the Good News?

This challenge to the hierarchical Church, I believe, is enormous. We need to go back to Jesus to understand His message of equal discipleship in a radically new way. Jesus continues to talk about the first will be the last and the last will be the first ... talking about equal relationships. I wonder why the washing of feet on Holy Thursday has never become a sacrament? A big challenge for us is how to be and work in this Church so that this Church be more of the Church of Jesus in this sense.

Sr Filo HIROTA, MMB, Superior General  
Executive Committee Member of SEDOS

# Welcome

**G**ood afternoon everyone. On behalf of the Executive Committee of SEDOS, it is truly a great privilege for me to welcome each of you to our 2013 SEDOS Seminar here in Nemi. I welcome our participants who have traveled from near and far to come for this event. At this time, I would like to invite our participants from abroad to stand so that we know who you are and can give you a proper welcome to Rome and, in particular, to *Centro Ad Gentes* in Nemi.



We welcome our presenters who have traveled from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and other parts of Europe. And we welcome our translators and all those who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes for many months to prepare for this conference. We want all of you to feel at home in Nemi throughout this week. Let us enjoy the sun when it shines and make our own sunshine when the showers arrive.

We gather today as a learning community: ready to listen to the insights of others, ready to share from the wealth of our own lived experience, ready to grapple with the challenges before us in light of “New Evangelization” — challenges of which we are aware and new challenges that we will discover together.

Some of us have been asking ourselves: What is the “new” in New Evangelization? What is the *New Wine for New Wineskins*? Perhaps it is a call to a new commitment to proclaim the Gospel in witness and proclamation — with new methods — with new expressions — in a new way — within a new cultural context, a new reality — with new passion. Perhaps it is simply an invitation to engage with the Holy Spirit in the task of creating a new model of being Church for today. And, to be sure, at the heart of our reflections and discussions is the faith conviction that *Jesus is the Light* — we pray that we can reflect his light in our world with new courage.

Today, we gather as a discerning community of faith, seekers on a journey who desire to live our discipleship of Jesus with integrity, with passion and with joy. Hopefully, the experience of these next few days will have positive influences on our ministry and mission when we leave this sacred space.

Once again, I say: **Welcome! Benvenuti! Bienvenidas! Bienvenue!**

Sr Georgeanne M. Donovan, SMSM  
President, SEDOS — 23 April 2013

Giulio Albanese, MCCJ

## Identikit del Missionario nel Contesto della Nuova Evangelizzazione

**S**criveva pertinentemente Giovanni Paolo II nell'enciclica *Redemptoris Missio*:

"Il numero di coloro che ignorano Cristo e non fanno parte della Chiesa è in continuo aumento, anzi dalla fine del Concilio è quasi raddoppiato. Per questa umanità immensa, amata dal Padre che per noi ha inviato il Suo Figlio, è evidente l'urgenza della missione" (Rm 3).

Mai il campo è stato esteso come oggi. Mai come nel nostro tempo sono esistiti sulla faccia della terra miliardi di persone e miriadi di gruppi culturali a cui la Parola di Dio non è mai arrivata. E, badate bene, la loro percentuale sta aumentando vertiginosamente di giorno in giorno. Mai in termini statistici, la Parola di Dio è stata aliena a tanti uomini e a tante donne come oggi. Nel mondo, poi, si rilevano situazioni estremamente contraddittorie: la devastante crisi dei mercati finanziari che ha penalizzato i ceti meno abbienti innescando la cosiddetta recessione su scala planetaria, il perdurare di modelli di sviluppo economico e tecnico nei paesi industrializzati che non tengono conto del Bene Comune. Non dimentichiamo poi che circa tre quarti della popolazione mondiale vive in situazioni di povertà, e si tratta in gran parte – ironia della sorte – dei "non evangelizzati". Ma anche nei Paesi industrializzati di tradizione cristiana (Europa e America) la situazione culturale e sociale è così cambiata da quando fu fatta la prima evangelizzazione che la maggior parte della gente non si ritrova più in sintonia col messaggio evangelico come fu presentato allora. Da ciò l'esigenza di una , come viene chiamata oggi, "nuova evangelizzazione" . Cioè un nuovo incontro con la Parola, un esporsi alla Parola, con la ricchezza e la povertà, con le certezze e le insicurezze, con le conquiste e le sconfitte, con l'esperienza umana e tecnologica del nostro tempo. A questo riguardo, nella *Redemptoris Missio* troviamo una precisazione sulla quale vale la pena ragionare: "Le differenze nell'attività all'interno dell'unica missione della chiesa nascono non da ragioni intrinseche alla missione stessa, ma dalle diverse circostanze in cui essa si svolge. Guardando al mondo

d'oggi dal punto di vista dell'evangelizzazione, si possono distinguere tre situazioni. Anzitutto, quella a cui si rivolge l'attività missionaria della chiesa: popoli, gruppi umani, contesti socio-culturali in cui Cristo e il suo vangelo non sono conosciuti, o in cui mancano comunità cristiane



abbastanza mature da poter incarnare la fede nel proprio ambiente e annunziarla ad altri gruppi. È, questa, propriamente la missione *ad gentes*. (52) Ci sono, poi, comunità cristiane che hanno adeguate e solide strutture ecclesiali, sono ferventi di fede e di vita irradiano la testimonianza del vangelo nel loro ambiente e sentono l'impegno della missione universale. In esse si svolge l'attività, o cura pastorale della chiesa. Esiste, infine, una situazione intermedia, specie nei paesi di antica cristianità, ma a volte anche nelle chiese più giovani, dove interi gruppi di battezzati hanno perduto il senso vivo della fede, o addirittura non si riconoscono più come membri della chiesa, conducendo un'esistenza lontana da Cristo e dal suo vangelo. In questo caso c'è bisogno di una nuova evangelizzazione, o rievangelizzazione" (Rm 33).

Dobbiamo allora stare molto attenti alle semplificazioni. Occorre piuttosto guardare alla realtà concreta delle nostre comunità disseminate nel mondo, nella consapevolezza che, come spiega la *Redemptoris Missio*: "I confini fra cura pastorale dei fedeli, nuova evangelizzazione e attività missionaria specifica non sono nettamente definibili, e non è pensabile creare tra di esse barriere o compartimenti-stagno. (Rm 34)



Questo in sostanza significa che ogni agente pastorale deve vivere sincronicamente le tre dimensioni di cui sopra. Il problema è che per fare ciò occorre avere il coraggio di mettersi in profonda discussione. Dovremmo chiederci soprattutto, che cosa deve cambiare nella nostra maniera di svolgere la missione? L'interrogativo è pressante perché cresce di giorno in giorno l'urgenza del nuovo nell'azione evangelizzatrice a tutte le latitudini, Europa compresa. Una sfida missionaria di proporzioni inaudite, a cui noi, in quanto Chiesa, sembriamo essere impreparati in una società moderna, anzi "post moderna" che schizza via alla velocità della luce. Forse per la prima volta in duemila anni di cristianesimo, tante ricchezze e tradizioni, di marca squisitamente occidentale presenti nella liturgia, nell'interpretazione del dogma, del diritto canonico, possono diventare dei pesi tremendi da meritare il "guai a voi dottori della legge" proferito senza mezzi termini dal Signore. È anche vero, comunque, che non è facile cogliere la linea di demarcazione tra ciò che il Vangelo è in quanto messaggio di salvezza, e ciò che è accessorio, semplice aggiunta, incrostazione. Mai come oggi il mondo è stato così diverso dai tempi di Gesù Cristo come cultura, come modo di vivere, come sentimento del sacro, come senso di Chiesa, come sistemi culturali, come modalità comunicative, come senso di libertà e indipendenza, come pluralismo religioso, come rapporto con l'aldilà, come visione globale della realtà.... E questi disagi – è bene dirlo con franchezza – sono percepiti dai giovani all'ennesima potenza, innescando a volte una sorta di frustrazione non solo psicologica, ma esistenziale. La missione non è arrivata al capolinea, ma bisogna trovare certamente un nuovo modo di viverla. Continuare testardamente sulla stessa strada, accontentandosi di un cristianesimo sotto naftalina, non fa che aumentare la

frustrazione e la crisi. Che cosa deve allora cambiare? Alcune indicazioni molto concrete ci sono state offerte dal Concilio ma purtroppo, lasciatemelo dire, non sono ancora state ancora recepite, ruminare, digerite, metabolizzate del tutto. La missione non si può ridurre solo alla celebrazione dei sacramenti. Oggi la missione deve impegnarsi nella promozione dei valori del Regno (Rm 34), nella ricerca dei "germi del Verbo" (Ad Gentes, 11) e nella scoperta e promozione di quei "beni spirituali e morali e i valori socio-culturali" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2), che si trovano sparsi, per opera dello Spirito Santo, nelle culture e nelle popolazioni anche al di fuori della Chiesa. Di fronte, è bene rammentarlo, il missionario si trova persone create a immagine e somiglianza di Dio, inserite nella loro storia e nella loro propria religione, ed è solo nell'ascolto e nel dialogo con esse che viene offerto il messaggio della salvezza, secondo la logica dell'incarnazione. Per questa ragione Paolo VI nell'esortazione apostolica *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ricordava che: "Per la chiesa non si tratta soltanto di predicare il Vangelo in fasce geograficamente sempre più vaste o a popolazioni sempre più estese, ma anche di raggiungere, e quasi sconvolgere mediante la forza del Vangelo, i criteri di giudizio, i valori determinanti, i punti di interesse, le linee di pensiero, le fonti ispiratrici e i modelli di vita dell'umanità" (En 19).

La sfida, dunque, consiste nel coniugare "Spirito" e "Vita", nel senso che oggi più che mai la Parola deve uscire dalle nostre sacrestie, entrando a pieno titolo nelle vicende umane a trecentosessanta gradi. In questa prospettiva, il nostro discorso mira ad individuare le direttrici verso cui si deve orientare la missione del futuro, quel futuro che ci sta davanti all'inizio di una nuova epoca caratterizzata dalla mentalità post-moderna, da una nuova cultura planetaria, dalla globalizzazione, da nuovi fondamentalismi religiosi e da forme di ingiustizia strutturali sempre più gravi (questione della remissione del debito, le migrazioni dei popoli ...). Proviamo allora a definire l'identikit del missionario/a di questo terzo Millennio in una prospettiva aperta alle sfide del mondo per la causa del Regno:

1) Il missionario/a deve anzitutto riaffermare il primato dello Spirito sulle Opere. Infatti, nel corso della sua storia, la missione si è andata sviluppando in forme che alla lunga hanno evidenziato soprattutto

le opere materiali, visibili e documentabili nelle statistiche: chiese, scuole, ospedali, cooperative di sviluppo sociale, oratori, ecc.... Questa maniera di fare missione, ha ridotto a volte l'evangelizzazione ad un'impresa di opere pubbliche (religiose e civili) da programmare, organizzare, finanziare e realizzare con spirito imprenditoriale, con l'inevitabile accentuazione dell'efficientismo e dell'individualismo. Ecco che allora le opere della missione, invece di essere strumenti, si sono identificate con la missione e hanno fatto dimenticare che essa è prima di tutto caratterizzata da una relazione di invio al mondo da parte di una comunità cristiana, un movimento spirituale segnato dalla fede e dall'obbedienza allo Spirito, dalla carità e dal dialogo interpersonale. Al di là delle più sante intenzioni, la missione si è quindi trasformata in un insieme di "cose da fare", e in un'organizzazione umanitaria, molto efficiente, che canalizza la generosità della comunità cristiana e che attira la stima e la simpatia di tutti, anche dei non praticanti. Per essere agenti della missione cristiana non basta realizzare delle opere, bisogna realizzarle per una motivazione che non è solo intenzionale o, meno ancora, supposta, ma deve essere continuamente presente nella loro trasparenza. Il missionario della nuova evangelizzazione, prima di essere un operaio efficiente, dovrà presentarsi come un uomo di Dio, offrendo una forte testimonianza della risurrezione di Gesù Cristo e della speranza del Regno. Decisiva sarà la qualità della sua presenza in mezzo alla gente, "testimonianza vissuta di fedeltà al Signore Gesù, di povertà e di distacco, di libertà di fronte ai poteri di questo mondo, in una parola, di santità" (En 41). Non sarà il fascino delle sue opere, né le promesse di sviluppo e di progresso, ciò che evangelizza, ma la fede del discepolo che diventa epifania, memoria cioè e profezia, del Regno di Dio.

2) Il missionario dovrà poi sentirsi davvero cattolico nel senso che la missione non è già più, e neppure potrà essere più, un movimento a senso unico che viene dalle chiese di antica data, dall'occidente verso il resto del mondo. La missione è cooperazione. La missione allora ritorna là dove ha avuto inizio e rinnova, attraverso il suo dinamismo e le ricchezze dei popoli che ha raccolto, le chiese che l'hanno promossa. In un mondo globalizzato con tutta la sua rete di comunicazioni, la Chiesa deve assumere la cattolicità come criterio di missione. Essa a



pensarci bene diventa allora la globalizzazione perspicace di Dio. E in questa prospettiva, i cristiani non possono rimanere inerti in un tempo, come il nostro, in cui i mezzi di trasporto sono divenuti veloci e tanti "non cristiani" sono ormai vicini a noi, a casa nostra. Pensiamo alle migliaia di extracomunitari non cristiani che approdano sul nostro continente e che sono presenti ormai nelle nostre chiese. Ma c'è oggi una nuova dimensione della cattolicità che deve essere riconosciuta e attuata. La missione non si può accontentare di raggiungere ogni luogo, deve rivolgersi anche alle persone e alle culture già raggiunte dall'annuncio cristiano per trasformarle al di dentro, per "sconvolgerle mediante la forza del Vangelo" (En 20) e per risvegliare quell'uomo "nuovo" che è l'oggetto della salvezza cristiana. La missione del futuro deve completare la prima fase della diffusione del Vangelo, che possiamo chiamare della cattolicità geografica, con un'altra cattolicità che potremmo chiamare antropologica. Infatti la missione non è diretta soltanto a tutti gli uomini, ma deve raggiungere ogni uomo nella sua profonda verità, per fargli incontrare Cristo affinché egli sia da lui trasformato e salvato.

3) Il missionario dovrà poi essere un comunicatore nel villaggio globale, nella certezza che Cristo è il Verbo di Dio. "Comunicare", parola composta dal prefisso cum e da un derivato di *munus* ("incarico, compito"), vuol dire letteralmente "che svolge il suo compito insieme con altri". Ne consegue che il mondo missionario, dovendo veicolare messaggi d'inestimabile valore incentrati sul rispetto della fede, della speranza, della carità, della "res publica", delle regole, della dignità umana ... non può



prescindere dal "cum-munus", cioè dalla dimensione partecipativa rispetto alla missione evangelizzatrice. Ed oggi il paradosso è sotto gli occhi tutti, viviamo in una società digitalizzata, internettiana ... eppure mai come di questi tempi nella Chiesa si fa fatica a comunicare al cuore della gente. La nostra predicazione spesso si riduce a un compendio di leggi, leggende e dottrine, dimenticando che il Vangelo è Buona Notizia.

4) La missione del futuro dovrà anche avere un'attenzione particolare verso il processo di inculturazione del Vangelo e, in generale, della fede cristiana. Quest'esigenza del nuovo modo di fare missione è "particolarmente acuta e urgente" (Rm 52). Ne va del rispetto per il Vangelo che è destinato ad essere accolto da tutti in modo profondo ed

esistenziale, non superficiale o solo intellettuale o nozionistico. Ne va anche del rispetto per i destinatari dell'evangelizzazione, chiamati a impegnare tutta la loro esistenza in una conversione che deve coinvolgerli

totalmente: "Amerai il Signore Dio tuo con tutto il cuore, con tutta la tua mente e con tutte le tue forze" (Mc 12, 30). In qualche luogo la rapidità dell'evangelizzazione ha impedito di curare le esigenze delle singole persone e la conoscenza delle loro tradizioni. Il risultato è stato un cristianesimo steso sopra la cultura "a somiglianza di vernice superficiale" (En 19), che non ha potuto penetrare nel fondo dell'uomo e della società. L'inculturazione è una sensibilità abbastanza recente, che tuttavia, nella missione del futuro, non può essere più ignorata, se vogliamo che il Vangelo metta radici profonde e trasformi significativamente le culture. La chiesa deve cercare di portare il Vangelo nel profondo delle diverse culture affinché esse quasi producano una nuova cultura. Lo ha detto in modo molto chiaro Giovanni Paolo II alle chiese d'Africa: "Una fede che non diventa cultura, è una fede non pienamente accolta, non interamente pensata e non fedelmente vissuta" (*Ecclesia in Africa* 78). Il compito di inculturare il messaggio

evangelico è responsabilità specifica della comunità locale (Rm 52c), domanda ai missionari di essere vicini alla gente, di vivere con loro, di assumerne le ansie e le speranze, cercando di vivere la loro fede in comunione profonda con le popolazioni cui sono stati inviati, evitando di opprimerli con la loro potenza culturale ed economica.

5) Vi è un ultimo aspetto nella lista, ma certamente fondamentale guardando all'orizzonte globale ed europeo in particolare: mi riferisco alla questione socio/politica. Il missionario deve essere un soggetto politico. Nel senso che più di altri, essendo portatore di una sacrosanta sfera valoriale, ha il compito di manifestare affezione alla "res publica", al bene comune. Le migrazioni, le disparità sociali, i poveri e gli emarginati.... Devono

essere sempre e comunque in cima alla nostra agenda.



Queste prospettive suppongono naturalmente che esistano ancora delle persone che si consacrano totalmente alla missione evangelizzatrice. In questo senso, il momento presente non ci offre molte illusioni. Vediamo infatti che le vocazioni missionarie stanno diminuendo anche nelle chiese europee che finora ne hanno avute molte mentre quelle che nascono nelle nuove chiese non riescono ancora a rimpiazzarle in modo da dare continuità al passato. Sarà questo un dato di fatto scoraggiante che ci fa cadere le braccia come davanti ad un fatto inevitabile e irreparabile? O non sarà invece un'indicazione provvidenziale che Dio ci fa giungere per rinnovare evangelicamente la figura stessa del missionario, aprendola a tutti coloro — sacerdoti, religiosi e religiose, laici e laiche — che sentono il bisogno di rispondere all'amore di Cristo? Non resta che pregare e discernere per fare la Sua volontà.

# Fr Noel Connolly, SSC

## New Evangelisation in Australia

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### INTRODUCTION

Today, many Australians would describe themselves as cultural rather than fervent or regular Catholics. They often wed in the church. Many have their children baptised and send them to a Catholic school and they are likely to be buried from the church but that may be it. So Australia qualifies well for the "New Evangelisation" envisioned by John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*, #33. We are a democratic, secular, plural and fairly materialistic country where the Church's influence is waning. In this context we have been called to evangelise with new ardour, methods and expression.

This paper has three sections: I: The Australian Context; II: The Australian Catholic Church: Some Relevant Trends; and III: Reflections on the New Evangelisation in Australia Today. Central to my reflections will be some of the basic themes of modern missiology: God's mission; the Kingdom of God; the importance of remembering that the Church is sign, sacrament and servant of the Kingdom, which is larger than the Church; and the need for a broad approach to evangelisation, one that stresses not only proclamation but the other aspects of mission such as work for justice, inculturation, dialogue and so forth. These themes should influence evangelisation anywhere but they are particularly relevant for the Australian context. In fact without work for justice, etc. we will not be credible to most Australians.

### I. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

It is impossible in this paper to give a complete introduction to Australia, its history and culture, so I will restrict myself to the two major themes most important for the New Evangelisation: Australia as a secular and pluralistic society.

#### **Secular Australia**

Australia is a postmodern, secular and multicultural country (D'Orsa, 2010, 104-117). But secular does not necessarily mean anti-religious or lacking in spirituality.

There is still interest in religion and spirituality but the churches have lost their

monopoly. Australia has been said to be the most secular country in the world but that is

debatable. We have our Australian way of being religious. It was described by one of our major historians,



Manning Clark, as "A whisper in the mind and a shy hope in the heart". There is a great reluctance in Australians to talk about religion and spirituality and a distaste for extravagant display. Interestingly John Thornhill in his book *Making Australia* (1992) entitled his chapter on religion *The Embarrassing Subject*.

However, that does not mean we are irreligious. Theologians like John Thornhill, Tony Kelly and Ross Langmead believe this suggests not a lack of spiritual depth but a silence that reveals wisdom. We don't have the tools to express what we have experienced because of our isolation, our brutal early history, our guilt before the Aborigines and our struggle with a harsh, raw land and climate. Many Australians are still searching for the transcendent and we need to learn to tell the Jesus story in an understandable and attractive Australian way (Thornhill, 1992), (Kelly, 1990), (Langmead, 2007).

To do that effectively we must understand the history of religion in White Australia. The foundational time for establishing Australian religious institutions was 1788-1840. Many of our founders were children of the Enlightenment and antagonistic to religion. In England the Church had lost touch with the urban poor so the convicts were rebellious and inarticulate religiously and for the first fifty years there were few clergy so they were left to their own devices. To make matters worse religion was used as part of the system for enforcing



order. Ministers often acted as Magistrates. Religion was seen as a civilising force so for many religion was fun-denying Wowserism. Australians were easy-going larrikins, egalitarian, anti-authoritarian, self-reliant.

They were also practical and pragmatic. The religion Australians admire is "religion with its sleeves rolled up". They admire religious people who live their religion in practical caring ways like the "good old Salvos" of Vinnies.

Given our history we have developed a particular approach to religion. Bouma (2006, 45-47) describes our approach as, among other things:

- having a light touch in dealing with religion — laid back;
- wary of enthusiasm — shy and withdrawn;
- distant from authority figures;
- committed to the here and now and enjoying life;
- against religion that is imposed;
- quiet reverence or deliberate silence;
- intolerance of God's police;
- infrequent and occasional attendance;
- and individuals tend to be religious early and late in life.

The strong tendency in religion today is towards spirituality and towards what Charles Taylor would call "expressive individualism", towards religion that feels good. There is also a tendency towards non-institutional or "do it yourself" access to the Transcendent, and to newer rather than print *media*. All this poses special difficulties for the Church and its pastoral leaders who have not been trained in this way.

It may be no surprise then that the fastest growing "religion" in the 2011 Australian Census is "no religion". They have risen from 18.7% in 2006 to 22.3% in 2011. A further 8.6% did not state their religion in the census.

### **Pluralist Australia**

Besides the normal pressures towards pluralism that you would find in a "postmodern" society like that of Australia, migration has ensured a special pluralism here.

Australia is the most multicultural country in the Western world: 47% of Australians were either born overseas or

have a parent who was born overseas. More than 7 million people have migrated to Australia since 1945. Up till 1960 the majority of immigrants were from Europe but between 1960 and 1990 non-Western migration grew from 12% to 52% of all migrants (Hanciles, 2008). 44% of recent arrivals are Asian and the average age of asians is 37 *versus* 56 for European migrants.

"Since World War II, immigration has played a huge role in the development of religious faith in Australia. That role has been evident in the place that many of the world's religions now have in Australia. Since 1971, the number of Australians associated with a religion other than Christianity has risen from just 0.1 million to 1.5 million. However, many millions of the immigrants have been Christian and some denominations would hardly exist today without the enormous influx of members that immigration has brought" (Hughes, 2012 b, 1). The Anglican and Uniting Church numbers have dropped significantly but Catholicism has been a major beneficiary. For example, between the 2006 and 2011 Australian censuses 1.2 million migrants arrived in Australia. 500,000 of these were Christian and 200,000 were Catholic. Because of migration Catholics have only slipped from 25.8% to 25.3% of the population between 2006 and 2011. [Catholics number 5,439,269 out of a total population of 21,507,719. More people identify with Catholicism than any other religious tradition in Australia].

But migration has been both a gift and a challenge. It has obviously enriched the Catholic Church both in numbers and cultures. Through migration we have also become a multi-faith society. Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus are increasing in number and are playing an increasingly important role in Australian society.

## **II. CATHOLIC CHURCH: SOME RELEVANT TRENDS**

In the 2011 Census of all identifying as Catholic: 25.3% were migrants; 21.6% were the children of migrants and 52.2% were born in Australia. According to the 2006 Census four dioceses: Sydney, Perth, Parramatta and Melbourne had around 30% of their Catholics born overseas (ACBC Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees 2007). The top ten countries of birth among Catholics born overseas are: Italy, the Philippines, England, New Zealand, Ireland, India, Vietnam, Malta, Croatia and

Poland in descending order (Hughes 2012a). Immigrants are significantly better at attending Church, although that falls off with succeeding generations. And while the majority of Australian-born attendees are older, the immigrants make up 40% of those under 65 attending religious services. They are more accepting of authority and more traditional in their devotions. So they provide both an increase in number and devotion and some interesting challenges. They are attracted to devotions that Australian-born Catholics have recently given up. Some of the things which attract migrants are the very things that alienate many Australian-born. "It is hard to provide religious nurture for both groups of people within the same context" (Hughes 2012 b, 8).

Meanwhile there is an increasing shortage of priests in Australia. Peter Wilkinson in his *Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster?* (2011) quotes the following conclusions from an examination of parishes in Australia:

- one in four Australian parishes is without a full-time resident priest
- very few new parishes are being established, despite a rapidly increasing Catholic population
- 184 existing parishes have been merged since 1994, with more likely to follow
- since 1995 local home-grown vocations to the priesthood have been few
- since 1997 parish ministry has become increasingly reliant on priests sourced from overseas
- parishes are generally having to care for an increasing number of Catholics; from an average of 3,481 Catholics per parish in 2000 to an average of 4,368 in 2010 (+25%).

Because of the shortage of priests almost all dioceses in Australia have invited overseas born priests to join them and staff parishes. Religious congregations have also invited many overseas members to join them.

Accurate information on how many overseas priests and religious have entered Australia is unavailable. "In 2010, my best estimate is that 300-340 overseas-sourced priests, diocesan and religious, now minister in territorial parishes, and constitute 20-22

per cent of all priests active in parish ministry" (Wilkinson, 2011, 17).

These priests are both gift and challenge. They are mostly younger and they see themselves as missionaries to the Australian Church. They are zealous and spiritual. Because of their experience of crossing cultural boundaries they may have special sensitivities and insights needed for building a truly multicultural church. But they have similar attitudes to the lay migrants. They are often traditional and sometimes authoritarian, finding it difficult to work with parish councils and women lay pastoral associates. Because of their accent many parishioners find it difficult to understand their homilies. A great deal of effort and planning needs to be put into programmes to welcome, enable and integrate overseas priests and religious. Some dioceses are good at this, others are not. More consultation and



preparation of the local priests and future parishioners is essential.

### **Religious Life in Australia**

In 2009 the National Council of Catholic Religious Australia commissioned the ACBC Pastoral Projects Office (now called the Pastoral Research Office) to survey the various Australian religious institutes (Reid, 2010). There were 8,422 religious [5,927 sisters; 884 religious brothers; and 1,611 clerical religious] in Australia in 2009, down from the peak of 19,413 religious in 1966. Their median age was 73 and only 8.2% were under 50. Religious now cover a wide range of apostolates. The largest number work in social services and pastoral care. Only 12% work in education compared to 48% in 1976. Just over 400 people made their first profession between 1997 and 2008 and 74.1% were still religious in 2009. There is no clear increase in the number of

vocations but a significant number of vocations come from migrant communities. Australian religious have made a major contribution to Australian society through their schools, hospitals, etc. In 2009 they still owned 563 institutions and jointly owned, sponsored or conducted another 84 but they have closed over 50 in the past ten years. Most institutes believe that their best future lies in partnerships with the laity and other institutes.

### **Mass Attendance in Australia**

In 2007 (updated 2009) the Pastoral Projects Office of the Australian Bishops' Conference produced their Final Report on *Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass*. Their research used a qualitative rather than quantitative methodology. They identified the following major reasons why Catholics have stopped attending Mass as:

#### *Church-centred reasons:*

1. The irrelevance of the Church to life today;
2. The misuse of power and authority in the Church;
3. Problems with the priest in the parish;
4. Lack of intellectual stimulation;
5. Concerns related to the Church as a community;
6. A sense of being excluded by Church laws;
7. Structural factors

#### *Participant-centred reasons:*

1. Family or household-related reasons;
2. Crisis of faith;
3. Going to Mass simply not a priority

These results were consistent with other research projects and were affirmed by the Australian Council for Clergy Life and Ministry Council (2008).

### **The Larger Australian Christian Context - National Church Life Survey**

The National Church Life Survey is second in size only to the National Census as a social survey, and is taken every five years around the same time as the Census.<sup>1</sup>

The survey measures nine "core qualities" of internal church life, nearly all of which showed a strong pattern of

improvement over the past decade. These include "an alive and growing faith", with 86 per cent of people saying their faith has grown; "vital and nurturing worship", with 76 per cent finding the preaching at church helpful; and "strong and growing belonging"; with 82 per cent of those who attend church going weekly and 95 per cent at least monthly. The only two core qualities that have fallen are Leadership (encouraging individual's gifts) and Faith Sharing (inviting someone to church). With Faith Sharing the percentage has dropped from 37% in 2006 to 35% in 2011. And Catholics are one of the most reluctant groups to share their faith at around 27%. The Catholic laity traditionally leave faith sharing to clergy and religious. Faith Sharing is the core value that has the greatest positive influence on all the other core values and therefore the health of the church (NCLS, 2012b).

The results of the 2006 NCLS Survey showed that the key factors in attracting newcomers were: a strong sense of belonging among attendees; attendees inviting others to church; an empowering leader; a sense of vision and direction; growth in faith and commitment; joyful inspiring services; contemporary worship; informal acts of helping; looking after the young; a focus on people outside the church; and a willingness to try new things (NCLS, 2012a, 108-109).

There are a few specific details about Catholics in *First Impressions* but the ACBC Pastoral Research Office has released two E-News Bulletins on the 2011 NCLS (Issues 18 & 19 December 2012). They reveal: 50% of Mass attenders are over 60; around 60% are women; 40% were born overseas; 85% of Mass attenders said they attend Mass usually every week or more often (Pastoral Research Office 2012).

### **III. REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW EVANGELISATION IN AUSTRALIA TODAY**

One of the things that concerns me about the present crisis facing the Australian Church is that the falling away from the Church seems to be indiscriminate. Children of committed Catholic families have also given up going to Church, despite the witness of their parents and receiving a good Catholic education.

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty-three denominations, including the Catholic Church, sponsor and participate. So far only a short *First Impressions* (NCLS 2012b) of trends in all the Christian Churches is available. It has some limited information specific to the Catholic Church. We also have the second edition of the Report on the 2006 survey *Enriching Church Life* (NCLS, 2012a).

Effective evangelisation seems to demand more than putting in a greater effort and developing better programmes. Clearly something bigger is at stake. We are in the midst of a major cultural move. We are living at the end of "Christendom". It may seem strange to talk of "Christendom" in Australia, a country so far from Europe, whose White history began only in the late 1800's, but its influence did persist. Even though we have never had a State Religion, our churches have had a Christendom mindset especially by aspiring to influence and exercise control over the moral debates of the country. However, history has taken away the supportive culture and plausibility structures we have been used to. The institutions, customs and beliefs that gave us security and credibility are now ineffective. Christianity has moved "from the centre to the margins, from majority to minority, from being at home in our culture to being an alien in it, from privilege to plurality, from control to witness, from maintenance to mission, and from institution to movement" (Langmead, 2007, ix).

**We need more than a better presentation of doctrine or catechetical renewal.** We are dealing with a radically new situation in which Christendom or a Christian culture no longer supports evangelisation. We are no longer being socialised into our Christian values.

Without the help of a supportive culture, faith has become a choice going against the tide and many Catholics have "fallen away". The Australian Council for Clergy Life and Ministry (2009) and Carroll (2009) both point out that most of the reasons why people do not attend Mass in Australia today were present in the 1950s but that they still went. Now they do not have to go. Now the Mass must be personally life-giving or they are unlikely to participate.

There will be no New Age of privileged faith and culture, at least not in the "West", so we need a radical rethink more than a greater effort at evangelisation.

### **Missiological Foundations**

*God's mission, the Kingdom and the Church as Servant of the Kingdom*

Fundamental to any rethinking of evangelisation are the basic themes of modern missiology.

A major rediscovery at Vatican II was that mission is founded in the life of the Trinity. Mission begins in the Father's boundless love, creating and sustaining the world. The three persons of the Trinity love the universe and are constantly creating, healing, reconciling, transforming and uniting the world. Jesus was consumed with a sense of mission. Although he was intensely conscious of the power of evil, he could also see goodness breaking through and preached that the Kingdom of God was near at hand [cf. Mk 1:15].

The Church has inherited his mission and its role is to be a sign and sacrament of the Kingdom. She is a servant of the Kingdom which embraces all creation but is especially embodied in the Church, "its initial budding forth". The Church exists for the sake of God's Kingdom which is breaking into our world in many places including far beyond the boundaries of the institutional Church. God is active wherever people strive for justice, peace, freedom and reconciliation between peoples, religions and with the environment. Our task is not only to proclaim but to seek out, discover, encourage, celebrate and build on the Spirit's activity in the world.

We are compelled to preach Jesus. We must also build Christian communities to keep alive the memory of Jesus and reveal God's coming Reign. However, the primary aim of evangelisation is not the extension of the Church, important as that is, but the revelation of God's love and the realisation of God's plan for the world.

### *A More Positive Attitude to "the world"*

If God is working in the world outside the Church then we must necessarily have a more positive attitude to the world than we had in the old missiology. The Church has normally been defensive and negative towards the modern world. We tend to long for the good old Christian days. Yet as O'Loughlin (2012) pointed out, Christendom was not God-given. It was the product of particular historical, social and cultural pressures and had its limitations as well as its strengths. There has never been and there will never be a perfect form of Christianity.

There are three missiological principles that can help us:

1). All cultures, even ours, are places for transcendence and encounter with God. The Holy Spirit is active in our modern world. It is our job to discover, celebrate and build on this presence. 2). All cultures are also human constructs and are therefore ambiguous, containing "seeds and weeds" which need to be rejoiced in, condemned or evangelised. 3). The Gospel can only be received, appreciated and lived within a people's culture. We have to speak to them in their terms, to find the evil and transcendence in their lives, to speak to their fears and hopes. Only an inculturated Gospel can call people to deep and lasting conversion.

So, there are three possible reactions to our "postmodern" world: hostility, innocent acceptance or discernment. And discernment must always be done out of consolation or appreciation not fear or anger. We will be much more convincing evangelisers if people feel we know, respect and enjoy them. This is especially true with Australians who have always suspected religious people as being negative and having all the answers.

*The "New Evangelisation" will be strengthened by a broad approach to mission*

Straight after this SEDOS Conference I am returning to Sydney for a Conference called: *Mission: One heart many voices*. The Conference is being called by Catholic Religious Australia in conjunction with Catholic Mission and will complement the "New Evangelisation".

The Conference is for people committed to and involved in mission, working for the Kingdom/Reign of God in Australia. People teaching in Catholic Education, caring for people in Catholic Health, Aboriginal Ministry, Saint Vincent de Paul, Catholic social Services, Catholic Earth Care, Migrant Chaplaincy, Mercy Works, MacKillop Family Services, work

with refugees or battered women, building Christian communities in their parish and other ministries. I fear that their work and commitment may seem tangential to the Australian Church's efforts to promote the New Evangelisation, which some restrict to explicit proclamation.

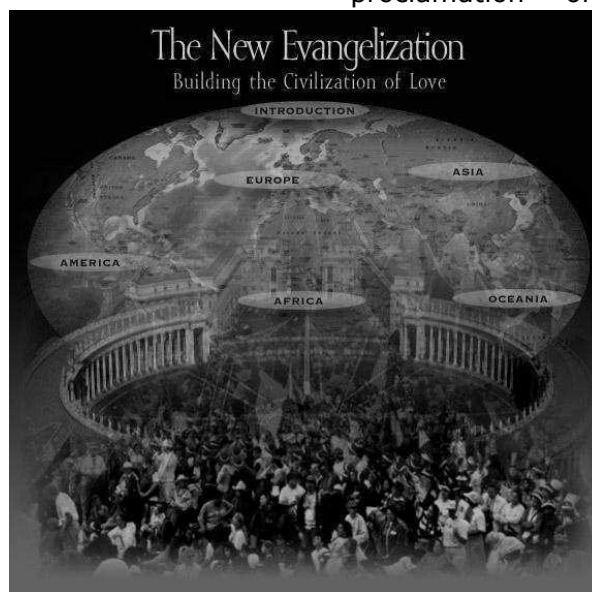
But the New Evangelisation will be less effective if it is limited to a narrow definition of evangelisation. John Paul II (1991) in his Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus*, taught: "the 'new evangelisation', which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasised many times, must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine" (# 5). In *Evangeli Nuntiandi*, Paul VI had earlier linked liberation, evangelisation and integral development:

"As the kernel and centre of His Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God ...." (#9). "But

evangelisation would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and man's concrete life, both personal and social" (#29).

Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*, (#15), develops Paul VI's teaching on the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and "man's concrete life", reaffirming the profound links between evangelisation and human development and development and liberation.

Proclamation is the "permanent priority" (*RM*, #44) but "Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways. Among these ways, some have particular importance in the present situation of the Church and the world" (*ibid.*, #41). Proclamation must be done along with work for the Kingdom such as justice, peace and the integrity of creation; interreligious dialogue; and reconciliation. At the Synod of Bishops on *Justice in the World* (1971) they



described "action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world" as a "constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel". Dialogue and the other aspects of mission are also constitutive of mission and so in practice mission cannot be restricted to only one aspect.

Proclamation without work for justice will be empty and possibly ineffectual. It will probably be seen as self-serving. In Australia it will lack credibility. Australians admire religion "with its sleeves rolled up", religion that practices what it preaches. They respect practical, involved Christian groups like the "good old Salvos" and "Vinnies". Possibly this was part of St Mary MacKillop's enormous appeal, shown during her canonisation.

It will also be a way of involving some of the Catholics who have stopped attending Mass. Carroll (2009) in her commentary points out that many non-attenders are often involved in agencies such as Catholic schools, Centacare/Catholic Community Services, St Vincent de Paul, Catholic Health and the social justice agenda. These are valued and valuable points of connection for disaffected Catholic and this needs to be recognised and the people affirmed.

For these reasons Catholic Religious Australia and Catholic Mission called for a mission conference, *Mission: One heart many voices*, in late April 2013. We hope that the conference will give a vision that will affirm, encourage and inspire all those working for the Reign of God and that this will build on other attempts at furthering the New Evangelisation.

#### *A Deeper Personal Conversion to Christ*

In Australia today we have to learn to preach and evangelise, without the backing of power and prestige, to an audience that is indifferent and even distrustful of us and our message. We must present a deeply personal and beautiful message. People are not interested in doctrine. Some years ago I was impressed by an article in the *SEDOS Bulletin* by Maria Ha-Fong Ko (2007) on *Mission in an Asian Context*. She asked a Taoist holy man what he thought of Christianity and he replied, "You Christians know too much about God". We have so much doctrine, but do we know God as mystery? We place such importance on pedagogy and too little on mystagogy.

We have to learn to know the mystery of God in our hearts and be ready to share it and the reason for our hope whenever we are asked for it, but "gently and respectfully" (I Pt 3:15). In a pluralist society we need to be able to talk to people and show them how faith in Christ can enrich and enliven an authentic experience. Our task is not to "pump religion into people" but to draw it out. To do that we need to know the mystery and the hunger in our own hearts, and respect it in others. Disarming the Church of much of its power has the potential to throw it back on its real foundations, the beauty of Christ, that we find in the New Testament: "that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life" (I Jn 1:1), (Sellick 2013).

David Smith (2003) suggests that in this post-Christendom time it might be best if we were to return to before Christendom when the Apostles and early Christians could not appeal to anything but the Gospel. In those days they expected that Christianity meant a radical conversion and that the moral demands would be high. They also had to understand and explain a dead Messiah. The Messiah was supposed to save us from death, not join us in it.

Timothy Radcliffe (2005) also suggests that the best role for Christians today is that of seeker or pilgrim, travelling with others as they search for the good, the true and the beautiful and towards happiness and God. We need to recover the "pilgrim spirit" of *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*.

#### **Responses in the Australian Context**

##### *Evangelising in a Secular Australia*

There are secularists who are strongly anti-religion in Australia but on the whole Australia is not a strongly ideological country. Australian secularism is pragmatic, soft rather than hard (D'Orsa, 2010, 109-110). Still religion is being increasingly marginalised in Australia. As in the rest of the West, Australian Churches aspired to wide influence and they expected to provide much of the moral framework on which society was organised but now they are just one voice. Australian society relies on reason and science to make the decisions that shape public policy not religious authority. Secularisation has meant the



undermining of religious meaning and the loss of increasing areas of life to religious control.

But as Ronald Rolheiser (2006) points out it will not be helpful if we regard modern secular society as the enemy, anti-church, amoral and the root of all our problems. Secularity is Christianity's adolescent child, not bad but unfinished and difficult. Many of its values are clearly Christian and some of its excesses may be the result of our excesses. For too long the Church has tended to see the modern world as "pagan" or "Godless" and that has undermined our credibility even further. We need to be more positive as well as critical and to discover how God is experienced in this culture and how to live lives that make Gospel sense in a secular world.

We also need to remember that secularity is deeply part of us, part of our way of thinking. This is both opportunity and challenge. There are many aspects of secularity that we would not want to live without: democracy, human dignity; freedom of religion from State control; freedom of inquiry; advances in science and even our modern way of thinking (Downey 2006). There are also destructive aspects: lack of respect for human life; consumerism; subject-centeredness, fragmentation, weak social involvement, privatisation of religion, etc. We must approach secular society with a listening and discerning heart, with respect, confidence and humility (Downey 2006), or in the spirit of prophetic dialogue championed by Bevans and Schroeder (2011), an approach of respectful dialogue but also prophetic evangelisation and criticism. "The Gospel challenges cultures, and the Good News is a sharp-edged sword as well. The prophetic dimension is crucial. Australia needs a church that stands out as a clear sign of the Reign of God" (Langmead, 2007, xxviii). To be prophetic we will need to integrate word and deed, costly discipleship, identification with the poor and challenge the powers.

Jim and Therese D'Orsa in a soon to be published book, *Leading for Mission: Integrating Life, Culture and Faith in Catholic Schools*, point out that because secularisation has the effect of muting religious messages in schools, it must be counterbalanced by strong and planned efforts at evangelisation. Otherwise the secular bias in modern Western culture will

prevail. Culture by nature is powerful and resistant to change and will win unless we take it into account.

In the past six months, while working at the Broken Bay Institute, I have been involved in courses on Mission and Religious Education and I have learnt a number of lessons related to the New Evangelisation. Firstly, religious education in many Australian Catholic schools is more evangelisation than catechesis. Catholic teachers can presume little Christian background in many of their students. Often the school is the only place where the children learn of Jesus and have any contact with the official Church and its liturgies. It is a frightening prospect for developing a deeply Catholic culture and tradition in the coming decades.

Fortunately great efforts are being put into educating teachers, especially religious education teachers, for our Catholic school system. And some of the most impressive thinking on evangelisation is being done by educationalists like Jim and Therese D'Orsa, who are at present finishing the third book of a trilogy on Mission and Education. A central theme of their work is the need we have to "befriend" culture, human experience and our living Catholic Tradition to help staff and students find meaning and purpose in the midst of globalisation, secularisation and pluralism. They are convinced that we need to link faith and evangelisation to the student's life, culture, sense of the world and the meaning of life or it will be shallow, ineffective and eventually overwhelmed by the force of culture. For more information on what is happening in Catholic schools see McGrath (2012).

One of the major weaknesses in much writing on the New Evangelisation is that it seems to ignore the importance of local culture as if we were all cultureless people.

#### *Proclaiming Jesus in a Pluralist Australia*

At a time when many in the Church are concerned with uniformity and orthodoxy and worried about a pluralist world, it is helpful to remember that our God is plural and that the foundational book of our faith, the Bible, is a book full of pluralism. There is no one cohesive theology but a series of traditions that do not always fit neatly

together. There is a legitimate diversity within a fundamental unity. There are poets, prophets, historians, evangelists, pastors and apostles. All of them have a different understanding of the Mystery that is God and Jesus because they were different people, writing with different questions for different audiences with different needs.

Even the Gospels present different images of Jesus depending on whether the authors were writing for Jewish, Gentile or mixed Christian communities; for people being driven out of the synagogues; or for Christians in need of encouragement and a sense of identity and mission. We have a rich variety of images of Jesus, because of the different pastoral needs addressed.

Theology is "faith seeking understanding". When searching or in moments of unbelief we turn to Jesus to help us understand, to think in a Christian way and to make Christian choices. Our questions are shaped by our experiences, our culture, and our needs. All these factors colour and filter our understanding of Jesus.

Andrew Walls (2002) points out that when preaching to the Greeks Paul referred to Jesus as *Kyrios* or Lord rather than as *Messiah* because Messiah was not a meaningful term to the Greeks. And the title "Lord" brought new theological questions about how Jesus related to the Father. Are there two "Lords"? And these questions led to the Greek enrichment of Christianity through doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, hypostatic union and so forth. Greek questions expanded our understanding of Christ and the Trinity.

These were implicit in the Scriptures but would never have been seen by the Jewish mind that was much more capable of living with the ambiguity of two possible "Lords".

If the Greek mind asking Greek questions could lead to such powerful new insights, we can only wonder at the richness we will gain when Asian, African and Aboriginal minds ask their questions and share their answers and insights. They have questions which Western Theology has no relevant experience to understand or appreciate. Their questions will reveal much that still lies hidden from our eyes.

Christ is the fullness of revelation but no human has completely understood the full dimensions of his revelation. That will only

emerge as people of every culture in every age seek in Jesus and the Scriptures the answers to their questions and needs.

Actually for the New Evangelisation to be telling, attractive and deep we need to ask Australian and especially Aboriginal questions. We may still be a largely European population but our experience of land, climate and history is far from European.

We should not be frightened of pluralism. The Church was at its best when it had to explain itself to a pluralistic world. It was the early Christians efforts to preach Jesus in a Greek and Roman world that made mission the mother of the Church and theology (Bevans 2004).

### ***The type of community we will have to be in the future***

#### *A learning community*

Many people who talk about the New Evangelisation, talk almost exclusively about what the Church has to give and rarely about what it might have to learn. We hear almost nothing positive about "the world". We seem to be back to pre-Vatican II missiology when we were "battling paganism" or preaching to people ignorant of God.

As a young seminarian on Columban's Day I sang with enthusiasm our Columban song,

"Who has a blade for a splendid cause,  
a cause that is good and true?  
To live and to die for the grandest thing,  
that man could say or singer sing,  
or ever soldier knew ...".

I was committed and prepared to give my life to such a crusade. By the grace of God, I have given my life to mission but I have given up the crusading image. I find it dangerous. As Cardinal Hume said after the Synod on the Family, "I saw in a dream a vision. It was a vision of the Church. I saw a fortress, strong and upstanding. Every stranger approaching seemed to those who defended it to be an enemy to be repelled; from that fortress the voices of those outside could not be heard" (*Catholic Herald*, 24.10.1980). Crusaders are not good listeners and necessarily have a negative opinion of the "enemy".

*A humble, respectful and sometimes silent community*

The title of the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on the New Evangelisation stressed the "transmission of the Christian faith". But there is a danger of evangelisation becoming too one-sided unless it is placed in the context of dialogue as it is in other Church Documents (e.g. *Gaudium et Spes*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio*, *Dialogue and Proclamation*). And unless we recognise as Paul VI did that we also need to be evangelised (EN, n. 15).

The Church has to be especially sensitive and respectful in searching out the "lapsed" and calling them back to the Church. As an editorial in *The Tablet* (20.10.2012) pointed out, many lapsed Catholics "lead lives of exemplary and sometimes self-sacrificing devotion to those in need; many others live conscientious and upright lives in their chosen trades and professions. To dismiss them simply as 'lapsed' is hardly fair. Indeed, many of them would give highly moral reasons why they reject an explicit place for the Catholic Church in their lives.... As Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham told the Synod this week, the first step has to be an act of 'profound listening'. There can be no effective proclamation of faith, he said, 'without an attempt to understand how the message is likely to be heard, how it sounds to others'. Similarly an editorial in the *National Catholic Reporter* (27.10.2012) high-lighted the need for the Bishops at the Synod to be humble listeners. Most former Catholics are just not interested, especially if we come to them with all the answers. "Is it possible that 'nones' can teach us something about God? Or at least can we learn something from listening to their questions? The Church's challenge is not to supply answers but to accompany people on their spiritual quest".

And John Allen reported in his *All Things Catholic* (12.10.2012), "Tuesday morning, Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila ... said for the Church to be a place where people meet God, it needs to learn three things from the example of Jesus: humility, respect for others, and silence".

"The Church must discover the power of silence", Tagle said. "Confronted with the sorrows, doubts and uncertainties of people, she cannot pretend to give easy solutions. In Jesus, silence becomes the

way of attentive listening, compassion and prayer. It is the way to truth".

This is especially true in Australia, where people have an aversion to "Bible-bashers" or "God-botherers" and are suspicious of religious people who have all the answers and know the "road map to paradise". There was clear evidence in the survey of those who had stopped attending Mass that they wanted to say something to the Bishops and all of us and perhaps the best answer might be to listen humbly and without quick answers.

### **Key Agents of the New Evangelisation**

#### *The laity*

*The Tablet* (20.10.2012) reported, "If the re-evangelisation of Europe is to mean anything, it is the laity the Bishops need to listen to rather than each other". We need to involve lay people in the leadership of the Church. Many, especially women, feel alienated and excluded. It is fine to recommend a humbler, listening Church but that will not be possible without formal structures for listening such as synods. If we are to engage in the New Evangelisation effectively, the Church needs to empower, and formally commission, the laity with missionary ministries within their families, their professions and in the secular world where they have a natural role (Young 2006). The New Evangelisation is more properly the ministry of the laity than of the clergy or the bishops.

#### *Migrants*

Migration is still changing the face of Australia. We are in the midst of what the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (2004) calls the "birth-pangs of a new humanity". A new Church is emerging locally and globally.

Migrants are a gift. There is a lot of hope and energy for evangelisation among the migrant communities. There are also serious challenges. Migration is a risk and there is normally pain and possibilities for both the migrants and the host community. Despite programmes in some dioceses migrants, both lay and clerical, are rarely properly welcomed, enabled, integrated and fully availed of.

Andrew Walls (2008) regards the recent growth of migration from the "South" as the result of the reversal of the great

European migration that lasted from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The North's economy and hegemony was built on this European migration. And mission followed these patterns of migration so now Christianity is becoming a "Third World" and principally an African, Latin American and Asian Church (Jenkins 2002).

Because of their experience of crossing cultural boundaries, our migrants and overseas born priests and religious may be a significant resource for evangelisation, for building a truly multicultural Australian Church, and provide an important link to the universal Church.

#### *The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses Child Sexual Abuse in Australia*

Because of the number of sexual abuse cases and the alleged inability of Church authorities to handle these cases, the Federal Government has set up a *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses Child Sexual Abuse in Australia*. The Bishops have expressed their willingness to cooperate and have in turn set up a *Truth, Justice and Healing Council* to lead the Church's response to the crisis. This council is largely made up of lay people. We need them and especially women to help our Bishops and Superiors handle allegations and minister to the victims.

Ultimately, the Royal Commission may be good for the Church but there will be severe criticism and probably legal action taken against Church personnel over the next few years. We will be seriously embarrassed and ashamed as victims tell their tragic stories.

It is an irony that we are being encouraged to call people back to the Church, at a time when the Australian Church has never been more distrusted. Now, because of our sins of deed and omission in the area of child sexual abuse and the care of victims, we are becoming a vulnerable and much less powerful and respected Church. It is paradoxical that this may be a better starting point for evangelisation.

David Bosch in *Transforming Mission* reminds us that crisis is the more natural state of the Church. We have often needed failure and suffering to become aware of our

real nature and mission (1991, 2). We too easily become triumphant in our successes, thinking that they are a sign of God's blessing and that failure means we have been deserted by God. But Jesus had to find God's saving love in rejection, failure, darkness and death. God's love is vulnerable and contrary to all human ideas of power. God enters into, has compassion for and embraces, the suffering of the world. The Cross is not the abandonment of divinity but the revelation of true divinity.

This crisis may force us to be more humble and respectful. We have been taken down from the pedestal and freed from perfection and power, to know shame, to feel powerlessness. We are called to the same vocation as Jesus, "to empty ourselves" (Phil 2:1-11), to live in humble solidarity with those who are victims. As with Jesus, sharing the life of the community and especially the victims', is the core of mission not just a tactic or strategy.

Our witness and proclamation from the position of our new found humility and our embarrassed shame but genuine compassion may be more telling and more Christian than our previously unquestioned "sanctity", perfection and power.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

A new surge of Gospel energy can come only from a new encounter with the crucified and Risen Christ (Collins 2012). We need to experience and know the mystery that is Jesus and learn the language to speak of him with humility and respect to Australians. We need to learn how to witness and preach confidently without the backing of prestige and power, and in an Australia with many competing messages. We are challenged to believe that the Gospel can save. We remember that our mission is primarily to be a sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God which is larger than the Church and often breaks through in the least expected places. Our job is not only to proclaim but to work for, and seek out, the Kingdom and to celebrate and build on it wherever we find it. Our mission is not primarily about the extension of the Church but the revelation of the Trinity's love for the world and the realisation of God's plan and mission.

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Susan Smith, RNDM

# What Needs to be “New” About the New Evangelisation in New Zealand?

## Understanding the context of New Zealand

One of the difficulties in writing about the significance of the Vatican’s call for a New Evangelization in traditionally Christian countries is that very little has yet been written about its implication for New Zealand (NZ) by the NZ Catholic Bishops’ Conference.<sup>1</sup> The different dioceses are providing a variety of activities as part of the Year of Faith which runs from 11 October 2012–24 November 2013 and this will be their primary focus for 2013.<sup>2</sup> The Pope’s call for a New Evangelisation will be acted upon by the NZCBC when the Post-Synodal NE Apostolic Letter is given to the Church. However, the NZCBC hopes that Year of Faith activities will ensure a real receptivity to the Church’s subsequent response to a yet-to-be-published Post-Synodal Letter on the New Evangelisation.<sup>3</sup>

In order to see what the New Evangelisation might entail for the NZ Catholic Church, this paper will include a historical and contemporary overview of NZ, an examination of representative pastoral practices designed to reach out to disaffected Catholics, and finally to dream about what the New Evangelisation might mean for the Church. Geographically speaking, NZ is a very isolated country. It should not be identified as Western as it is located in the southern Pacific Ocean more than 2,000 kms from its nearest neighbour, Australia. However, the arrival of European settlers throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and first six decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries meant that it saw itself as an outpost of European



culture. It is clear that the country’s geographical isolation has had an impact on its subsequent development as has the historical and contemporary relationship of the European settler population and its descendants with the Maori, the first people to settle in NZ.

The Maori came from the Pacific Islands to the north of NZ no earlier than the twelfth century, and it was not until 1642 that the first European, Dutchman Abel Tasman, sailed around NZ. He was followed more than a century later in 1769 by English navigator, James Cook. In 1814, Anglican missionaries arrived in NZ followed by French Catholic missionaries in 1838, and two years later NZ became a British Colony.

Prior to the late 1850s Protestant and Catholic missionary efforts were primarily directed to Maori. Catholic settlers were predominantly Irish, which meant that the first French missionaries were gradually replaced by Irish religious and priests, and by NZ-born religious and priests of Irish descent. The arrival of the settlers, their successful struggles with Maori over who owned the land and the diseases they introduced meant the beginning of a rapid decline in the Maori

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, “The Catholic Church in Aotearoa NZ –Te Hahi Katorika ki Aotearoa”, <http://www.catholic.org.nz/nzcbbc/fx-list-articles.cfm?ctype=BSART&loadref=83>, accessed 11 January 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See “The Catholic Church in Aotearoa NZ –Te Hahi Katorika ki Aotearoa, the Year of Faith, 2012-2013”, <http://www.catholic.org.nz/ms/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=284&pid=C9F2B42F-B3C8-569A-74B5BAAD927FF5F1>, accessed 11 January 2013.

<sup>3</sup> I have contacted two bishops, Bishop Pat Dunn of the Auckland Diocese, and Bishop Barry Jones of the Christchurch Diocese who updated me on the NZCBC’s position regarding Year of Faith activities and its relationship to the New Evangelisation activities.



population. By 1860, the settlers outnumbered Maori.<sup>4</sup> These demographic shifts saw Protestant and Catholic churches identifying pastoral ministry to the settler communities as their priority.

The French bishops and their Irish and English successors identified a Catholic school system as their most important pastoral priority. After 1870, the Government's refusal to contribute any finances to Catholic schools meant bishops turned to the laity for material resources and to religious congregations for teachers who would work without being financially remunerated, a situation that persisted until the early 1980s. The involvement of bishops, parish priests, religious women and men and laity in a Catholic parish school system ensured strong and vibrant parish-based Catholic communities.

The Bishops, aware of the minority status and often lower socio-economic status of New Zealand's first Catholics, were troubled both by the possibility and reality of "mixed" marriages. To lessen this possibility, they encouraged the establishment of Catholic youth clubs and Catholic sports clubs, hoping that this would diminish the likelihood of long or short term involvement between Catholic and non-Catholic youth. However the scattered nature of the Catholic population – there was nothing that approximated the Irish, Polish or Italian ghetto communities of Chicago or New York – meant that mixed marriages were very much a reality.

From the 1960s onwards, there were significant changes for the country. Constraints of space mean I shall only identify the most important:

1. The arrival of thousands of Pacific Island migrants in the 1960s led to demographic changes, a process that accelerated from the 1990s onwards as increasing numbers of Asians emigrated to NZ. Today Europeans are approximately 73% of the total population, while Maori the first to arrive in NZ are 10%. By 2026 it is estimated that NZ's population will be:

- a. New Zealanders of European descent 70%
- b. Maori 16%
- c. Asian 16%
- d. Pacific Island 10%<sup>5</sup>

2. Britain's membership in the European Common Market effectively deprived NZ of its access to the English market and obliged the country's primary producers to turn towards Asia and the Americas. England and/or Ireland stopped being 'home' for the descendants of the early settlers;
3. Since the mid 1980s successive NZ Governments, whether left-wing or right-wing, have pursued neo-liberal economic policies which have meant a steadily widening gap between rich and poor, and the erosion of the country's formerly robust social welfare system.

These years have also been a time of significant change for the Catholic Church:

1. Prior to the 1960s, the Church still had a small but significant number of Irish religious and priests complementing the work of NZ-born religious and priests in schools and parishes. As the 1960s drew to a close this changed, because vocations from Ireland were not so plentiful, while NZ-born vocations were few and far between;
2. Vatican II's theology of local church meant that NZ moved beyond being an outpost of French and then Irish Catholicism in the southern oceans and became a more local Church. Lay people embraced the opportunity to be more than traditional "pay, pray and obey" Catholics;
3. These years also meant a growing secularisation. The country's population gradually embraced a more consumerist, and individualistic lifestyle;
4. Generally speaking, Catholics, lay and clerical, embraced the opportunity to move beyond a pre-Vatican II mentality, and to respond generously to the Council's call to involve themselves in "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor and afflicted" (GS, #1). A significant number of Catholics were involved in social justice issues in the 1970s and 1980s. Catholic religious, particularly the Sisters, began to involve themselves more actively in cross-cultural ministry, either in NZ or overseas, often with the economically disadvantaged;

<sup>4</sup> Colonies such as Australia, Canada or NZ that enjoyed more temperate and cooler climates were quickly colonised by European settlers intent on farming. This led to legal and military conflicts with the indigenous peoples whether Aboriginal, Maori or Native American who soon lost their land and who struggled to retain their cultural traditions. I will refer to New Zealanders of European descent as Pakeha, the name given to them by Maori.

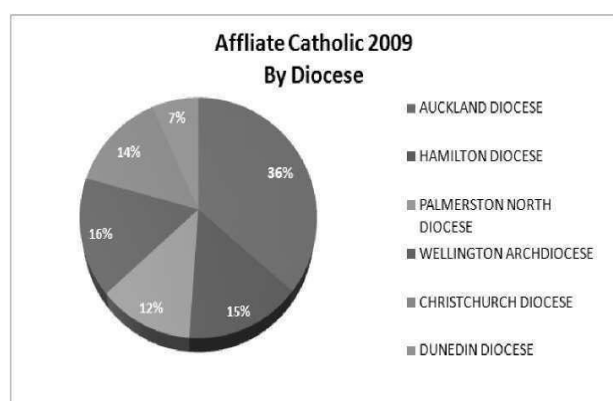
<sup>5</sup> See "Demographic Trends 2011: Statistics New Zealand", [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/demographic-trends-2011/national%20demographic%20projections.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/demographic-trends-2011/national%20demographic%20projections.aspx) These percentages total more than 100% as people born of mixed ethnic relationships can legally claim more than one ethnicity.

5. The influx of Pacific Islanders and Asians, many of whom are Catholic, meant that Sunday Mass attendance figures still look reasonably good, particularly in Auckland;
6. Ecumenism was alive and well at the theological and activist levels. Collaborative efforts around race, gender and the economy were particularly characteristic of the 1980s.

### New Zealand's ecclesial reality in 2013

When bishops met in late 2012 for the Synod on the New Evangelisation, 14.3% of New Zealand's population were Catholic, that is, more than 600,000 people out of a total of 4,500,000. Thirty-six percent of the Church's Catholics live in the Auckland Diocese.

### Percentage of Catholics in New Zealand's six dioceses<sup>6</sup>

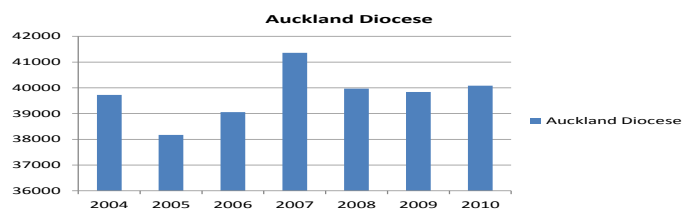


I want to look briefly at the situation of that diocese, the country's largest, as in many ways it is the trend-setter for the country. As the Table below demonstrates, Mass attendance is steady but there is no dramatic increase in numbers.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the Anglican or Presbyterian churches which are experiencing a rapid decline in Sunday service attendance, the significant migrant Catholic population means Catholic statistics look quite healthy.

Currently Canon Law favours territorial parishes over ethnic chaplaincies (see Canon 581), but increasingly ethnic Eucharistic celebrations are part and parcel of the parish scene. I am not aware of any local research into these two developments, but Australian evidence suggests that

"ethnic or national parishes provide a stronger support for faith commitment than territorial parishes ([www.ncls.org.au](http://www.ncls.org.au))".

### Trends in Mass Attendance



Just as importantly, Filipino, Indian and other Asian priests now serve as parish priests in the Auckland Diocese.<sup>8</sup> In Auckland less than half the diocesan priests involved in parish ministry are New Zealand-born, while another diocese, Christchurch, is actively recruiting in Vietnam for potential seminarians who would then be formed in New Zealand. Diocesan authorities hope that the experience of seminary training here will allow them to appreciate the cultural values and mores characteristic of the NZ scene.<sup>9</sup>

Generally speaking, first generation immigrants whether Polynesian or Asian, young or old, are committed Sunday Mass-goers. But as they are inculturated into the dominant NZ variation of Western culture with its more subjective, consumer-focussed lifestyle, and its ready acceptance of relativism and syncretism in respect of religious practice, commitment to the institutional Church diminishes particularly among young people.

In an effort to resolve the fact that there were fewer priests ordained for parish work, the Hamilton Diocese established the permanent diaconate some years ago, and more recently the Auckland Diocese has also established the permanent diaconate programme. The official Auckland diocesan website somewhat optimistically states that: "the response to the announcement by Bishop Pat [Dunn] to introduce the permanent diaconate in the Auckland Diocese

<sup>6</sup> See *The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand*, <http://www.catholic.org.nz/our-story/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=45>, accessed 30 December 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Professor Peter Lineham, Massey University, kindly provided the author with "Surveying Catholics", a Powerpoint presentation for the Auckland Diocesan Seminar, June 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Peter J. Wilkinson, "Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster", (2011), [http://www.catholicsforministry.com.au/uploads/28737/ufiles/wilkinsontext1a1\\_Copy.pdf](http://www.catholicsforministry.com.au/uploads/28737/ufiles/wilkinsontext1a1_Copy.pdf), accessed 10 January 2013.

<sup>9</sup> See Jane Anderson, Research Fellow, University of Western Australia, "Migrant Priests", *SEDOS* (August 2004), <http://www.sedos.org/English/anderson.htm>, accessed 2 January 2013. Anderson explores the contribution of foreign priests to Australian Catholic parishes and what she identifies as its implications for the development of strong lay ministers.

is positive and encouraging. The vast majority of men and women who attended the public meetings welcomed the move. Those who had reservations freely expressed their concerns".<sup>10</sup>

Although the Church here has so far emerged relatively unscathed from the paedophilia crisis affecting other Western Churches, the mass media has ensured that Catholics are well aware of the crisis this has meant for the Church, and like Catholics elsewhere, most are horrified at the institutional Church's often slow response to such offences.

This overview of the Church in NZ indicates that the situation it faces has much in common with North Atlantic nations and with its nearest neighbour Australia – declining church attendance and very few young or not so young locally born women and men showing an interest in religious life or the priesthood.<sup>11</sup> As John Paul II stated in 1988: "Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World".<sup>12</sup> The reasons for indifference to religion are usually identified as extra-ecclesial by Church authorities.

### **Recent attempts to address issues around disaffected Catholics in NZ**

Historically, one of the strengths of the Church has been its ability to adapt to a new milieu. This was most strikingly seen in

its capacity to move from a Jewish world into a Hellenistic world in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, an early example of radical inculturation as missiologist David Bosch demonstrates in his *Transforming Mission*.<sup>13</sup> Today we are living in a world that demands equally radically changes as the expression 'new evangelization' suggests. How is the NZ Church to respond to a situation that demonstrates cultural shifts every bit as significant as those confronting our ancestors in faith?

The need for significant shifts in missionary practice is highlighted in Pope Benedict's *Motu Proprio, Ubicumque et Semper*: "In the course of history, this mission has taken on new forms and employed new strategies according to different places, situations, and historical periods. In our own time, it has been particularly challenged by an abandonment of the faith — a phenomenon progressively more manifest in societies and cultures which for centuries seemed to be permeated by the Gospel" (21 September 2010). A growing number of Christians seem to be using the identifier, "I'm spiritual but not religious",<sup>14</sup> a comment which points to disaffection with religious institutions and movement toward a more privatized expression of religion.

NZ Catholics, clerical and lay, like their counterparts elsewhere have been aware that since the 1970s, church attendance has been dropping in affluent, Pakeha parishes, and rising in lower socio-economic parts of NZ where Pacific Islanders live and recently in the more affluent parishes where Asian Catholics are now a significant number. In one provincial town, a priest on the staff of the local Catholic secondary school told me some years ago that not only did 80% of the student body rarely go to Sunday Mass, but that neither did many of their parents. The drop-out rate among Pakeha young people is particularly concerning. It is little wonder that programmes for youth are high on the list of Church priorities.

### **1. Programmes designed for youth**

In NZ, various programmes have been initiated for youth at national, diocesan

<sup>10</sup> "Selection for Diaconate Formation", *Catholic Diocese of Auckland-Te Taumata O Te Hahi Katorika*, <http://www.google.co.nz/search?q=permanent+diaconate+in+the+auckland+diocese&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=com.yahoo:en-US:official&client=firefox>, accessed 7 January 2013. The author understands from conversations with priests, religious and laity that acceptance was not as enthusiastic as the official diocesan website suggests. The diaconate training programme is not operating this year in the Auckland Diocese.

<sup>11</sup> Catholics are around 11% of NZ's total population while in Australia Catholics constitute about 25% of the population. The higher proportion of Catholics in Australia means that religion is more part of social and political life and debate.

<sup>12</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 1988, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html), accessed 14 January 2013.

<sup>13</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, ed. ASM Series Editorial Committee, 20th Anniversary ed., American Society of Missiology Series, vol. No. 16 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 195-218.

<sup>14</sup> See Robert C. Fuller's *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

and parish levels. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine them all in detail but I will refer to three ways that the local church wants to reach out to young people and children. First, the accepted belief is that World Youth Days can and should enjoy a key role in the re-evangelization of youth. Is this in fact happening? According to one researcher, "the 2008 World Youth Day in Sydney generated significant energy and interest among NZ Catholics culminating in 4,000 mostly young pilgrims travelling to Sydney to participate.... [This] represents a significantly higher proportion than other Western countries [who sent young people to the Sydney WYD]. However, despite this surge in Catholic involvement, NZ parishes are now experiencing similar levels of local youthful participation to that before World Youth Day".<sup>15</sup> WYDs appear "surprisingly ineffective in reversing or even slowing the increasing rate of relative absence of young adults in the Catholic churches of NZ".<sup>16</sup>

Second, at the October 2012 Synod on the New Evangelisation, Bishop Charles Drennan pointed to the important role of Catholic primary and secondary schools in forming children and adolescents. He states that "the primary community of faith has become the school. It is in our schools that the large majority of the baptised, and the yet to be baptised, encounter for the first time, in any systematic way, the person of Jesus Christ, prayer, liturgy and the sacramental life of the Church. Teachers, rather than parents, have become in many instances the first formators in faith of our young".<sup>17</sup> Catholic schools are certainly the primary community of faith for many children and young people, but there is little to suggest that this commitment to a school

faith community translates into commitment to the parish or institutional Church when young people leave school. Despite the wonderful work of devoted teachers in Catholic schools we need to remember that while their audiences are indeed engaged, they are also captive audiences.

Third, at national, diocesan and parish levels, a number of programmes have been developed for young people who have left school. The Catholic Discipleship College in Auckland indicates what it sees as a priority in forming young people: "Christian formation in an environment of Catholic spirituality, prayer, Scripture, study, and community life. [Its] aim is to strengthen and deepen our students' faith in God and equip and call individuals into active responsible participation in the life of the Church".<sup>18</sup> In an undated letter sent to John Paul II Bible School at Radway, Alberta, Neil Vaney SM, the College's first director, wrote: "NZ is a small nation with a very small Catholic population fighting against a sea of indifference and secularism". This is precisely the concern expressed by the last two popes in their statements on the new evangelization.<sup>19</sup> The College has attracted between five to ten students each year. Two other youth programmes that actively involve young people in important outreach are LOGOS and the Wellington-based Challenge Programme. Both these are about youth-to-youth interaction, and neither appear to be as attached to the more traditional Catholicism characteristic of some other youth programmes.

The apparent 'traditionalism' of a minority of younger Catholics who still see themselves as part of the worshipping community points to another characteristic of the Church in contemporary NZ. Generalisations and labels are not always helpful, but it could be argued somewhat simplistically that 'liberals' were the beneficiaries of Vatican II while the 'conservatives' sometimes with justification could be forgiven for thinking that they were the losers in the changes that followed Vatican II. However over the last few years, the Vatican has sought to redress that

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Duthie-Jung, "Faith amid Secularity: A Critical Evaluation of catholic Identity among Young Pakeha Catholics in Aotearoa New Zealand" (Sydney College of Divinity, 2011), 20. Duthie-Jung continues: "[A]lthough no research has been undertaken in New Zealand, observation by diocesan youth ministry staff members confirms this situation. This was also the pattern that was found in Australia after WYD 2005 in Cologne. See Richard Rymarz, "The Impact of World Youth Day: A Twelve Month Follow-up of Under 18 Australian WYD 2005 Participants", *Australasian Catholic Record*, 84, no. 4 (2007), 19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Bishop Charles Drennan, *Intervention of Bishop Charles Drennan to the Synod on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, 7-26 October 2012, Rome, <http://www.pn.catholic.org.nz/?sid=2082>, accessed 13 January 2013. In some instances, teachers are not Catholic or not practising Catholics, although they often have the academic qualifications needed to teach religious education.

<sup>18</sup> Catholic Discipleship College, <http://www.cdc.ac.nz/>, accessed 7 January 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Neil Vaney, SM, to Alumni and Friends of Radway, no date given, <http://www.jpil.net/nz/FrNeil.pdf>, accessed 9 January 2013

situation. This has encouraged more traditional Catholics to feel at home in our Church, and the more liberal Catholics to experience feelings of alienation. Furthermore, Catholics have become less 'visible' in society. Going or gone are the distinctive dress of priests and religious, going or gone are practices such as Friday abstinence, fasting before Communion, or the wearing of scapulars and medals, and the various other practices that ensured a visible Catholic identity. This involvement with children and youth points to the deep concern of ecclesiastical authorities about the "greying of the Church".

## 2. The Year of Faith 2012-2013

When Pope Benedict proclaimed the Year of Faith, one of its stated aims was "to give fresh impetus to the mission of the Church to lead human beings out of the wilderness in which they find themselves".<sup>20</sup> By 11 October 2012, when the Year of Faith was launched, NZ dioceses had planned programmes intended to support people experientially and intellectually in their faith-lives. The methods advocated in diocesan Year of Faith programmes fall into two major categories:

- **Educational** – Alerting people to the riches of Conciliar Documents such as *Dei Verbum*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is rightly identified as important for the future intellectual health of Catholicism. Almost fifty years have elapsed since the close of Vatican II and so there are two generations of Catholics for whom the Council is little more than a historical fact. A more informed knowledge of the Bible and sacramental theology are emphasized with the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation being particularly emphasised.
- **Experiential** – dioceses are identifying the celebration of ethnic diversity and pilgrimages to early foundations of the Church in NZ as important. For example, on 13 January 2013, NZ Catholics gathered at Totara Point in the Hokianga to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Mass celebrated here by Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier. Other dioceses have planned pilgrimages to places that have historical significance for a particular diocese or for the wider NZ Church.

<sup>20</sup> See "Year of Faith 2012-2013". *CathNews New Zealand*, <http://cathnews.co.nz/2012/10/09/the-year-of-faith-begins/>, accessed 11 January 2013.

## 3. "Informal" evangelising activities of some Catholics

Recently, some middle-aged and older Pakeha Catholics have distanced themselves from certain aspects of institutional church life, because they are concerned about what they perceive to be its restorationist tendencies. Today there are small but vibrant groups of Catholics and other Christians coming together for meditation, retreats, the prayerful study of medieval mystics or contemporary theologians and spiritual writers such as Elizabeth Johnson, Richard Rohr or Thomas Keating. All these are seeking nourishment they no longer find in the Institutional Church. Often these people, particularly women have engaged in significant theological and spirituality studies.

## 4. How can Catholics reach out to those many New Zealanders who experience 'mystery' in their lives?

In New Zealand, Interest and/or belief in the Transcendent occurs because of many people's close and enlivening links with God's gift of creation. As McBrien writes: "The whole created order gives echo to the word of the one who named its creatures, and these created beings manifest the divine presence, majesty and wisdom (Ps 19:2.5; Job 26:7-13; Prov:23-1; Sir 42:15-25, 43; Wis 13:1-9)".<sup>21</sup> Some months ago, I was part of a group engaged in tree planting on Matakoke Island, a small island in the Whangarei Harbour where young kiwi chickens are raised to adult status before being released to predator-free parts of the mainland. We were sitting having lunch, the ranger told us of a new path they hoped to open along the side of the hill. He remarked that such a track through the bush looking down on the harbour toward the Whangarei Heads could 'inspire' people. The word 'inspire' rang theological bells for me. What did he mean? Did he realize that this simple expression was suggesting that people are searching for the Transcendent and, by extension, the Creator who can be known through creation?

## New missionary imperatives needed in New Zealand

The 2012 Synod, following Pope John Paul II, identified three aspects of evangelization: "Firstly, evangelization *ad gentes* is the proclamation of the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ.

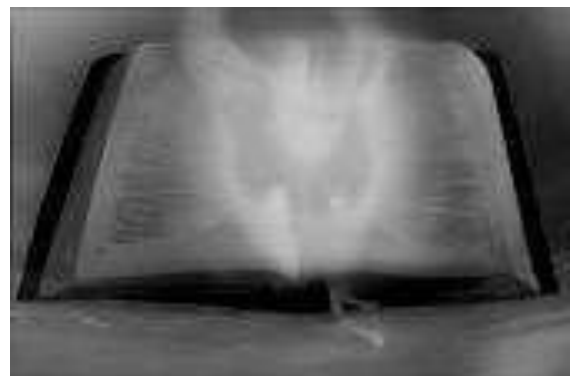
<sup>21</sup> Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (East Malvern, Vic.: Dove Communications, 1980), 206.

Secondly, it also includes the continuing growth in faith that is the ordinary life of the Church. Finally, the New Evangelization is directed especially to those who have become distant from the Church".<sup>22</sup> The third sentence is obviously directed at churches in countries such as NZ or Australia where growing numbers of people are distant from Christian churches. "Most New Zealanders (just over 50%) believe in God ... while 30% either do not believe in God or do not know if there is one. Forty percent of respondents believe there is a God who concerns Himself with every human being personally, and for 20% life is meaningful only because God exists".<sup>23</sup> Thirteen percent of the population attend Sunday services – Catholic or Protestant – regularly.

As Benedict XVI had earlier indicated, "the process of secularisation has produced a serious crisis of the sense of the Christian faith and role of the Church", and therefore the recently established Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization asked Bishops' Conferences to "promote a renewed evangelization" in countries where the Church has long existed and is currently experiencing "a progressive secularisation of society and a sort of 'eclipse of the sense of God'".<sup>24</sup> People who had drifted from the Church would be re-evangelised through "a renewed personal encounter with Jesus in the Church, to deepen their appreciation of the truth of the faith and joyfully to share it".<sup>25</sup> A perusal of the diocesan Year of Faith programmes suggests the bishops want the Church of the future to form Catholics who are willing to communicate and witness to their faith in a secularised society.

In my reading of material relating to the Year of Faith and the New Evangelisation, there is little to suggest that action on behalf of the poor, or action on behalf of the environment are seen as mission priorities. Rather programme organizers seem guided by the pope's words: "Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is

urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is *to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself* present in these countries and nations".<sup>26</sup> While remaking "the fabric of the ecclesial community" is indeed important, I suspect that many of today's disaffected Catholics are those who believe that the biblical call to action on behalf of the poor should be a priority for the disciples of Jesus, particularly in our society and world today.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, action on behalf of the oppressed has taken something of a back seat in Church life. Intra-ecclesial realities, e.g., recent changes in the liturgy or abuse issues are given more pulpit and/or media coverage while extra-ecclesial situations such as the ever-widening gap between rich and poor in New Zealand, or the growing environmental crises are less frequently mentioned. Archbishop Dew of Wellington sees as significant the references to ecology in the recent FABC meeting on the New Evangelization,



although such concerns do not appear in NZ's Year of Faith programmes despite the many environmental issues facing NZ in particular and Oceania in general.<sup>28</sup>

If I were asked to prepare an official statement indicating what I believe the call for the New Evangelisation required of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, there would be four points I would like to emphasize.

### **1. Revisiting the mission of the Holy Spirit**

In 1986, when Pope John Paul II met with Australian Aboriginal people he told them: "At the beginning of time, as God's Spirit moved over the waters, he

<sup>22</sup> Holy See Press Office, "Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin: XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 7-28 October 2012", Proposition, n. 7, accessed 13 January.

<sup>23</sup> See "Religion in New Zealand" March 2006, *International Social Survey Programme*, [http://publicaddress.net/assets/files/ISSPReligioninNZ\\_09.pdf](http://publicaddress.net/assets/files/ISSPReligioninNZ_09.pdf), accessed 13 January.

<sup>24</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI", 28 June 2010, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20100628\\_vespri-pietro-paolo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100628_vespri-pietro-paolo_en.html), accessed 11 January 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *Synodus Episcoporum*, Proposition, n. 57.

<sup>26</sup> "Ubicumque et Semper"

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *Gaudium et Spes, Populorum Progressio*, or the 1971 Synodal Letter, *Justice in the World*.

<sup>28</sup> Archbishop John Dew, *The Challenge of the New Evangelisation* <http://www.catholic.org.nz/news/fx-view-post.cfm?loadref=53&id=34>, accessed 18 January 2013.



began to communicate something of his goodness and beauty to all creation. When God then created man and woman, he gave them the good things of the earth for their use and benefit; and he put into their hearts abilities and powers, which were his gifts. And to all human beings throughout the ages God has given a desire for himself, a desire which different cultures have tried to express in their own ways".<sup>29</sup> Not only did the pope's words resonate with his Aboriginal audience, they also resonated with others whose homes are located in the great Pacific Ocean.

In reading the Vatican and Synodal statements, the interventions of the two NZ Bishops at the Synod, and the USCCB Document on the New Evangelization, the Christological character of such documentation is very clear. Although all missionary activity is Trinitarian in origin, references to the Holy Spirit are somewhat limited in the documentation I have cited. But Patristic and Magisterial writings all point to the mission of the Holy Spirit. For example Belgian Jesuit Jacques Dupuis quotes approvingly from Irenaeus: "The Word and the Breath of God, whom St Irenaeus saw as the 'two hands of God' (Saint Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses*, IV, 7, 4: SC 100:462-65) [are] conjointly do [God's] work."<sup>30</sup> Luke's Gospel shows that it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is conceived (Lk 1:35), and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus begins his public ministry (Lk4:14). Pope John Paul II directs attention to the Spirit's universal and salvific presence in every time and place (*RM*, nos. 28-29).<sup>31</sup>

Ideally, future documents on the New Evangelisation should offer a richer appreciation of the mission of the Spirit at work. Does an emphasis on the particular presence of the Spirit in the Church, guiding its bishops mean less emphasis on the universality of the Spirit present in all cultures? In a broken and fractured world a belief in the universality of the Spirit's presence can break down some of the barriers that separate us.

<sup>29</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Address of John Paul II to the Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders in Blatherskite Park*, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19861129\\_aborigeni-alice-springs-australia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19861129_aborigeni-alice-springs-australia_en.html), accessed 18 January 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 195.

<sup>31</sup> See Pope John Paul II, "Redemptoris Missio", William R. Burrows, ed., *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading 'Redemptoris Missio' and 'Dialogue and Proclamation'* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993).

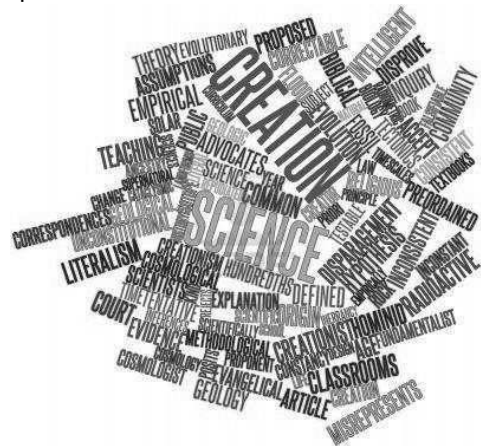
## 2. Mission to and with the poor

Sadly, the anonymity of the Spirit's presence can be overlooked in historical actions of liberation made in solidarity with the poor. Within the Judaeo-Christian Tradition, there have always been a variety of Spirit-inspired responses to the problem of poverty: the denunciations of the Old Testament prophets; the teaching of Jesus and the first Christian communities see (Lk 4:16-19; Acts 4:32-33; 5:1-11), the inheritors of that prophetic tradition; the voluntary poverty embraced by various religious movements; and almsgiving and charitable works carried out on behalf of the poor.

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of freedom for the oppressed. As the Sequence for Pentecost Sunday tells us, the Spirit is the "*Pater pauperum*, 'father of the poor' who suffer in captivity and who long for liberty".<sup>32</sup> The Spirit, who has traditionally empowered prophets to denounce injustice, empowers contemporary Christians and Christian communities to be involved in prophetic ministries that protest against systemic injustice.

## 3. Mission as care of creation

Much media coverage is devoted to droughts, floods, earthquakes, forest fires, and extreme temperatures. Scholarly work has been done projecting what this will mean for creation, for humankind especially our sisters and brothers whose lives will be radically affected by such realities. A number of Bishops' Conferences have already stated their concerns about the impact of climate change on their countries. The impact of such natural disasters is affecting all of us whether we live in North Africa, Asia or New Zealand, although the impact is much greater in poorer societies.

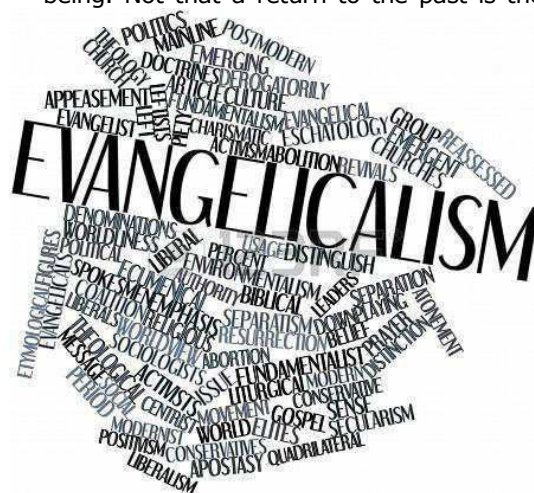


<sup>32</sup> Leonardo Boff, *New Evangelisation: Good News to the Poor*, trans. Robert R. Barr, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 85.

#### 4. Mission as inter-religious dialogue with Maori

If love of the Church is characterised by regular Sunday observance, then Maori, the indigenous people, the *tangata whenua* ("people of the land") are probably among the most disaffected Christians in NZ. Unlike other Pacific Islanders who live in Samoa or Tonga or Auckland, the majority of Maori appear more alienated from institutional Church life. In this respect they have much in common with the indigenous peoples of Australia or Canada. As far as I can judge this situation is attributable to the fact that Maori, unlike Samoans living in Samoa, are a minority in their own country where successive 19<sup>th</sup> century settler governments set out to disenfranchise them culturally, politically and economically. Churches were complicit in this and as Maori historian, Ranginui Walker, notes: "the Catholic Bishop Pompallier thought that Maori were infidel New Zealanders.... Driven by such attitudes, the missionaries were the advance party of cultural invasion".<sup>33</sup>

from such religions to embrace the Christian faith. Acceptance was always much greater among indigenous peoples whose religious beliefs and practices were intimately related to where they lived. Given the early missionaries' role in delinking Maori from their traditional religion, dialogue with Maori about hidden or lost religious traditions and practices is important for the Church and for NZ society. Furthermore if care for the environment is seen as a missionary imperative, then understanding how the Maori people related to the land before the arrival of settlers, could be important. It is now commonly acknowledged that traditional subsistent economies characteristic of indigenous peoples, including Maori, prior to the arrival of European settlers was less destructive of the environment than the intensive agricultural approach believed essential for contemporary NZ's well-being. Not that a return to the past is the



## Conclusion

<sup>33</sup> Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle without End* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990), 85.

souls”,<sup>34</sup> then mission in the future is in serious trouble.

We have different groups of people, particularly younger people in our Church who are grateful for the chance to be in touch with a devotional spirituality that lost some of its significance in Catholic life after Vatican II. They are also happy with an emphasis on more traditional theological positions as they seek to discover what a Catholic identity means for them in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious culture. Markers of Catholic identity such as World Youth Days, the use of miraculous medals, scapulars or praying the Rosary become very important. I have met some of these young people and cannot fault their commitment or generosity.

At the same time I have met other Catholics, including younger Catholics, who ask how Catholics are to share in the joys and hopes, sorrows and sufferings of others; how Catholics can be faithful witnesses to the Church’s social teaching, or to the biblical call to be in solidarity with the poor? How is the New Evangelization to touch them? Archbishop Dew’s reflection on the FABC Synod perhaps provides a way forward. After noting the social megatrends identified by the FABC as new missionary imperatives for a broken world, he wrote: “There has been a lot of talk about people being very spiritual and involved in lots of spiritual practices, but that does not necessarily lead to being active in society and taking the Gospel with them wherever they go”.<sup>35</sup> He also emphasises that the FABC belief that “if the Church wants to have an influence in society it must be humble and it must be contemplative”.<sup>36</sup> These words should resonate in the minds and hearts of all those seeking to understand what the New Evangelisation requires of them in New Zealand today.



<sup>34</sup> John L. Allen, “Synod update: Syria, Islam and Minor Notes”, *National Catholic Reporter*, 19 October 2012, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/>, accessed 16 January 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Archbishop John Dew, *The Challenge of the New Evangelisation* <http://www.catholic.org.nz/news/fx-view-post.cfm?loadref=53&id=34>, accessed 18 January 2013.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

## New Evangelization *A Journey of Mutual Transformation*



I asked Sr. Lydia, one of our wise Sisters from The Netherlands, what she thought about the "New Evangelization". She is a woman in her late seventies who has reflected a lot on the new developments in mission over time and especially on mission in Europe. At present Sr. Lydia lives in Tilburg in a retirement home for women and men religious.

She wrote: "To make the step from the secularized society I am part of towards the New Evangelization is rather difficult, because, in my opinion, this wording belongs to the world of the past as it dates from a cultural era when we Christians had the common conviction that our truth, our religious faith, should be shared by all and everywhere, and that we should devote ourselves to spread that faith in our immediate surroundings and far away. Also for this time and age the Good News should be spread, of course, but the word 'evangelization' has been used too much as the prerogative of the Christian churches and of bringing their religious message to all.

Sr. Lydia continued: "I think 'A Journey of Mutual Transformation' is a much better expression for what we can achieve together today. I can learn a lot from my fellow citizens and it is up to me to discover in their commitment to people and situations what binds us".

### **1. Religion in a Post-Secular Society**

In the process of secularization religion has been banished from the public sphere and has become a privatized phenomenon. There was a fear (and there still is) that through marginalization and privatization, religious practice and belief might decline and eventually disappear leaving a secular worldview that is determined mainly by science.<sup>1</sup>

A post-secular society obviously shows new interest in spirituality for all its secularity, although people do not necessarily belong to any kind of religion or religious community.

Men and women are open and look around for promises of salvation that can be found everywhere. They consciously deal with different teachings and concepts of salvation; and they are interested in all kinds of enlightenment because they experience that scientism cannot

establish itself as the sole arbiter of reality. Religion has its rightful place in the discourse of society, although it may carry the "asymmetrical burden" of having constantly to prove itself in the face of secular reason.<sup>2</sup>

### **Longing for Salvation**

People have a broken relationship with the Christian message of salvation. Those who live a personal spirituality often draw on wisdom and spiritual practices from different religious traditions. The 'patchwork' is mostly personally tailored to respond to the individual's desires and interests.

The "spirituality boom" in a post-secular society goes beyond the churches. Indeed, evangelization also has to compete with expectations of salvation from advertisements, movies, and leisure events in the esoteric scene as well as from proposals in the medical and wellness field that promote healing and wholeness of body, mind and soul, personally and communally.<sup>3</sup> Expectations of salvation have been shifted to the secular sphere.

In "Utopias of Invulnerability":<sup>4</sup> Advertisements represent an important trendsetter with promises of salvation. Designers know about the body, mind and soul of people; they are familiar with their difficulties and crisis situations; as they also know how to respond to the deep desire for healing and enlightenment they offer people a product they really want to have and people even believe that without it they cannot live anymore. Thus advertising can place promises in places that don't exist in reality, in 'utopias of invulnerability'. For example, the fastest cars promise to be the safest. Classical music and a comfortable interior make one believe that nothing can happen to the driver and owner of this car. But the victims, who could be run over by these cars, are not considered. Take a scent or perfume which promises 'infinity', 'awakening', 'rise', 'shine', 'awareness', 'Eve's Kiss', or a 'Massage from Heaven'. Rituals for using the scent in such a way that it fulfills the promise of these trade names also leads to belief in one's invulnerability on

earth. The scents, like an invisible mantle, separate those who use them from reality and pretend to make them invulnerable.

The promises of Salvation which target the utopia of invulnerability resonate deeply with our human desire not to be hurt, to face disaster and vulnerability; to avoid pain and weakness. In reality we are hurt, have to face disasters, vulnerability, experience pain and weaknesses.

*In 'Other Places' of Salvation:* When people are confronted with their own vulnerability or weakness and begin to realize that promises of salvation do not come true, their hope for salvation without having to face vulnerability brings disappointment, doubt and resignation. Here the Christian understanding of salvation, of healing and wholeness looks at 'other places' where salvation will happen, e.g. in the sphere of sickness, suffering and dying.

'Other places' (*heterotopias*) are different from common places and 'utopias'. They are born from a strong vision and provide orientation. These are "true places, effective places, integrated in society, and so to speak alternative or counter concepts".<sup>5</sup>

The Gospel is full of stories of God's presence, revelation, healing, salvation in "other places". Places like the manger in Bethlehem or the Cross on Golgotha have been a challenging message all through time. God appears in a newborn and vulnerable child; in Jesus who suffered from unjust religious, political and juridical systems, as well as human betrayal and God-forsakenness. God faces life including invulnerability, suffering and dying in Jesus' body, mind and spirit. Tradition tells us: God became immersed in vulnerable realities.

People who have taken the Christian way of understanding the mystery of Christian salvation into their hearts, seldom belonged to faith- and belief-systems which know precisely what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. The shepherds were the ones who heard the angels singing, the sick experienced healing even on a Sabbath, and sinners celebrated reconciliation with God when they were excluded from the community and Mary spoke her "Fiat".

Those who were and are in touch with their own vulnerability and weakness but, at the same time, put their hope and faith in God's salvation experience God's 'unheard' and 'unseen' presence in the midst of brokenness, God's healing in the midst of sickness and holiness in the midst of a sinful heart.

## 2. Mission as Mutual Transformation

The prophetic spirit in the process of the New Evangelization can only be awakened when we

become immersed in the life of the people. The experience of 'oneness' with people and with the universe allow us to participate in the spirituality of Jesus. This enables us to interpret the concrete situation in the light of God's dream for the whole of humanity and for creation. Listening to the voice of God, reading the "signs of the times" from God's perspective and focusing on the Word of God in the present are the defining features of prophecy.<sup>6</sup> Then it will be possible to challenge and to name what is against the Christian ideal and to accompany "the bottom billion".<sup>7</sup>

### Four Ways of Mission to Be a Healing Presence in Secularized Societies

#### **Among the Poor**

Sr. Maria Goetzens, a Medical Mission Sister, medical doctor and general practitioner is working in a clinic for homeless people called 'Elisabethstraßenambulanz', in short ESA, in Frankfurt, Germany. The Straßenambulanz offers medical aid and support for sick homeless people and for drop-outs of the modern health system and for those who have no access to it, due precisely to this very fact. They are poor and their state of health (addiction, mental illness, incurable diseases) does not fulfil the criteria required to be eligible for health insurance.

Sr. Maria confides that from the very beginning her involvement in mission became a spiritual journey which had a great impact on her understanding of the "mystic-prophetic call" in today's world and, on religious life; how to talk about the "God-quest" and where to find "God". When she started her mission 20 years ago,



she felt impelled to respond "to the needs of the time" by "serving the very poor", to be "a healing presence" of Jesus Christ the Healer in the midst of a wide net of like-minded people. She knew that she needed help to live her call, mainly from those people who were far away from the Christian faith or religious communities. She witnesses: "Indeed, it was the social-workers, the homeless people themselves, who taught me and continue to teach me".

*The Poor and Suffering Reveal "What Life is all about":* "In a modern city in today's world, the homeless are the people who speak to me about God's Kingdom and "what life is all about". For example, there is Evelyne, 48 years old,

living on the street. One year ago she had a stroke. Evelyne candidly tells anyone who enters the clinic: "This is the only place where people know me. Once in a while a friend allows me to stay overnight in his flat".

My encounter with Evelyne revealed to me: How important it is, to be "known" by somebody, to be called by name and to have someone to relate to. The power of love can save a life and the impossible becomes possible if we are able to reach out, to trust, to network, to stay true to life.

*Building up Relationship Leads to Mutual Transformation:* The second story is about Gary. Gary had to leave the U.S. because he was born in Germany and got into trouble for taking illegal drugs and trading in them. He was a small child when his mother married an American soldier and moved to North America. Gary, who has spent almost his whole life in the U.S., is now back in his "home-country" with only a few words of German. Gary is a stranger here with no relatives. He knows that he'll never be allowed to go back to live with his family in the U.S.

Sr. Maria has known Gary for several years now, but she did not expect him to touch her heart so deeply. She told us: "Gary showed up again six months later. Now he is suffering from severe depression and it turns out that Gary is also HIV-positive. "I am waiting for death to come", he said all of a sudden. When I asked him: "Do you want to commit suicide?", he replied, "No, I won't. I am much too afraid of God. I know, I'll go to hell, but I don't want to make it worse!".

Then we start talking about his relationship to God and Gary explains to me: "Why should I go anywhere else than to hell? Why should I trust Him? If God knows everything, He knows about all of my life and how terrible it was. If He knows, He is also responsible for all that disaster. Why should I trust Him?". I was speechless yet at the same time deeply touched. The encounter with Gary has alerted me once again: I can never know when and how a "cry for life" will be expressed!

If we dare to touch the common ground of woundedness, of pain, longing and hope, then "a prayer of life" can be said with all, including those who call themselves "non-believers" as Gary called himself. The thirst for life never ends. Journeying with those who are 'thirsty' reveals our common vocation: To trust in God, who has loved us into life!".

*Listening carefully means we'll talk differently about God:* The speech of the poor is different. Sr. Maria knows: "I have had to learn their language of life, their talk about God, without naming God in a way I am used to. When I am open and let their pain, suffering and unjust

treatment touch my heart, I can resonate with that kind of profound woundedness, which belongs to every human being and then speech about God comes up. Mostly it's a longing for love which can only be satisfied by "the holy one", by the unconditional love of God. These homeless people enable me to be in touch with my own longing for love, for healing, life to the full! If I dare to stay with this longing (thirst) there is no other way to dare to talk".

### ***Use every available resource to make the Gospel tangible:***

*... in Social Action and Political Involvement:* Naming the burning issues, the root-causes which hinder people from finding their rightful place at the table of creation, claiming the power of powerlessness and finding ways to give them a voice and making their voices heard; networking and collaborating with like-minded people to create a community where the sick and poor are included.

*... in Sharing Faith:* Sr. Maria says: "My daily encounter with sick, homeless people leads me to a new awareness, and I understand that "life is stronger than death" when I see their ability to trust, to relate and to keep contact although they are deeply hurt and wounded. Their capacity to relate witnesses to God's power and healing potential in every situation of brokenness. Even the loving relationship of God (Father, Son and Spirit) is revealed by the homeless in the way they care for each other, a challenging reminder for all of us as well. I can say: that the faces, stories, and realities of sick, homeless people transform and shape my perception of the 'Good News'. They constantly change my prayers, my way of talking about God.

There is a great opportunity to share my faith in the unconditional love of God with colleagues, the visitors, donors, Church related people, Christians and non-believers who visit the ESA. They ask me about my involvement among the homeless and what I find life-giving. They want to hear the stories and they are eager to get them, e.g. in regular circular letters.

*... in Action and Contemplation:* Long-term involvement with the poor needs to be nourished by a 'source' outside ourselves, in order not to be burned out. Prayer and contemplation are ways to find strength and courage.

Over the years my work and being with homeless people has become at times a deep contemplative experience in itself. While giving a foot bath all of a sudden I felt deeply connected with Jesus at the Last Supper; or when a person is willing and able to start a new life without drugs and alcohol, I have experienced "resurrection".



Even in situations of pain and powerlessness when "nothing can be done anymore". Just by staying with the people I experienced Jesus' suffering with those in misery".

*Maria Goetzens – Frankfurt/Germany*

### ***In a World far away from Religion***

Marzahn – Hellersdorf are two neighbouring dormer towns in East Berlin with more than 200.000 people living in tower blocks. This satellite town was built during the time of the Eastern German Democratic Republic for government employees who were privileged enough to have apartments with central heating and warm water. After the Fall of the Wall this part of the city became a low social income area with all the problems involved.

Two Medical Mission Sisters, Sr. Michaela Bank and Sr. Angelika Kollacks, started their mission here in 1992 after the Fall of the Wall. They moved into one of the high blocks among the people and started a counselling centre for women. Today there are 5 sisters and 4 associated members.

At the beginning there was widespread disillusionment. Many hopes were left unfulfilled. After 40 years of a communist regime resignation and lack of perspective were apparent. And at the same time there was a political and social sense of responsibility for a country which, on paper, was now united. There was a search for communality and a meaningful commitment to it.

One of the most depressing realities for the women in the Eastern part is that 67% of them are out of work, and ¾ of them are long-term unemployed. 82% of women believe that they were better off before the Fall of the Wall, because 92% of women were employed at that time. It was "socialist competition", a form of work of learning and living which gave meaning to people in the former GDR – and it gave them a sense of being alive.

Therefore one might think: "unemployment makes people ill", but that would be an unacceptable simplification. The fact is that women with a low level of professional training, with poor health, feel they are 'victims'. They are mostly elderly, lone parents and single women. At the same time they search for new values which are closely linked to questions of identity. But a search for God is not obvious and churches are considered old fashioned. How then can one talk about God? Two examples:

*In situations of crisis:* Sr. Michaela Bank: "I was called to visit a family because a child had suddenly died. It was only a few months old. When I entered the apartment, the parents were there and also two women who were pregnant, and their husbands. I first approached the mother

who had lost her child. She was a young woman. The father, 22 years old, shouted at me: 'Tell me, why has this happened!? That is not all! Our child was still so small, it could not enjoy life. Why did God allow this to happen?'. I answered: 'I don't know. I cannot answer this question'. He became very angry and shouted louder: 'That's why I called you, and now you are not able to answer this question!'.

"The police wanted to intervene but I did not want them to, and said to the father: 'I cannot tell you why, but I can tell you where I can go in the midst of suffering and I believe that there is somebody who listens to me'. There was an irritated, astonished and sceptical reaction. After a while I asked the family to bring a picture of the baby and a candle so that we could gather round the table and share the experiences they had had with the baby. I invited them all to tell the baby what they wanted to say to him for his future journey.

"I will never forget what followed: everybody – even the men – said something good to the child. The peak experience was when the grandmother suddenly turned to her daughter and said: 'I know what it means to lose a child. I have never spoken about it but I also lost two children like that'. It was a very intense atmosphere followed by a long, solemn period of silence. Then all said 'good bye' to the baby.

"People perceive that these encounters 'offer' something which they do not understand but that helps them. These words and gestures respond to the situation, rituals touch the heart of people in their specific reality". Sr. Michaela concludes: "These moments shape my own sensitivity for God's work in contexts far away from religion or the Christian faith".

*When speaking of God is not usual God:* Although people don't know how to express questions about God, one language to speak about and communicate God is music. Sr. Angelika Kollacks works as a music therapist especially with women who would not speak about spirituality or any experience of God. Having been deeply shaped by the spiritual dimension of music, Sr. Angelika tries to open a way with them "to be touched by God" through music.

She shares: "During a workshop on inner life issues the women can choose an instrument and play the music which they feel best expresses their inner experiences. They play it again and again in order to find out where they are and what they need for their journey. Sometimes, at the end of the workshop, when they are asked to put their experiences into words they say: it is "new life" "breathing", "freedom", "love". Indeed this

approach to life can be a healing experience after misery or destruction.

And it can be a way to experience 'life or God in me'. Some instruments can evoke the potential of a person and help to get in touch with the inner centre or core. Playing these instruments can open a space in the heart. If this is the case, then everyone taking part in this process can enter the space and discover together the 'mystery', both those playing and those listening. When such an experience "happens", we either listen in silence or we find words for God's presence, if this is still necessary ... because we all know what happened".

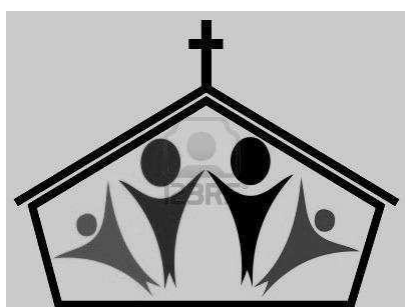
*Their experience:* "For over 20 years in Marzahn – Hellersdorf we have tried to communicate to people in situations of crisis that although faith does not have all the answers it can help us and carry us through. Although many people have no words to express religious contents, they are open to experiences. They listen to the secret of life which opens to them a journey beyond destruction and death. Entering the realities in an atheistic surrounding and being a healing presence meant a change in many aspects of life – also letting go of a certain way of religious life".

*Angelika Kollacks/Michaela Bank-East Berlin, Germany*

### **In Understanding Earth as God's Home**

*"We are coming to see that in whatever mission we are involved, we have to make a major shift in our awareness of being a healing presence to and with the Earth".<sup>8</sup>*

Sr. Rita Syron from England shares: "From 1968 – 1992 I was on mission in East Africa. We knew that something was happening to our climate. The rains were no longer as they had been in the past. There were more frequent droughts and advancing desertification bringing with them hunger, famine, refugees, malnutrition and sickness. Meanwhile, unregulated logging and landlessness increased. Prime land was being used for agribusiness and flower growing – all for export.



At the beginning of the 1990's I read a Report of a meeting held at the Nairobi-based United Nations Development Programme. At the end came an ultimatum that

stuck with me. We had about 30 years (2020) to get control of greenhouse gas emissions and

their effects, or else the future of humankind and the planet would be grim.

Efforts to get emissions targets and legislation failed dismally. The Earth Summit in 1992 promised the hope that a global pact, the Kyoto Protocol would integrate human development and the environment but subsequent conferences again failed to get target agreements. It was more or less left to national governments how and if they would respond to the challenge. The reluctance of industrialised nations to accept responsibility for most emissions and an insatiable consumerist life-style raised the issue of eco-justice, equity and solidarity with the people of the South who were already experiencing the grief of climate change.

My first response to that ultimatum echoed the response of many people. What could I do? Would my little effort have any effect? In the U.K. in the 1990's there was very little awareness of the gravity of climate change and the life-style that fostered it. Green Groups were thought of as being somewhat eccentric. The Churches were not engaged with the issue except for a few prophetic voices and religious groups. I joined Friends of the Earth as a way of working for the local and global environment. Through this secular group I met and grew in friendship with men and women of all ages and backgrounds; people of faith and no faith. We linked with other groups for rallies; petitions and lobbying. Most of us were present at the foundation of the Campaign for Climate Change – an organisation which has since become global.

In some heated conversations we shared our environmental concern, views of life, religious beliefs, local and economic matters and how life could be lived more simply. I admired the convictions of vegans, vegetarians and permaculture enthusiasts. Some lived very simply after spending free time in allotments and community gardens. Most were not churchgoers but there was a respect for individual choice and inclusivity. They knew I was a religious sister – a "nun" they called me. This mutuality and my experience overseas helped me to raise the global realities of justice, equity and solidarity and how I experienced what made for authentic human and environmental flourishing as God's work in the world.

Looking back over my life, I saw the need for personal transformation – to live more congruently and simply and more conscious of my connection to others and to creation: to be more discerning of what fostered life. More than anything I came to value an inner landscape of trust, hope and non-violence.

After the Millennium there was more uptake of climate issues by Governments, the general public and the Churches. Broad coalitions were formed to lobby and demonstrate for targets legislation. Now, in 2013, there is some hope for global climate agreement to tackle emissions. May it be so – by the power of the Spirit working through many people for the common good now and into the future!

Growth and transformation is on-going as change and issues emerge. I am grateful for all those interactions in the secular world that opened me to wider horizons in faith and to questions that need to be lived. It just proves that evangelization is a two way process”.

*Rita Syron – London/England*

### **In Growing old Gracefully**

Sr. Lydwien Nieuwenhuis from The Netherlands shares: “My generation, born in the twenties and thirties of last century, has received from society in North West Europe many possibilities “to grow old gracefully”. The Government has provided all of us with a State pension; medical knowledge has increased and increases all the time so that medical specialists can take away many physical problems related to old age; health insurance companies still reimburse expensive medical surgery and medication even when we are over 80; nursing care is provided from outside in our own living quarters and when that is no longer possible we are cared for in nursing homes subsidized by the State. So financial and physical care is assured and, if one does not consider the most important provisions, it does help people “to grow old gracefully”.

Our inner life is a different story. When people in earlier times were becoming old, they were respected for their experience and wisdom and being in touch with a world beyond this one (and in many cultures that is still so). But for us in the North West of Europe that has changed considerably. Not only is a younger generation convinced they do not need that experience any more, we too are conscious of the fact that our experience, our knowledge, our spirituality built up over long years, does not necessarily help us to live “gracefully” and be at peace with the present day. When I see myself stumbling on the digital speedway I know that worlds separate me from the younger generations.

How do I cope with that? I have gradually left behind the feelings of nostalgia for the Church and Society I have known and I have come to

see the positive points of the secularized society I live in. What have I gained in my inner life and in my relations with my fellow citizens?

*My own inner life:* I have taken to heart the many comments secularized citizens say concerning our convictions as faithful, regarding our arrogance, our moralism, our hypocrisy. Among others “the masters of suspicion”, (Marx, Freud and Nietzsche) have formulated these. They have made me see how many issues I have taken for granted in my way of believing have prevented me from asking myself the questions that need to be asked: how was/is my image of God shaped by my own aspirations and limitations? How do I cope with or contribute to suffering and injustice in this world?

The real questions about the mystery of life and death and the community of life were answered all too simply by God Creator, Jesus Redeemer, and Spirit Inspirer. As faithful, we gradually realized after Auschwitz that we could no longer light-heartedly believe, theologize and proclaim the Good News. We were more aware of our vulnerable, finite human condition and we could no longer claim that our faith or our religious convictions are unchangeable. This has disillusioned me, made me “poorer”, but it has also released and redeemed me from the false images of God I had created for myself.

Jesus has become Incarnate in our human race and in every single creature. That is the starting point of my faith in our secularized society and its future and for my connectedness with those who share time and space with me.

Our doubts as Christians have resulted in a free space where we can meet and learn to understand our fellow human beings who hold a different belief. Long ago our mystic thinkers

warned us about the fixation of God in our finite images and words: “God is without a name and about him nobody can know anything or explain anything” (Meister Eckehart).

*My relations with my fellow citizens:* Realizing the above has made my relations with secularized people more open and more relaxed. Also the notion that good and evil can be less clearly distinguished than I supposed has made me less judgemental. What we consider ‘sin’ or ‘evil’ depends greatly on a person’s circumstances, social setting, and education. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic authors Graham Greene, Bernanos, Claudel, and the present day’s jurisdiction have greatly helped me in understanding that. Deeds



can be judged evil, people not. That has given me space and openness towards the variety of people I meet. And made me turn away from all kinds of moralising. To my own surprise a good detective movie on television serves me regularly as an examination of conscience!

*Lydwien Nieuwenhuis –Tilburg, The Netherlands*

### **3. Essentials for the New Evangelization in a Post-Secular Society**

Against the background of the four ways of mission in secularized societies we can identify what is essential for the New Evangelization in secularized societies.

#### **Develop Strong Vision**

*We are invited to "discover anew the God who turns life upside down, leads us through doubt, confusion, chaos, pain, and unknowing into something new. Led by the Spirit we can move into the new with confidence that we will find God in these defining moments on our journey, have the courage to embrace whatever will be asked of us and the willingness to be shaped by it".<sup>9</sup>*

Developing Vision requires deep listening and watching so that the 'unheard' and 'unseen', the 'untouched' dimensions in break-ups and ruptures can work in our souls and give a picture or a sound that can trigger dreams and promises, hopes and desires.

A strong vision can give clear identity and a sense of belonging. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a protestant theologian and activist in the Resistance Movement against Hitler, was struggling during his imprisonment with the question: "Who am I?". At the end he reached his strong vision: "I am Thine". That helped him to go with dignity to the place where he was hanged a few days later. Mechtild of Magdeburg, a medieval mystic, experienced in her spiritual journey that "life is stronger than death" which encouraged her to live among the poor all her life.

In unclear, confusing and uneasy situations, vision provides orientation. Then a focus on the visionary potential might help: "*Behold, I will do something new; now it will spring forth. Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert*" (Isiah 43:19).

*Take a Contemplative Stance:* Strong vision with the power to bring change in view of God's Kingdom will only grow through contemplation. "It is through contemplation that we are able to see the world and the people we are called to serve from God's perspective".<sup>10</sup>

Also the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, was clear in his address to the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization when he said that "contemplation is the only ultimate

answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter".<sup>11</sup>

We are invited to take a long, loving look at reality until it awakens something in us, so that what we see looks at us and invites us to respond. A long, loving look gives prayerful spaciousness to become free from self-orientation and the distorted understanding that comes from them. It "honours what is, and awakens us to what is enough and what is life-giving. This attitude opens us to the gifts of others, welcoming what they offer".<sup>12</sup> Then any superiority towards others will give way to the experience that we can mutually learn from each other to foster the best in each one.

*Let the Heart Become a Place of Prayer:*<sup>13</sup> For developing strong vision the heart needs to become a place of prayer where transformation can happen. A transformation that flows through our body, psyche, intellect, feelings and intuition, imagination, memory, and will where we decide on how to live such virtues as love, forgiveness, joy, patience, etc. Transformation does not mean simply acquiring a new set of beliefs, it means becoming a new person, a 'new creation in Christ'.

It is a long journey to learn to look at reality with the eyes of God without any regard to one's own instant satisfaction. It means to journey along the path of life as Jesus did in a loving relationship with his Father, inspired by God's Spirit.

A 'discipline of prayer and contemplation' helps to purify our motives, to form a clearer vision of the love of God and of Jesus' healing and liberating way, in order to let the reality of Jesus come alive in us so that we become a presence of Jesus in our daily life. How do we get to know it? A strong vision means going beyond human capacity. It will be the Spirit's work.

*Ask the Spirit to enter our spirit:* To develop a strong vision we must ask the Spirit to enter our spirit and bring the clarity we need to see reality with the eyes of God. When Mary heard about God's great vision for her: "You will conceive and give birth to a son.... He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; ... his Kingdom will never end" (See: Lk 1:31 – 33). Mary asked: How will this be? The response was: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you; and the power of the Most High will overshadow you!" (Lk 1:35). To let the Spirit

work demands stillness and humility on the journey, there is no other way to be transformed.

### **Open the Heart to transformation/Conversion**

*Evangelizing ourselves and opening ourselves to conversion.*<sup>14</sup> "It is fruitless to rail against the world. The world I inhabit is a reflection of my own self for macrocosm always mirrors microcosm. If I see in the world, I know the seed exists in me. Therefore, to change the world I now commit myself to my own transformation. I become the fertile soil for the world I want to see".<sup>15</sup>

"Conversion is a shift in one's orientation towards life".<sup>16</sup> This shift, happens when people experience in-depth a divine touch, a prompting of the Spirit, that enables them to choose and to act for the sake of something or someone greater than themselves. A basic mystical experience, a direct experience of God, of oneness with God and God's creation is like "coming home to oneself". It is an experience of new birth, a new sense of identity in answer to the question "Who am I?"; to the call "What shall I do?" and to mission "For whom shall I go?". But it involves a journey.

### **In the Movements of On-going Conversion<sup>17</sup>**

*Darkness or Confusion:* This is an awareness of: emptiness that needs to be filled; thirst that needs to be quenched; questions that beg for answers. Yet there does not seem to be anything or anyone able to satisfy these needs. Mostly an impasse follows with inner conflict, a search for a solution, or an experience of aimlessness that seeks direction. Conversion starts but it does not come as expected.

*Awakening:* This is exactly the place for an awakening by being touched and called by God to listen. Listening opens us up to our inner longings and desires and to the Spirit's promptings in all facets of life. Only the Spirit can touch the heart directly and awaken it and await its fulfilment in union and communion. For true conversion to happen, our decision to change must stem from the heart. The experience of awakening enables us to see what is happening around us and we need to hear God calling us.

*Prophetic Action:* Receiving a response to "what shall I do?" leads to prophetic action, an experience of an initial impetus of faith, a sudden surge of inspiration which brings with it enthusiasm and the desire to put the new-found conviction or belief into action. Furthermore prophetic action moves us to bear witness to God, by word and work in a particular context or historical situation.

*Silence:* After action quality time is needed for contemplation, for pondering on it in one's heart in order to hear again and discern God's word in the world. It is a time to reflect on and make sense of what has happened, to internalize the values brought forth by the newly accepted and deepening faith, to learn how to share a heart to heart talk with God and to deepen what we see and hear from God's point of view.

*Integration:* In the final movement conversion becomes an integral part of one's being. It is about making sense of what has happened, of integrating the change in attitude, perspective and belief into one's history and life, and to synthesize all the aspects of the mystical and prophetic experience of conversion.

## **4. New Wine in New Wineskins**

*"Around and outside us" – so an old story goes – "floats something of Paradise. It is warm there. And quiet. And ideal. A miracle has more value there than evidence. We cannot opt, alas, for that country. We are too busy with our job. Perhaps better so. Who knows, we might freeze if we had to face facts squarely. It remains a country of dreams and danger. The poet is always in search of it. He would like to capture it with words, but he sees it disappear around the corner, again and again".<sup>18</sup>*

The poem expresses the soulful thinking of a secularized society that urges us to "Think and Act Anew!".<sup>19</sup> One recommendation for the new adventure is: "In essentials let there be unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things Charity" (Saint Augustine).<sup>20</sup> The New Evangelization moves us in an as yet unknown, liminal space.

### **A Contemplative Humanity on the Journey to be Fully Human**

*"We invite you all to contemplate the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, to enter the mystery of his existence given for us on the Cross, reconfirmed in his Resurrection from the dead as the Father's gift and imparted to us through the Spirit. In the person of Jesus, the mystery of God the Father's love for the entire human family is revealed. He did not want us to remain in a false autonomy".<sup>21</sup>*

A secularized society is no longer served by individualism, patriarchy, a scarcity mentality, or competition. The world is outgrowing the dualistic constructs of superior/inferior, win/lose, good/bad, and domination/submission. Breaking through in their place are equality, communion, collaboration, synchronicity, expansiveness, abundance, wholeness, mutuality, intuitive knowing, and love.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of contemplative humanity resonated with these ideas. Dr. Rowan Williams said at the Synod: "To be fully human is to be recreated in

the image of Christ's humanity". Fully human means to live, to represent the relationship of the eternal Son to the eternal Father in daily life wherever we encounter people, situations, and creation. The relationship between the Father and Jesus is one of loving and adoring self-giving, a pouring out of life to the 'Other'. Living this loving relationship in friendship and solidarity with all; doing justice is an act to make God visible and tangible in our world. It is to share the fruit of Christ's redeeming work with the world.<sup>23</sup>

To 'love human beings in a human way' means not to love them for what they may promise and contribute to society or the Church, but to love them for who they are in relationship to God, beloved daughters and sons of God, sisters and brothers of Jesus, vulnerable and fragile as we are and as creation is. *"If you really love, you are inventive; If you really love you try to find out you are interested; If you really love you are patient and long suffering. Certainly if you love you accommodate yourself; If you love you want to give, you are tireless, selfless and generous; If you love you really want to serve and not just to work; one does not spare oneself if one loves".*<sup>24</sup>

When we really love we will also have "a heart" for those who no longer find meaning in the regular practice of sacramental faith. We will become inventive and find new ways to share our longings, convictions and questions. We are interested and ready to accommodate. Journeying on together as sisters and brothers is the only way that might eventually lead to a 'sacramental way' of living the Christian faith.

A contemplative humanity invites us to look first at the love of God present in all and everything, and to discover the on-going liberating practise of Jesus and not to look at all the problems first. We know: energy flows where attention goes. Therefore:

### Live Hope

We hope that mutual transformation will happen through the new evangelization and that we can change our patterns of 'mission' in spreading the Good News.

We have to ask ourselves if we are ready to be transformed by the "Good News" that appears in the ever evolving mystery of God's love in "other places" in new ways? God is also always alluring us from 'other places' and in the yearning of the post-secular society and wants to meet us there. Trusting in God's presence there we experience that it is this power that grasps us and makes us new. We trust that the Spirit will continue to lead us to these new places and help us find new 'communion' in essentials.

### Start the Journey with a Beginner's Mind<sup>25</sup>

The New Evangelization needs to start out clean and fresh, free from expectations about what will emerge, not knowing the outcome. Often our past experience of the success or failure of evangelization, joy and pain, or assumptions control plans for the future by suggesting what to do and what not. They separate us from the people in a post-secular society who are at a different place; and they hinder us from creating a new space in our hearts and minds in which to anchor God's mystery, now unfolding, in a post-secular society.

We need to let go of this 'past' insofar as it hinders us from discovering God's new mystery unfolding in a post-secular society so as to create new ways of evangelization. By letting go of all that hinders us "the Spirit then leads us to a new place".<sup>26</sup>

### At the side of the Marginalized and Wounded of Today's Society

*"A testimony that the world would consider credible can only arise from an adoring gaze at the mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.... The other symbol of authenticity of the new evangelization is the face of the poor. Placing ourselves side by side with those who are wounded by life is not only a social exercise, but above all a spiritual act because it is Christ's face that shines out in the face of the poor.... We must recognize the privileged place of the poor in our communities, a place that does not exclude anyone, but wants to reflect how Jesus bound himself to them. The gesture of charity, on the other hand, must also be accompanied by commitment to justice, with an appeal that concerns all, poor and rich ...".*<sup>27</sup>

Wine in new wineskins means to commit ourselves:

- To remain at the side of the poor, letting ourselves be transformed in our encounter with them who teach "what matters in life".
- To contribute our own experiences to the "New Evangelization" and let the voices of the poor speak as authentic messengers who see the unseen and hear the "still small voice" of God (I Kgs 19:12) in our society and in the Church
- To prepare ourselves and future generations to grow in a mystic and prophetic response to the God's signs of the times
- To discern our action so that we are not caught by the temptations of our time, to be successful and effective agents of systems that have different interests
- To be remain faithful to the cry of the poor and obedient to the call of God within their cry
- To live simply enough to reach the poor and to be true loving people
- To learn the language of today's world and of the poor

- To find the right balance between demand and need, action and contemplation
- To dare to risk
- To become more and more human.

### **Know the Treasure We Have**

We need to know the realities because they are the treasure on the journey. We have everything we need and we know that what we have is enough for evangelization as a mutual transformation process.

We have the treasure of the Gospel, the Tradition of thousands of years of Jewish-Christian Faith and of the Church(es). We have the treasures of different peoples' spirituality throughout history, we have even learnt more about inter-religious dialogue in Europe.

We have people of good will throughout time and in every place, good information about the aspirations and longings of women and men nowadays. We are open to a spirituality that bears a message for daily life. We have a lot of information about various spiritual and philosophical concepts and backgrounds; a highly developed system of advertising that knows about the visible and invisible longings and desires of people at every stage in life, in different cultures, etc. In Europe we have the ingredient of centuries of war and peace with a strong desire for peace: "Never again war!". We have the painful reality of a silent exclusion of foreigners, refugees and asylum-seekers at the borders. We have periods of separation, division and unity between and within nations.

We are networking and linked with countless local and global organizations following similar goals and cooperating with millions of like-minded people and institutions of different faiths and cultures. We call Earth our mother, nurturer and sustainer and the cosmos our dwelling-place. And most of all we have God as our source present in everyone and everything; Jesus our truth, way and life, and the Spirit as our guide and inspiration on the inner and the outer journey.

### **Create an Ecological awareness and Change of Lifestyle**

*"Nevertheless he is called to safeguard the integrity of creation out of a sense of responsibility towards future generations".<sup>28</sup>* Wine in new wineskins means to commit ourselves:

- To find our unique place in the community of life,
- To respond to the ecological crisis in being an "active presence of Christ in the community of life",
- To integrate the ecological awareness into our whole way of thinking, doing and relating, to

start to shift from a technological mindset and way of life to an ecological one where the focus is on the 'whole', to see fundamental interconnectedness where the context is important and relationships require clear identity, openness, dialogue and accountability.

- To understand reality as interrelated, interdependent, and held together in the web of life.<sup>29</sup>

### **Let the Realities speak to us**

We mostly look at realities to see how we can use them to achieve our own goals. In the process of the New Evangelization all realities need to be seen and heard as "treasures" to discover how they want to be involved in the process of transformation. That means putting hope in every reality, person, every moment, every process, in order to discover a new horizon of possibility for the new evangelization. This requires time and space so that everything can speak up and share its own unique treasure and the way it sees its place in the process of the new evangelization.

It's like listening to the story of the seeds and talents including suffering, to discover the treasures in the field of what is 'true and holy'. *"At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth ... which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasy of our own mind or the brutality of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us.... It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely.... I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere".<sup>30</sup>* Only from this point of view are we able to make deliberate choices concerning which are life-giving and make the "New Evangelization" happen.

### **Work for Peace in Nations and Communities and above all in and among ourselves**

*"A field in which the light of the Gospel can and must shine in order to illuminate humanity's footsteps is politics. Politics requires a commitment of selfless and sincere care for the common good by fully respecting the dignity of the human person ... by removing the causes of injustice, inequality, discrimination, violence, racism, hunger and war. Christians are asked to give a clear witness to the precept of charity in the exercise of politics."<sup>31</sup>* Wine in new wineskins means to commit ourselves:



- To make this world a better place, work for the achievement of the Millennium Goals
- To communicate, collaborate and celebrate with people of good will beyond the Christian faith

### **Be Present to the Process of the New Evangelization**

We need to trust in the process and that the Spirit will move hearts and souls in its own time. The Spirit will “do” it: enlighten and transform, but we must be close enough to the process of transformation in order to know what is happening and to check on progress. We cannot know the outcome of co-creating a new reality of evangelization with the Spirit. But the process is about trusting in what is unfolding on our journey together and this requires a kind of hope that is quite free from the need to be recognized as the one doing it and who has achieved some success. Co-creating with the Spirit asks us to surrender ourselves to the process of transformation, to let the Paschal Mystery live in us.

### **Create a New Language - able to cross the Barren Desert**

*The New Evangelization is centered on Christ and on care for the human person in order to bring about a real encounter with him ... it carefully cultivates the dialogue with cultures, confident that it can find in each of them the “seeds of the Word”.... Faith does not close its eyes, not even before the excruciating questions arising from evil’s presence in life and in history, in order to draw the light of hope from Christ’s Paschal Mystery.<sup>32</sup>*

Counsellors and therapists are confronted with the question: how can they communicate with people in a secularized or even atheistic context on questions related to religion. Talk of God originates in the break-ups and interruptions of (human) life.<sup>33</sup> God is hidden in the experiences and circumstances of life, in the unexpected crisis, disturbing questions, and sudden inspiration. This is where “God’s unpredictable grace” meets us. We often miss these moments, leave the encounter to the Divine.

In secularized societies religious questions are put differently because in atheistic societies there is no language for this topic, although people are sensitive to mystical experiences. There is no history of rituals in an atheistic surrounding. Talking about God is deeply rooted in Silence, in moments between life and death. At times when our speech is faint and when no words can express what we experience we turn to metaphors and their creative effect.

We are called to find words to speak of God. At the same time we share the religious speechlessness with so many people of our day.

We are called to interrupt the hushing-up in critical situations, when we are faced with the abysses of life when hardly anything can bridge the gap. We are called to bridge the gaps with metaphors arising from the context.

Of course we are afraid of not doing justice to the inexpressible, not being able to pass on the treasure of Faith. Do we want to edge out of our inability to speak of God by taking refuge in a jargon that we did not hear in the silence? Or are we ready do justice, be who we are, – speechless in God’s talk - love tenderly expressing what we have heard in our hearts to walk humbly with our God who will always rise anew?

For the sake of our own authenticity and credibility, should we fail to listen to the word that God wants to give birth to in us, the people with whom we share life would realize that we are desperately lost.

It is sometimes a long and painful journey not knowing the outcome. At the same time people can expect to experience our hope, the hope we put in God’s living word in every situation. Our commitment bears the responsibility to do everything we can to overcome our own inability to express God’s speech especially in difficult situations. Here we have to learn how to talk about it, to co-sense what we are together in it. Wine in new wineskins means to commit ourselves:

- To let new words be born in silence to proclaim God’s News that give courage and hope to those who have lost every word and would like to listen to that word or try to stammer their own,
- To go to the edge of our silence to dare to speak a new word: discretely, treating God as the secret of the world; and critically in the unyielding hope that the impossible of today will be the possible of tomorrow,
- To use non-violent language, a language of love, because God dwells in it, ever anew,
- To create metaphors as an interactive communicative process to interpret the fragile mystery of God wherever it finds a space,
- To create new rituals to get a message across.<sup>34</sup>

### **Serve and Offer the Faith**

Everyone is invited to sit round the table and share the ‘good news’ of salvation of the Christian Tradition and to celebrate the ‘new life’ we have experienced. We are always serving and receiving. This



journey in 'communion' with secular society is an open space where there is a place for everyone, including guests who arrive unexpectedly.

Only humility and trust will enable us to offer hospitality by welcoming and offering whatever we have and to receive whatever the others have to give. We are grateful for the gifts as well as for what is lacking and count them all as blessings.

A co-creative process of sharing the core values and essentials of the Gospel will help us to move forward united in the essentials on the journey of transformation.

### **Build Community with 'Others' as an 'Oasis' in the Desert**

*"We must form welcoming communities in which all outcasts find a home, concrete experiences of communion which attract the disenchanted glance of contemporary humanity with the ardent force of love".<sup>35</sup>*

At the heart of the Christian faith lies an attitude of hospitality that embraces the other in their otherness.<sup>36</sup> Openness to the other can change the other, even as it can change us, who know that God may talk to us through others to teach and transform us, even as God may use us to transform others.<sup>37</sup> It may give others new perspectives on the Gospel; it may also help the other to understand their own faith from a new perspective. In turn, the transformation that comes from it can enrich our lives in surprising ways. Wine in new wineskins means to commit ourselves to build communities:

- To be places where we can learn the language of understanding, and seek ways to bridge gaps together,
- To create time and space to reflect together on God's transforming presence which happens in sharing stories of life, singing, praying, etc.,
- Where doors are open to welcome the 'stranger' as created in the image of God,
- To really be a 'home' for those who are searching for God,
- To learn solidarity *with the 'other'* and be companions on the journey,
- To learn *from the other* deep values and human frailties being at the heart of the secularized society,
- To discover *in them* signs of God's presence and the Kingdom already present



deprived citizens. It was a lively Medical Centre and the doctors and nurses working there had become socialists, communists and Marxists in their student years. Later, that had made them choose a part of the city where medical care needed to be improved and linked to other organizations for the well-being of the inhabitants.

It was a joy to work together for that purpose; church or religion were never mentioned. When later they accidentally discovered I was a "nun", the other board members were surprised: "I would never have expected that one day I would and could agree and cooperate with Christians as we do here and now". I experienced our mutual appreciation as a real grace; the lack of that in past years had been a real pain on both sides".

"Let us, on both sides, lay aside all arrogance. Let us not, on either side, claim that we have already discovered the truth. Let us seek it

together as something which is known to neither of us. For then only may we seek it, lovingly and tranquilly, if there be no bold presumption that it is already discovered and possessed".<sup>38</sup>

*"We firmly believe that we must convert ourselves above all to the power of Christ who alone can make all things new, above all our poor existence".<sup>39</sup>*

This will challenge us and shake us to the very foundations of our way of looking at the world and at the "New Evangelization", let alone our self-confidence, because 'they have threatened us with resurrection'. All those millions who died a violent death in war in Europe, on the streets, in homes and brutal relationships. All the victims of injustice in the work place, in political power systems, in fights over gender inequality and in gambling dens. All those who suffer from climate change, men and women, fish and cattle, plant and tree and those who are disappointed by false promises and advertisements. All who lose hope in the future, who threw away their beliefs and trample on the Church and religion out of anger, pain and powerlessness. All those who refuse to look for new opportunities and give up hope in the new evangelization. They have threatened us with resurrection.

Since the stones that bury them will cry out the truth that Life is stronger than death, justice stronger than injustice, love stronger than hatred, equality stronger than dominance, we are urged

## **5. Mutual Transformation — a Journey of New Evangelization**

Sr. Lydia shares: "In my active years I was a member of the Board of a Medical Centre in the old part of Rotterdam, then full of migrants and

to dive into the depths of the realities of secularized societies and our own in order to touch the divine treasure of Jesus Christ hidden in "earthen vessels". The Second Vatican Council declared: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of all that is true and holy in these religions".<sup>40</sup> This attitude needs to be extended to the expectations of salvation in secularized societies including post-secular religiosity.<sup>41</sup>

The Resurrection challenges us to stand up and focus mind, heart and will by responsibly opening ourselves to the promise of new LIFE, even in dying. The Paschal Mystery is the greatest resource in which the New Evangelization is rooted. We know it's a journey as Nelly Sachs, a survivor from Auschwitz, knows: "Only a few of the great broken-hearted have loved so much that the granite of the night burst open".<sup>42</sup>

So the vision for the "New Evangelization" in secularized society is to let the love of God overflow from the 'earthen vessels' of which we are a part. Then mutual transformation will happen on the journey to maturity in Christ.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Robert Schreiter, Mission in the Second Decade of Globalisation, SEDOS Seminar 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermans, Zwischen Primitivismus und Naturalismus, Frankfurt 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Hildegund Keul, Sehnsucht nach Heilwerden in einer verwundeten Welt, Vortrag Dezember 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Hildegund Keul, *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces, Utopias and Heterotopias. See: "Des Espace Autres" published by the French journal Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité in October, 1984, was the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967. Although not reviewed for publication by the author and thus not part of the official corpus of his work, the manuscript was released into the public domain for an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Michel Foucault's death. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec.

<sup>6</sup> Judette Gallares; Opening the Heart to Listen, Opening the Heart to Listen: Becoming Mystics and Prophets Today; UISG 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Schreiter, Mission in the second Decade of Globalisation, SEDOS Seminar 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Walking Beyond Boundaries, The Society Study and Religious Life and the Vows, Medical Mission Sisters, London 2009.

<sup>9</sup> 47<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Medical Mission Sisters, London 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Judette Gallares, Opening the Heart to Listen, *ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Archbishop Rowan William in his Address to the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization 2012, in: Zenit.org

<sup>12</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, Medical Mission Sisters 2009

<sup>13</sup> Exercise with Judette Gallares: The Heart as the Place of Prayer, Manila 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization, No. 5, Rome 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Ciyo Beck, Prayerforce, Excerpt from Prayer To Personal Transformation, in: 365 Days To A New Life, Authorhouse, UK 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Robert M. Doran, What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'? at: [www.lonerganresource.com/](http://www.lonerganresource.com/) Toronto 2011.

<sup>17</sup> The five moments are introduced by: Judette Gallares, Opening the Heart to Listen, *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> Gerrit Komrij, sent in by Lydwien Nieuwenhuis

<sup>19</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, Medical Mission Sisters, London, 2009

<sup>20</sup> Anna Dengel, Collected Notes on Papers, Archives MMS London.

<sup>21</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No 3, Rome, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Pat Farrell, Navigating the Shifts, Presidential Address at Leadership Conference of Women Religious Assembly, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Archbishop Rowan Williams' Address to the Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization, *ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> Anna Dengel, Archives of Medical Mission Sisters London.

<sup>25</sup> The idea of the following 5 phases are taken from: Bernard Glassman and Rick Fields, Instructions to the Cook. A Zen Master's Lessons in Living a Life That Matters, New York, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, Medical Mission Sisters, London, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No. 12 Rome, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No. 10 Rome, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Keep the Fire Burning, Society Renewal Guide 2009 – 2015, Medical Mission Sisters, London, 2010

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Merton, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, New York, 1965.

<sup>31</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No. 10, Rome, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No. 10, Rome, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Hildegund Keul, Wo die Sprache zerbricht. Die schöpferische Macht der Gottesrede

<sup>34</sup> Hildegund Keul, Wo die Sprache zerbricht. Die schöpferische Macht der Gottesrede, Mainz, 2004

<sup>35</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No. 3, Rome, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Carlos Emilio Ham, "Who do you say that I am?" Our identity in relation to the other. Lecture at the annual gathering of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding, World Council of Christian Churches, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Pat Farrell, Navigating the Shifts, *ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, No 3, Rome, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate, No. 2, Rome, 1965.

<sup>41</sup> Hildegund Keul, Sehnsucht nach Heilwerden in einer verwundeten Welt, *ibid*.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted from: Martha Zechmeister; Passion for God: Compassion for the other. At CORI (Conference for Religious for Ireland), 2012.

Guylain Prince, OFM<sup>1</sup>

## **Le bonheur de connaître Dieu : La nouvelle évangélisation au Québec fondée sur la praxis de Jésus de Nazareth**

**E**nfin, l'Église universelle met une nouvelle évangélisation au cœur de ses préoccupations et de son agir! Lorsque l'on m'a contacté pour cette conférence, à l'occasion du rassemblement annuel du SEDOS, je me suis écrié spontanément: «J'y vais, sans hésiter, même si je dois m'y rendre à genoux!» Voici plus de 20 ans de méditation, de réflexion et d'expérimentation qui trouvent enfin un écho au-delà de petits cercles de fous de Dieu aux allures un peu marginales. Et c'est avec beaucoup de bonheur que je me retrouve avec vous, aujourd'hui, après un parcours des plus inusités. Car, au Québec, notre situation est — vous verrez — peut-être unique et, il y a plus de 15 ans, nos évêques avaient vu juste.<sup>1</sup> Quelques instances d'Église ont alors pris au sérieux l'appel de notre épiscopat — dont la *Société catholique de la Bible* où je travaillais — et nous y avons consacré temps et énergie à développer de nouvelles approches, une nouvelle vision de la mission et de la pastorale. En résumé, je dirais : il faut revenir à la base et recentrer notre présence et notre service en proposant, de manière renouvelée, le bonheur que nous avons de connaître Dieu. Depuis ce temps, dans mes responsabilités liées à l'organisation de la Grande Mission du Diocèse de Joliette, dans les suites de la démarche synodale de ce même diocèse, ainsi que dans la fondation d'un organisme voué à l'évangélisation par la musique, j'ai travaillé avec enthousiasme et avec cœur à la mise en place d'une nouvelle manière d'annoncer l'Évangile dans le monde sécularisé qui est le mien. Mon terrain est le Québec, bien sûr, et en ce sens, il est limité, mais comme vous le verrez, l'approche est profondément enracinée dans les Écritures et dans la riche tradition de l'Église — quand celle-ci est en situation de minorité. Il s'agit tout simplement de renouer avec nos origines, notre histoire et notre dynamisme spirituel, et j'ose dire, de retrouver notre élan évangéliste.

<sup>1</sup> Assemblée des évêques du Québec, *Annoncer l'Évangile dans la culture actuelle au Québec*. 1999.

### **I Une praxis fondée sur Jésus de Nazareth**

L'appel confiant de Jean-Paul II à préparer l'an 2000 par trois années thématiques fut reçu avec enthousiasme au



Québec. Les diocèses s'y sont impliqués, entre autres par l'organisation de week-ends thématiques qui étaient coorganisés par l'église locale et la *Société catholique de la Bible* (SOCABI). À titre d'agent de recherche et développement, j'ai supervisé la rédaction du matériel pédagogique et l'organisation de plus de 70 rassemblements diocésains autour des figures de Jésus Christ, de l'Esprit et du Père. Ces événements ont provoqué la publication de livres comme *Sur les traces de Jésus : Parcours historique et biblique*<sup>2</sup>. Cet ouvrage collectif, rédigé avec les conférenciers Paul-Hubert Poirier et Pierre Létourneau, abordait avec rigueur et accessibilité les grandes questions d'ordre historique et théologique à propos du Nazaréen.

Or, au cours de ces rassemblements, une question revenait régulièrement chez participants: «Quelles étaient les relations de Jésus? Quelle était son approche missionnaire?» Je me suis donc penché sur les évangiles pour étudier le *modus operandi*, la manière de procéder, de Jésus dans son rapport «évangéliste» avec ses contemporains. D'abord, j'ai tenté de

<sup>2</sup> Publié chez MédiasPaul, Montréal, 1998



comprendre les « relations » de Jésus (Annexe no 5, du livre ci-haut cité):

### **Jésus, le missionnaire**

Dans les évangiles, quand Jésus va vers les gens, il privilégie ceux qui sont exclus par la société et la

religion juive. Ainsi, il choisira volontiers la compagnie des pauvres, des malades, des infirmes, des collecteurs d'impôts, des pécheurs publics, etc. Quand Jésus est en mission, il se perçoit clairement comme envoyé vers les « brebis perdues de la maison d'Israël » (Mt 10, 6). Son programme missionnaire se trouve dans l'épisode de la synagogue de Nazareth: « L'Esprit est sur moi [...] pour annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle aux pauvres [...] pour] proclamer aux captifs la libération, etc » (Lc 4, 18-19). Jésus est lourdement jugé pour avoir été « l'ami des collecteurs d'impôts et des pécheurs » (Lc 15, 2); il semble accumuler les mauvaises fréquentations.

### **Jésus, l'invité**

Lorsque vient le temps de se rendre chez quelqu'un ou de recevoir quelqu'un de manière personnelle, Jésus ne s'impose aucune limite apparente. Il se laisse accueillir autant par le pharisien (Lc 7, 36) que par des amis (10, 38; Jn 11, 1.5); il reçoit un notable (Jn 3, 1) et répond à l'invitation du centurion (Lc 7, 6). Il partage la table des collecteurs d'impôts et des pécheurs (Mc 2, 16; Lc 7, 34; Mt 11, 19) et loge même chez eux (Lc 19, 7). Lorsque quelqu'un s'approche de lui ou lorsqu'on l'invite, Jésus semble ne poser aucune condition, sinon celle de souhaiter le rencontrer.

### **Jésus, le prophète**

Les évangiles ne témoignent pas seulement de relations harmonieuses entre Jésus et les personnes qui l'entourent. Par exemple, les contacts avec les autorités juives — grands prêtres et anciens — semblent toujours marqués par le conflit (Mt 21,15; Mc 14,1.43; Lc 20,1.19; etc.). Jésus pose un geste prophétique très significatif : il renverse les tables du Temple (Mc 11, 15-19 et parallèles). En réponse, ceux-ci orchestrent sa mort. Mais une attitude provoque aussi une réaction vive et

parfois violente de Jésus. Certains se donnent des airs de justes ou se croient justes aux yeux de Dieu et, par conséquent, se permettent de mépriser les autres. Flatterie pour soi et mépris pour les autres: attitude qu'il reproche surtout à certains « scribes et pharisiens ». Des paroles de Jésus parmi les plus dures leur sont adressées dans les évangiles (ex: Mt 23).

Par ailleurs, quand on porte attention aux différentes manières de Jésus de prendre la parole, je les résume ainsi:

### **Jésus, le prédicateur itinérant**

Jésus prêche régulièrement à des foules indistinctes. Parfois dans des synagogues, mais aussi, souvent, dans des agoras improvisées ou sur les places publiques. On dit régulièrement que les gens « aimaient l'entendre » et se rassemblaient volontiers autour de lui pour l'écouter. Par ailleurs, Jésus constate que certains s'approch

ent de lui; ils veulent mieux comprendre et aller plus loin avec le maître.

Jésus a donc une parole publique attirante, qui fait

courir les foules, qui est intéressante. C'est un bon conteur. D'ailleurs, Jésus correspond parfaitement à la conception que l'on se faisait d'un prédicateur itinérant dans le judaïsme du 1<sup>er</sup> siècle. Jésus est « prédicateur populaire », sans grande formation apparente, et s'adresse autant aux assemblées de synagogue que celles des places publiques.



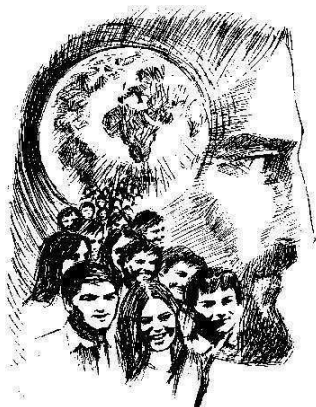
### **Jésus, le rabbi**

Nous dirions aujourd'hui, Jésus le pasteur ou le « maître ». Régulièrement on le voit accueillir les disciples ou toute autre personne — et prendre le temps qu'il faut pour comprendre là où se situe le visiteur dans un rapport personnel. Ainsi, il pratique la vieille technique des rabbins juifs qui, à une question posée, pose une autre question. Ce qui semble être une manière de détourner l'attention est en fait une technique bien connue aujourd'hui : toujours valider où la

personne se situe dans son cheminement et où elle se perçoit. Jésus accueille alors le chercheur *tel qu'il est*, sans le moindre reproche. Jésus est «rabbi» avec ceux qui se présentent comme «marcheurs» ou «chercheurs», en cheminement.

### Jésus, le prophète

Je ne reviendrai pas sur cette dimension qui fut élaborée plus tôt, dans la manière d'interpeller certains de ses contemporains. On constate alors que Jésus parle de manière à bousculer, déranger. Comme tous les prophètes, Jésus déstabilise ceux qui sont trop sûrs d'eux et il reconforte ceux qui ont besoin d'être pardonnés, guéris, relevés. Jésus est «prophète» avec ceux qui ont besoin de



faire la vérité dans leur vie. Il agit ainsi avec des gens qui sont au cœur de la foi et de la religion juive de son époque.

Nous pourrions encore analyser et discuter longuement sur chacune de ces dimensions, mais je dirais que nous avons suffisamment d'éléments pour tirer quelques pistes de réflexions avant d'aller plus loin:

1. Jésus est *ouvert à toute personne* : tant dans sa prédication publique que dans l'approche personnelle que font les gens qui veulent le connaître. En fait, il est étonnement ouvert et accueillant de l'autre, dans le contexte du judaïsme de l'époque et en particulier celui de Galilée.
2. Cependant, dans son travail missionnaire, il *priorise ceux qui sont marginalisés par la majorité où il se situe*. De dire que Jésus priorise les pauvres n'est pas tout à fait exact, mais les marginaux oui!, parmi lesquels se trouvent une écrasante majorité de pauvres, d'handicapés et de malades de son époque.
3. Jésus *synchronise sa parole et son agir*. En fait, le Christ représente un cas type de ce que la littérature sapientielle appelle le «juste»: celui dont l'agir est parlant et dont la parole est agissante. Comme le Dieu de la création (Gn 1) qui parle dans l'histoire du monde et d'Israël *par ce qu'il fait*<sup>3</sup>. Il tient parole; il est fidèle. Jésus fait

ce qu'il annonce et son agir éclaire ce qu'il dit<sup>4</sup>.

4. Devant le grand public, Jésus a une parole attirante, intéressante et surprenante. En fait, plus d'une fois, la «chute» ou la conclusion de ses histoires est ouvertement déstabilisante, voire même dérangeante. C'est en fait, une des caractéristiques les plus sûres des paraboles de Jésus, par rapport à son environnement. Elle donne le goût de se questionner, d'aller plus loin, de se rapprocher, de se faire «disciple». Certains auditeurs entendent, mais ne comprennent pas. À eux, Jésus laisse le choix de s'approcher. Jésus propose à tout venant une parole qui suscite l'intérêt, mais il laisse libre celui qui veut continuer son chemin.

## II Le Québec d'aujourd'hui, une situation unique?

Avant d'aller plus loin, laissez-moi vous présenter mon coin de pays. Jusqu'à Vatican II, le Québec — une province du Canada — était considéré comme l'une des terres les plus catholiques de la planète. On y dénombrait près de 5 millions d'habitants dont 98,5 % étaient catholiques et pratiquants. Aujourd'hui, cinquante ans plus tard, on calcule que le taux de pratique en milieu urbain se situe autour de 5-7 %, et en milieu rural autour de 10-15 % (selon les études et les régions).

On attribue ce changement de situation à un phénomène social qui est difficile à cerner; il est généralement désigné par l'expression *révolution tranquille*. Pour beaucoup d'observateurs extérieurs, la *révolution tranquille* est une mouvance un peu floue, mais bien réelle, qui a permis à la société québécoise de se libérer de la tutelle de l'Église. Au milieu du XXe siècle, les institutions catholiques marquent de leur empreinte presque toutes les sphères de la société: éducation, travail social, santé, etc. S'il est vrai que plusieurs acteurs importants

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mot « d<sup>e</sup>barim » peut signifier les « paroles » ou les « événements » qui deviennent parlants pour le peuple de Dieu. Ce déplacement de sens témoigne aussi en faveur d'un lien très profond entre « parole » et « agir » cohérents, surtout quand il est question de Dieu.

<sup>4</sup> Ainsi peut-on comprendre le chapitre 4 de l'évangile de Luc (« L'Esprit du Seigneur est sur moi, ... ») : Jésus y annonce son programme missionnaire qui se déploiera tout au long de l'Évangile. Là, il révèle la *clé d'interprétation* de tout ce qui va suivre. De même manière, le Sermon sur la montagne tout entier doit être lu dans la lumière de croix. Jésus en est le parfait exemple.

<sup>3</sup> Dans l'hébreu de l'Ancien Testament, le « dabar » est généralement traduite par « parole ». Or, au pluriel, le



de cette *Révolution* ont été, par exemple, des artistes qui refusaient ouvertement la foi et l'influence de l'Église, il reste que l'ensemble du phénomène a aussi touché des hommes et des femmes de foi profonde. Des gens qui étaient croyants et qui le sont restés. Aujourd'hui, on tend à expliquer ce changement radical à la conjugaison de trois forces qui, au Québec, se sont additionnées.

Premièrement, il y a d'abord eu un désir de la société québécoise de s'affranchir d'une certaine forme de vie collective où l'Église et les gouvernements collaboraient à presque tous les niveaux de la structure sociale. S'est affirmé peu à peu un clair désir de séparation de l'Église et de l'État. Parallèlement à cela, et deuxièmement, l'Église du Québec — en elle-même — vivait d'importantes transformations. Les mouvements d'*Action catholique* étaient florissants; ils proposaient une nouvelle manière de faire communauté: autour de la Parole, de la fraternité, de luttes communes, de changement social. On peut dire que le laïc engagé y retrouvait ses lettres de noblesse et toute son importance en regard de la venue du Royaume de Dieu en ce monde. Dès la fin des années '40, on peut constater une légère baisse des vocations sacerdotales et religieuses. Celle-ci peut être observée avec une relative constance jusqu'à l'hécatombe des années '60 et '70. L'Église du Québec était lancée dans une voie de renouvellement à l'intérieur même de sa vie et de son influence. Finalement, à ces courants proprement «québécois», s'est ajouté l'*Aggiornamento* de Vatican II. Notre Église du Québec est entrée de tout cœur dans le renouveau d'après-Concile, y consacrant d'énormes ressources en personnel et en argent. La conjugaison des trois courants (social, intra-Église locale et Église universelle) a résulté en un véritable tsunami qui a causé des transformations extrêmement profondes au Québec, qu'il est encore difficile de mesurer.

Impuissant, on en constatait seulement les «dégâts»: l'une des populations les plus catholiques de la planète en 1950, désormais, se pense et se construit de plus en plus sans Dieu. Attention, je ne veux pas dire ici qu'elle n'est plus croyante, ou que la foi chrétienne y est totalement absente, mais la référence explicite à la foi ne fait plus partie de l'héritage commun. Pire, il est gênant de

déclarer sa foi chrétienne. Se présenter publiquement catholique est quelque chose qui ne se fait pas, qui est perçu presque comme une «tare» par nos cosociétaires. Notre Église est l'une des plus âgées du monde, tant dans ses fidèles que dans ses ministres et agents de pastorale.<sup>5</sup> Nous voyons partout des belles et grandes églises qui sont parfois occupées par une poignée de croyants, donc, sur qui reposent la vie de la communauté et l'entretien d'un édifice beaucoup trop grand. Réorganisations structurelles, rationalisation, fermeture de lieux de cultes, peut-être même de diocèses, bref, les pasteurs du Québec gèrent, en grande partie, ce qu'on appelle pudiquement la «décroissance».

À l'occasion d'un jubilé de mes confrères franciscains, où l'on célébrait des 40, 50 ans ou même 60 ans de vie religieuse ou sacerdotale, l'homéliste avait souligné un point qu'on tend à sous-estimer:

*Chers confrères, rappelez-vous que vous êtes les survivants d'une mutation de l'Église comme on n'en a peu connu. Outre les persécutions franches et ouvertes, peu de transformations ont été aussi dures et abruptes que ce dont vous avez été témoins dans les 40-60 dernières années. Votre fidélité à une époque où tout le monde quittait un navire que l'on jugeait en perdition est tout bonnement admirable. Loin d'être des hommes parfaits — nous en sommes parfois sortis meurtris ou blessés —, au nom du Seigneur, vous avez duré, vous avez traversé le temps. Vous avez pris soin de ses brebis, et cela de votre mieux, j'en suis certain. Vous avez été fidèles en peu de choses; vous entrerez bientôt dans la joie de votre Maître. (Citation de mémoire de l'homélie du P. Léo Hébert, OFM, c. 2000).*

### **III Vers une définition du terme évangélisation**

Le portrait que nous avons dressé — en trop peu de mots, il faut le dire — peut sembler accablant. Or, il n'en est rien. Car, ce qui est souvent négligé dans

<sup>5</sup> Les statistiques internes du diocèse où j'habite (Trois-Rivières) révèlent qu'il est le plus âgé du Canada, et probablement du monde. Sur 82 prêtres séculiers, en mars 2012, 68 avaient plus de 75 ans. À quelques différences près, ces chiffres témoignent probablement de la situation qui prévaut aussi chez les religieux et religieuses.



le feu de l'action, c'est l'extraordinaire faculté d'adaptation de l'Église au cours de l'histoire. Dans les vingt siècles qui nous séparent de Jésus, et même présentement à travers le monde, l'Église est multiforme. Les situations sociales sont toutes uniques: parfois c'est une jeune Église dans un milieu hostile, parfois on lui est indifférent. Il arrive que l'Église résiste depuis des siècles à des contraintes injustes, parfois elle figure parmi les institutions les plus importantes des pays où elle se trouve. Dans la seule époque du Nouveau Testament, on constate des communautés judéo-chrétiennes qui adoptent plus ou moins le modèle des synagogues; puis, il y a les églises de Paul où l'on reconnaît l'enthousiasme et le fonctionnement des temples d'autres religions<sup>6</sup>. Le tout, dans le processus d'implantation des communautés, faisait l'objet d'un discernement avec l'aide de l'Esprit Saint.

Je dis souvent que l'Église du Québec est peut-être encore trop riche, et attention, je ne parle pas ici de biens matériels. À ce chapitre, en fait, elle est plutôt dans une situation précaire et connaîtra bientôt de profondes désappropriations. Quand je dis que l'Église du Québec est encore trop riche, je veux souligner qu'elle peine encore à se percevoir clairement comme petite, fragile et surtout, minoritaire. Qu'on le veuille ou non, l'histoire récente de notre coin de pays marque toujours l'imaginaire collectif, si bien qu'il n'est pas rare de lire dans les médias des reproches faits à une Église qui n'existe plus depuis 30 ou même 40 ans. De même, les agents de pastorale ou les ministres ne peuvent s'empêcher de se rappeler des édifices bondés ou des assemblées ferventes et nombreuses. Souvent, la tentation est grande de travailler *chacun de son côté* ... avec beaucoup de générosité, soit!, mais avec une approche qu'il est difficile de questionner radicalement. Or, moi qui ai 48 ans, je n'ai jamais connu cette Église-là. Celle que j'aime et celle qui m'a fait naître à la vie est l'Église d'aujourd'hui. Même avec ses incertitudes et ses défis, elle est belle mon Église, mais elle peine à concentrer sa vision et son agir autour de pôles clairs et précis.

Dans son document de 1999, *Annoncer l'Évangile dans la culture actuelle du Québec*, l'Assemblée des évêques de notre province a fait preuve d'un exceptionnel discernement. Dans les orientations à privilégier (p. 69 et ss), on abordait tout d'abord la question de l'identité chrétienne: «En quel Dieu croyons-nous?». Cette intuition rejoint celle des personnes impliquées dans le dialogue œcuménique ou interreligieux. *On ne peut vraiment entrer en dialogue sans savoir qui l'on est*. De plus, à la rencontre de l'autre, je présente ce que je suis, il est vrai, mais je me mets aussi à l'écoute des aspirations de l'autre. Dans le Québec actuel, il y a encore des braises évangéliques,<sup>7</sup> il y a des aspirations au bonheur et à la vie qui sont tout à fait conformes à l'Évangile. L'Esprit travaille *déjà* dans le monde, tel qu'il se donne à connaître et non seulement tel qu'on le voudrait. Le Québec moderne est une société pluraliste; l'Église catholique, malgré un passé prestigieux, n'est plus qu'une voix parmi d'autres, mais elle est loin d'être négligeable. Sans cet acte d'humilité profond et sans cette écoute renouvelée pour nos contemporains, il n'y aura pas de «nouvelle évangélisation au Québec». Car, personne ne nous écouterait!

En deuxième lieu, dans le même document, on parlait de «rassembler les différentes interventions autour d'un axe intégrateur». Pour être efficace dans son agir et dans sa Parole, l'Église doit cesser de *dispenser ses énergies*. Il faut beaucoup de courage pour faire un constat serein sur ce que l'on fait et ce que l'on dit. Peu de gens chez nous, il me semble, reconnaissent que beaucoup d'énergie dépensée ne mène à rien, ou à très peu de résultats. On s'en remet toujours à l'Esprit, dans notre rapport avec les enfants, par exemple. Car il arrive encore que l'on demande une initiation «sacramentelle», sans trop savoir ce que c'est d'ailleurs. Or, nulle part on n'ose s'avouer que leur disparition — après 2 ou même 5 ans de cheminement — de notre vie ecclésiale, ou plus généralement d'une claire identité chrétienne, est un échec. Pourquoi n'osons-nous pas reconnaître que nous sommes un éléphant qui accouche d'une souris? Que d'énergie, que d'enthousiasme, que de créativité et que d'argent pour si peu

<sup>6</sup> Ceci apparaît très clairement, par exemple dans les épîtres aux Corinthiens.

<sup>7</sup> L'expression vient d'un sage dominicain du Québec, le P. Benoît Lacroix, qui garde une profonde espérance pour le Québec de demain.

de résultat. Il y a une diffusion de l'énergie créatrice, beaucoup trop centrée sur les enfants, alors diagnostique clair fut énoncé par les évêques du Québec et de nombreux intervenants — dont le Ministère de l'éducation du Québec — la catéchèse ne fonctionne pas sans les parents, sans des témoins significatifs d'une foi belle et vibrante dans l'entourage des enfants. Aucune stratégie ou système éducatif ne remplace les témoins! Le recentrement sur quelques axes vitaux, pour l'Église et le monde, est nécessaire, mais aussi l'humble constat de résultats pauvres ou médiocres, et les ajustements qui devraient en découler, fait partie aussi de cet axe à privilégier.

Finalement, le document parle d'une «perspective organique qui intègre l'action, l'intelligence et la prière». Tout l'être est convoqué au salut; nos approches devraient appeler toute la personne, entière (cœur, âme, esprit, volonté, etc.), dans l'acte de croire personnel, bien sûr, mais aussi dans celui de toute la communauté. Pour comprendre que Dieu est notre joie et notre bonheur, ça prend des chrétiens joyeux et heureux. Mieux, ça prend des communautés qui respirent l'espérance et la joie de manière manifeste, perceptible, décodable par nos contemporains. De même, une vie chrétienne qui garde à l'écart l'intelligence sera, inévitablement un feu de paille. Aussi, la foi qui ne transporte pas les montagnes de structures sociales, qui n'a aucun impact dans la société, n'a aucun sens au Québec. Par l'Incarnation, c'est l'être tout entier qui est convoqué à la gloire; le Royaume de Dieu doit irradier dans toutes les sphères de la vie du croyant et des communautés.

Après avoir présenté un certain nombre d'aptitudes à développer et des lieux de rayonnement de la Parole<sup>8</sup>, l'AEQ continue en identifiant les défis qui réclament une action plus urgente. Il s'agit, à mon avis, des pistes d'actions les plus limpides et les plus réalistes qu'il m'ait été donné de voir. En tout premier lieu, il faut assurer l'évangélisation. En 1999, les évêques entendaient par «évangélisation» mettre un accent renouvelé sur l'initiation chrétienne et, en second lieu, on mentionnait la «première annonce». À mon avis, c'est à ce chapitre que la situation a le plus évolué, au Québec, au point même où la *première annonce* pourrait devenir l'axe

premier de la mission de l'Église, et l'initiation chrétienne, l'axe second. Et comme vous le verrez, je crois qu'il faut que les jeunes adultes soient la cible de cette première de l'évangélisation.

Depuis ce document, depuis la publication du *Catéchiste de l'Église catholique*, mais aussi des outils qui en découlent — surtout en ce qui a trait à la transmission de la foi — il est devenu plus clair que la foi chrétienne connaît trois « étapes » dans sa croissance. Ainsi, on parle «d'éveil, d'initiation et de maturation». Par exemple, quand on parle de formation permanente, on aborde la question sous l'angle de la « maturation ». Quand on parle de catéchèse, on désigne, bien sûr, l'initiation chrétienne. Mais quand on parle d'éveil à la foi, de quoi parle-t-on au juste?

C'est ici que je me permets de distinguer deux choses, tout en sachant que je me positionne ici, à contre-courant. Mais comme vous le verrez, on y gagne en clarté, il me semble. Du Christ, l'Église a reçu la mission de transformer le monde selon les valeurs de l'Évangile. Elle s'y applique d'une manière remarquable, à plusieurs niveaux, tant dans ses fidèles qu'à travers ses ministres. Mais à l'intérieur de la grande mission de l'Église, il est une «étincelle», un allumage qui ouvre l'être humain à l'être même de Dieu. Dans le Nouveau Testament, il y a une claire distinction entre l'ensemble de la mission de l'Église, d'une part, de la première annonce de l'Évangile qui provoque l'éveil ou la foi, d'autre part. Parfois, on parle de première annonce, parfois on parle *kérygme*. Je vous suggère de restreindre le terme *évangélisation* à cette toute première annonce et de parler de mission pour tous les autres champs d'activités de l'Église dans sa relation avec les cultures et le monde. Ainsi, l'évangélisation est une part de la mission de l'Église, une part importante bien sûr, mais une infime part qu'emprunte la grande mission de l'Église dans toutes ses formes. Le terme « mission » est alors un terme englobant, alors qu'«évangélisation» devient alors beaucoup plus restrictif et précis. Voici la proposition de définition que je vous fais:

*Par évangéliser, nous entendons tous les efforts pour éveiller ou réveiller une relation vivante avec le Dieu de Jésus-Christ.*

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<sup>8</sup> Op. cit, p. 71-94

À mon avis, donc, la nouvelle évangélisation n'est pas notionnelle, n'est pas intellectuelle ou même missionnaire au sens large, mais plutôt *relationnelle*, c'est à dire d'ouvrir à une relation avec le Dieu de Jésus Christ. La confusion qui règne autour du terme évangélisation peut être évitée. Il y a un constant déplacement dans la signification du mot «évangéliser», chacun y mettant ce qu'il entend ou — pire! — ce qu'il fait déjà.

Au sens strict, d'un point de vue étymologique, le terme *eu-angelion*, en grec, signifie «bon message, bonne nouvelle». En langage biblique, l'évangélisation est l'action ou le processus qui apporte la bonne nouvelle. Or, le centre de la mission de l'Église, au lendemain de la résurrection, est précisément la victoire sur la mort. C'est parce que le Christ est vivant que sa vie, son message et même sa mort deviennent significatifs. En tant que prophète, ayant connu une mort abrupte, on aurait sans doute continué de parler de Jésus, mais serait-il encore le cœur de la foi de plus d'un milliard et demi d'êtres humains? Ce qui distingue radicalement le Christ, c'est qu'il est vivant; il a vaincu une fois pour toute la grande épreuve de la mort. Pâques à une *relation vivante* avec le Père qu'il a annoncé. Cette relation, bien sûr, connaîtra des moments de croissance, mais ce qui déclenche tout, c'est l'étincelle initiale, la première annonce, le kérygme. L'Église est née par la Parole. Et cette Parole est annoncée par des témoins crédibles, qui sont l'incarnation de ce qu'ils annoncent, en terme de foi, d'espérance et de charité. Tout le reste est important, mais *second*: c'est là le champ de l'initiation chrétienne, de la pastorale, de l'accompagnement spirituel, de la maturation de la foi, de la transformation de la société et du dialogue avec le monde présent. L'évangélisation est l'étincelle qui ouvre les chemins de la mission.

#### **IV La Nouvelle évangélisation dans le contexte québécois: Douze ans d'expérimentation**

Avant de tirer quelques conclusions, laissez-moi vous présenter le cheminement que j'ai vécu à plusieurs niveaux. En 2002, le diocèse de Joliette, au Québec, fête son centenaire. L'évêque du lieu, Mgr Gilles Lussier, demande aux Franciscains d'avoir une petite équipe pour l'aider à fêter spirituellement ce Jubilé. Le rappel historique, les grandes fêtes et les célébrations populaires étaient déjà très bien structurés,

mais, aux yeux de l'évêque du lieu, il manquait une petite dimension spirituelle, un élément de renouveau de la foi. Se basant sur les anciennes «Grandes missions franciscaines», qui nous n'avions pas vécues depuis plus de 40 ans au Québec, nous avons proposé une équipe qui allait visiter tout le diocèse: chaque paroisse, mouvement ou organisation qui acceptait de nous recevoir. Durant plus de huit mois, répartis sur 2,5 années, nous avons parcouru les 52 paroisses, visité les écoles, rencontré les gens chez eux, assisté à des assemblées de marguilliers ou des partages bibliques. Nous avons créé de toute pièce des nouvelles activités, des choses audacieuses ou parfois très classiques. Et nous avons fait la rencontre des publics les plus bigarrés: des jeunes, des vieux, des enfants, des décrocheurs scolaires, des personnes âgées, des distants, des communistes, etc. Toujours avec un seul objectif en tête: «éveiller ou réveiller une relation vivante avec le Dieu de Jésus-Christ».



Ces huit mois furent profondément révélateurs. Une équipe formée de deux franciscains, deux prêtres séculiers, 4 laïcs, ont parcouru les lieux, les places et les milieux. Nous avons réussi de grandes choses, où l'Esprit était franchement palpable, et nous nous sommes trompés de manière remarquable à plusieurs reprises. Par un jeu d'essais/erreurs, nous avons corrigé, ajusté nos approches et nos stratégies. Or, à notre plus grande surprise, tous les groupes d'âge, même les plus réfractaires, ont été touchés d'une manière ou d'une autre avec succès. Il en a résulté un petit rapport sans prétention<sup>9</sup> où furent identifiés 10 axes/activités d'évangélisation qui ont eu un succès certain dans le fait d'éveiller ou réveiller une relation vivante avec le Dieu de Jésus-Christ. Or, une terre que l'on dit «sécularisée» ou même «réfractaire à la foi

<sup>9</sup> *Un peu de la bonté infinie de Dieu : Rapport final de la Grande Mission du Diocèse de Joliette (2002-2005), Joliette : 2005.*

catholique» fut étonnamment accueillante à de nouvelles approches. Pour chaque groupe d'âge, nous avons identifié des axes non seulement prometteurs, mais des axes qui fonctionnent, qui donnent des résultats, à court et à moyen termes.

Suite à cette grande mission, et devant l'urgence d'une nouvelle évangélisation des «jeunes adultes» (expression qui pour moi signifie 16-40 ans), j'ai choisi de creuser le filon expérimenté avec succès par la Grande Mission: l'évangélisation par la musique. Ici entre en jeu *Maison InterCD*, un tout petit organisme qui «produit et diffuse de la chanson inspirée par le message chrétien», définition officielle de la mission de l'organisme. En fait, la mission de *Maison InterCD* est «l'évangélisation par la musique chrétienne», ici entendue par contemporaine. Depuis 2005, donc, je produis des disques et des spectacles qui ouvrent à une expérience de Dieu, qui est une toute première annonce, vibrante et puissante, du kérygme et du bonheur de connaître Dieu. Depuis ce temps, on m'a affectueusement surnommé le frère «danseur», puisqu'il paraît que je bouge d'une façon étonnante en dirigeant mes chorales.

## **V La Nouvelle évangélisation au Québec: Quelques réflexions et pistes d'avenir**

Ce que je vous livre à partir de maintenant, je le dis de tout mon cœur, mon âme et mon intelligence. C'est l'analyse des Écritures, d'une part, et le fruit d'une expérience d'évangélisation en milieu sécularisé, d'autre part, qui ont produit ce que je m'apprête à vous dire. La combinaison donne, bien sûr, quelque chose de très personnel et, je l'espère, d'interpellant — quelque soit le milieu d'où l'on vient. Je vous livre davantage des convictions que des certitudes:

1. La nouvelle évangélisation est de favoriser *la relation avec Quelqu'un*, et non quelque chose ou même d'initier au plus saint des contenus. Il faut garder en tête que le Christ présente un Père qui aime et qui est à aimer, et que ce même Père nous envoie dans le monde. Par son Esprit, il habite déjà ce monde et il nous y attend. L'évangélisation, dans son sens le plus strict que je propose ici d'adopter, est foncièrement *relationnelle*: s'ouvrir à la présence et à l'action du Dieu de Jésus-Christ. En moi, dans l'Église et dans le monde. Point.

2. Dans un deuxième temps, se planifie et s'organise *l'initiation chrétienne* qui, elle, fait entrer dans le mystère avec plus de profondeur. Là s'y trouvent l'amour des Écritures, la découverte des sacrements, la mission personnelle, l'amour de l'Église, la transformation du monde selon l'Évangile, etc. Là se trouvent de nombreuses années à explorer le trésor des différentes traditions spirituelles de l'Église, mais il faut que reste claire une distinction entre *l'éveil à la foi* (évangélisation) de tous les autres champs de la mission de l'Église (initiation chrétienne, pastorale, action sociale, etc.). Distinction nécessaire, sans exclusion, bien sûr, mais déterminante pour savoir de quoi l'on parle.
3. Tout comme à l'époque biblique, je suis convaincu que la nouvelle évangélisation au Québec devrait *cibler en tout premier lieu les adultes, et en particulier les jeunes adultes* (16-40 ans). Des enfants que l'on tente de rejoindre *sans* leurs parents ou, au moins, sans d'autres adultes significatifs de foi profonde dans leur entourage immédiat, est une stratégie qui s'est révélée infructueuse au Québec. Croyez-en notre expérience de plus de 40 ans d'expérimentation et d'expertise. Nous y avons brûlé énormément d'énergie, de ressources et de créativité. Les résultats furent, au mieux, mitigés et, au pire, un échec. Et ce, je le dis même si nous peinons à faire ce constat à ce moment-ci de notre histoire. Tout comme à l'époque biblique, tout comme à certaines époques où les missionnaires arrivaient sur des terres nouvelles, l'Église renaîtra en terre sécularisée par les jeunes adultes qui «adhèrent au Christ» de façon consciente<sup>10</sup>, souvent à contre-courant.
4. L'Incarnation assume la dimension corporelle de l'humanité. Un évangélisateur ou une communauté évangélisatrice est, d'abord et avant tout, l'incarnation du message d'amour qu'elle porte. Par exemple, il a été clairement diagnostiqué au Québec, qu'un représentant d'Église, pour être crédible, doit *manifestement se présenter avec un surcroît d'humanité, de bonté et de spiritualité*. Le messenger lui-même doit incarner le message qu'il porte. De même pour la communauté évangélisatrice. Il ne suffit plus de déclarer notre inaptitude à «incarner parfaitement l'Évangile» pour excuser toutes nos soirées, nos célébrations ou nos conférences ennuyeuses. Les personnes qui ont longtemps cheminé peuvent s'accommoder de célébrations un peu moins vivantes ou de conférenciers monotones, mais *pas les*

<sup>10</sup> En araméen, disciples se dit «adhérants, collants».

*personnes distantes ou les néo-convertis.* Il nous faut être et paraître *clair-ement* ce que nous avons choisi d'être. Et ne nous y trompons pas. Il ne s'agit pas d'une nouveauté, mais bien d'une cohérence entre la parole et l'agir qui est bien documentée dans les Écritures (dans les courants prophétique et sapientiel) et qui, aujourd'hui, est incontournable. Jésus lui-même en était l'un des grands promoteurs.

5. L'Église du Québec — et peut-être d'ailleurs, qui sait? — doit avoir une claire idée de sa position sociale minoritaire et des conséquences qui en découlent. Il y a un monde de différence entre éveiller à la foi un public «captif» et un public «sélectif». En tant qu'une voix parmi d'autres, l'Église doit reconnaître que le principe d'autorité ne fonctionne pas dans une société pluraliste. Par internet, mais aussi avec les médias de masse, la population a *déjà* accès à une multitude de renseignements, de contenus et d'opinions qui n'ont rien à voir avec l'Évangile. C'est un fait de la vie; il n'y a aucun reproche à faire à la population en rapport avec cette réalité. La première parole que le Christ nous demande de prononcer sur ce monde, tel qu'il est — et non tel que nous le voudrions — il la formule ainsi: «Paix à cette maison!» (Lc 10: L'envoi des 72 en mission), et il nous invite à nous présenter dans une « posture » qu'il compare aux « brebis au milieu des loups ». Il nous demande de nous présenter de telle manière qu'il y a en nous aucune menace, aucune puissance, aucune autorité qui s'impose. Rien que le message évangélique et sa pertinence pour le monde présent. Et, en fait, c'est tout ce dont nous avons besoin. Or, un public sélectif — qui a le choix — saura reconnaître la beauté et la vérité de l'Évangile s'il lui est bien présenté, car celui-là est *parfaitement ajusté à son cœur d'être créé par Dieu*. Aujourd'hui comme hier, l'homme ne trouvera son repos que quand il aura trouvé Dieu. Pour nos contemporains, aussi éloignés parfois qu'ils nous semblent de l'Évangile et du Royaume, ils restent des hommes et des femmes qui aspirent à la vie divine. Sans cette conviction, nous n'avons plus rien à dire à ce monde. Et si nous ne sommes, minimalement, des messagers porteurs, dans notre corps, dans nos mains et dans nos yeux, de ce bonheur, nous n'avons plus rien à dire à ce monde. Il faut que notre proposition de l'Évangile, déjà dans ce que nous incarnons, soit humble, convaincante et attirante.
6. Tout comme Jésus, l'Église évangélisatrice se doit d'être ouverte à tous et à toutes, car Dieu reconnaît en tous une créature

infiniment aimée. L'accueil *inconditionnel* est une part fondamentale du message évangélique. Aussi éloignée de la foi que la personne peut nous paraître, elle est néanmoins infiniment aimée par Dieu. Le Fils de Dieu n'hésiterait pas à s'agenouiller devant elle, à ceindre le tablier et à la servir. La première attitude devant toute personne en est une de considération, d'amour et de bonté. On ne pourra jamais justifier le mépris ou l'exclusion, au nom de l'Évangile. Et encore moins à l'étape de l'éveil à la foi, ou de l'évangélisation.

7. Cet accueil, cette ouverture, ne doit pas masquer qu'il y a une priorité dans l'évangélisation qui nous est confiée. Nous sommes et serons toujours envoyés d'abord et avant tout vers ceux qui sont exclus ou marginalisés par les sociétés où nous habitons. Par exemple, près du quart de la population québécoise vit sous le seuil de la pauvreté, ou connaît la misère. Même dans ma société que l'on dit « riche », il y a des exclus, des marginaux, de pauvres à qui l'on reflète constamment la laideur et le refus. Ce n'est pas une mission exclusive, mais très certainement prioritaire. Je suis convaincu que si plus de la moitié de notre temps et de notre énergie pastorale n'est pas consacrée, concrètement, à cette tranche de la population, il y a quelque chose de l'Évangile que nous ne pouvons pas comprendre. Il y a bien sûr, des situations temporaires, ou des services internes de l'Église ou de nos instituts, mais la perte de contact avec les marginaux nous fait perdre la perspective unique du serviteur de Dieu; lui qui sera accueilli par son Maître avec cette affirmation: «Chaque fois que tu l'as fait à l'un de ces petits, c'est à moi que tu l'as fait» (Mt 25). Nous ne pourrions pas dire que nous ne le savions pas. Notre priorité, elle est là, sans la moindre hésitation. De toute façon, pour moi, il s'y trouve aussi une question de mystique chrétienne: sans les marginaux et les pauvres dans notre vie, il y a quelque chose de Dieu que *nous ne pouvons plus comprendre*. Ce n'est pas une question de bonne volonté ou de bonne intention. On ne *PEUT* plus comprendre Dieu sans avoir les deux pieds dans la marge de nos sociétés. Sur la route des nations, c'est là que Dieu nous attend.
8. L'Évangile est et restera toujours une «bonne nouvelle». Pour moi, le grand test de l'évangélisation réside en peu de choses: avant même d'avoir prononcé une parole, sommes-nous des bonnes nouvelles pour ceux vers qui nous sommes envoyés? Est-ce que nos yeux, nos mains, nos corps, est-ce que nos êtres tout entiers, avant d'avoir dit un

mot, sont reçus en ce monde blessé comme une « bonne nouvelle »? Car, le monde ne s'y trompe pas. Le Dieu d'amour de Jésus-Christ est un message si percutant et si profond qu'il ne peut entrer dans une vie sans lui insuffler l'espérance, la foi et la charité.

Impossible qu'il en soit autrement, en fait. Saurons-nous être évangélisés, nous-mêmes, par l'Esprit de Dieu et laisserons-nous cet Esprit rayonner à travers nous, afin de communiquer monde rien d'autre, que le bonheur de connaître Dieu?

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Mary Motte, FMM

# Evangelization in the United States: *A Journey Forward From Vatican II*

## 1. A NEW WAY OF SEEING IS LAUNCHED

As I begin this reflection I wish to share with you a story told by a Rabbi. I read it in our local paper one morning when I was still in the early stages of formulating this paper. Rabbi Ben Kamin explains how differently he experiences each visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He writes, *each occasion [is] leavened by the vicissitudes of life, by doubt, scepticism, spiritual immobility or vague rhapsody and certainly by my own vanities.* He comments that one has *first to get past the sense of being an intruder, even if one is incontrovertibly Jewish, because the landlords of Jerusalem's Western Wall, a conglomerate of stern bearded men from a variety of ecclesiastic tribes, are rather possessive of their default contract with the place.... I follow the ritual because so many people have been doing this for so many centuries that the very cycle — and its uniformity and peacefulness and solemnity — instills the absolute holiness that attends this place. God is there, to paraphrase rabbinical tradition, because we have let God in.... I spoke to an old woman as I walked up the plaza from the Wall one day. Her eyes had seen more than mine ever will. She told me she had survived Treblinka. Then she wished me, 'Shabbat shalom' in Polish-inflected Hebrew. Who could hear that and then require some passing rabbi to describe God for me?*<sup>1</sup>

This *Year of Faith*, that contextualizes our renewed search to realize a *New Evangelization*, is set within the 50 year celebration — the Golden Jubilee — of the Second Vatican Council. Many of us who were young religious in 1962, remember the hope burgeoning from our minds and hearts. With amazement we wondered how we could be so blessed as to live in this moment of *aggiornamento*. As we encountered each new challenge, we believed the struggles held hope and a vision of the future. As the years unfolded we began to realize that hope opens

out slowly — so very slowly. But the vision of the call into the future did not fade. The purpose of this paper is not to describe all the contours of this journey, but the memory needs to be recalled for this memory constitutes a sacred underpinning for the evolution in our consciousness of God's unconditional love and its implications for us as consecrated women in the Church.<sup>2</sup> This journey continues as a journey in mission and prophecy; it has been marked by search, contemplation, attentiveness and a developing compassion for the women and men of this time, especially the poor. The words of Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry constitute the strength for the journey:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Mission is an act of dialogue, because God's inner nature is dialogical: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*<sup>4</sup> And it is likewise an act of prophecy because God is *prophetic in dealing with creation.*<sup>5</sup> Both mission and prophecy are held in love, because *God is Love,*<sup>6</sup> and love is that dynamic quality of communion continually realized in the relationships among the Persons of the Trinity and into which all creation is called. In *“this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.”*<sup>7</sup>

## 2. A NEW WAY OF EVANGELIZATION EMERGES FROM VATICAN II

The roots of a new evangelization began with the Second Vatican Council 1962 — 1965. John XXIII opened the Council indicating:

What is needed is that this certain and immutable doctrine, (truths underlying faith) ... be studied afresh and reformulated in contemporary terms. For this deposit of faith,



or truths which are contained in our time-honoured teaching is one thing; the manner in which these truths are set forth (with their meaning preserved intact) is something else.<sup>8</sup>

Since that time there have been innumerable studies and programmes aimed at realizing a more vibrant expression and practice of a living faith. The Decrees of Vatican II recognize the relationship between God and the dignity of the human person, and call for a profound renewal in our relationship with God and with one another. The first document approved by the Council on 4 December 1963, was: *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. This document stresses the importance of the Paschal Mystery in the life and prayer of the Church in relation to the liturgical renewal proposed by the Council. This same importance underlies the further work on the sacraments, the life of holiness, the vocation of humanity and the mission of the Church in the world.<sup>9</sup>

The first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, addresses The Mystery of the Church:

Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is, both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission. This it intends to do following faithfully the teaching of previous Councils. The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men [*sic*], joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ.<sup>10</sup>

St Paul uses the term “mystery” to speak of the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Mystery is beyond our comprehension, and yet Paul claims this mystery has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ: *in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he created the universe....*<sup>11</sup>

... the very mystery of God and of the divine love for humankind has been revealed; the divine Word has been spoken for us in a definitive way in Jesus Christ. Through him the mystery of God’s very self has been made

known. Even this real glimpse into the life of God, which we see with the eyes of faith, defies our efforts at explanation.<sup>12</sup>

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, written after the Synod of Bishops on Evangelization in 1974, Paul VI deepens the themes of Vatican II:

There is no doubt that the effort to proclaim the Gospel to the people of today, who are buoyed up by hope but at the same time often oppressed by fear and distress, is a service rendered to the Christian community and also to the whole of humanity.<sup>13</sup>

The Council invokes the importance of reading the signs of the times, stating: The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel.<sup>14</sup> There are two premises that define this action, namely a commonly held truth among Christians that God speaks to us in and through the situation in which we find ourselves. The second premise, is that the Gospel should be a transformer of culture, and hence the importance of the encounter between culture and faith.<sup>15</sup> Quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, Paul VI speaks of evangelizing in a vital way ... “always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God”.<sup>15</sup>

In *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), John Paul II reminds us that Vatican II based the “missionary nature” of the Church *in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself*.<sup>16</sup> When



we reflect on the Trinitarian mission we are confronted by the dynamic of love among the three Divine Persons. Therefore, the foundational energy of mission is love, a love that seeks to bring all persons and all Creation into the communion of the Trinity. Bevans'

insight helps to further missiological insight, namely: *if God is truly a dialogical God, vulnerability, suffering and growth can hardly be conceived as imperfect qualities*<sup>17</sup> Edwards' exploration of a theology of the Creator Spirit considers how the Spirit is midwife to the birth of a new creation. He recognizes the Spirit as a faithful companion accompanying each creature and that the kind of power exercised by the Spirit in ongoing creation will be consistent with the kind of power revealed in the cross and Resurrection of Jesus; it will offer a new gospel vision of relational power examining how God suffers.<sup>18</sup> This dynamic nature of mission in the Church from the time of Vatican II forward has been shifting within the new context of the world from: seeing mission as *primarily proclaiming a dogmatic truth* to a greater emphasis on a clearer recognition of the *Missio Dei* — *mission is God's Mission* and the discerning awareness of God in our lives this implies.<sup>19</sup> Mission sending to God's people has involved discovering how God is present, and collaborating with them in their situation and together with them, deepening the experience of God who loves one and all.

Both the insights about *Missio Dei* and being sent to God's people has called forth new energy, hard work, significant research, conversation and relationships as well as profound pain and disappointment. New missiological themes have emerged which include inculturation or the encounter between the Gospel and culture, interreligious dialogue, liberation and justice, migration, care of Creation, taking their place alongside the continuing missiological theme of proclamation and the newer one of evangelization.<sup>20</sup> The conversations and debates within the Church disclose an emergent space of common ground as well as diversity and disagreement. An increasingly globalized world has brought about new insights into the importance of building appropriate relationships with others. At present the dynamic of the *new evangelization* is being applied to the Church's attempts to face the challenges coming from the world of today.

The United States presents a particular set of challenges with its ever-changing diversities of cultures, its on-going revolution in technology and its growing landscape of secularity. In the *Lineamenta* for the 2012

Synod of Bishops, the *Person of Jesus Christ and a personal encounter with him* provide the starting point for consideration of how to proclaim the Gospel in meaningful ways, able to communicate, in present situations.<sup>21</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) underlines that the new evangelization *calls all Catholics to be evangelized and then go forth to evangelize*.<sup>22</sup> An idea first expressed by John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*, and repeated by Benedict XVI gives further definition to the present understanding of the New Evangelization as re-proposing the Gospel *to those regions awaiting the first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but which have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularization....*<sup>23</sup> A new evangelization situated in the context of the *Year of Faith* (11 October 2012 — November 2013) starts from attending to our personal relationship with God. Commenting on Benedict XVI's designation of a "Year of Faith", the USCCB notes that this provides an opportunity for *Catholics to experience a conversion*, which involves a turning to Jesus and entering into a *deeper relationship with him*.<sup>24</sup> Dioceses throughout the United States, as well as throughout the world, have organized a variety of programmes for the "Year of Faith" in an effort to promote its goals and intentions.<sup>25</sup>

Since the conclusion of Vatican II, a number of different programmes have been launched at the national level to promote evangelization with new energy in U.S. Catholic parishes. Several examples are: laity-driven parishes working in collaboration with a committed pastor, discipleship programmes, welcome programs, renewed catechesis for adults and children, and programs oriented toward outreach to the poor, sick and lonely, as well as to the 'un-churched'.<sup>26</sup> Sociologist, Pierre Hegy, has examined a variety of tasks needed for a genuine renewal of the Church in the United States. The three steps he proposes are: 1) make passive attendees at the Sunday Mass into active participants in the celebration of the Eucharist; 2) transform the active Mass attendees into involved members of the local church/parish through four forms of ministry communities — worship, service, formation and ministry; 3) leading involved members into totally committed discipleship

especially through spiritual growth and missionary/evangelizing activities.<sup>27</sup> There are some parishes which have begun to inaugurate similar programmes. Emphasis is on a personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ, participative celebration of the Sunday Mass as a community of faith, involvement of the Laity in religious education and parish outreach programmes. Some are parishes of *destination* rather than geographical parishes. While there are very diverse populations in many of these parishes, fellowship, participation and welcome are stressed.

### **3. A PARTICULAR EVOLUTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>28</sup>**

Another reality to be considered is the journey of many religious communities in the United States since 1965. *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Conciliar Document concerning the renewal of religious life, called forth a profound response from many Religious Congregations, who were asked to return to the sources of their inspiration, identify their foundation charism and update their manner of life.<sup>29</sup> Religious, and I speak particularly from the experience of many women religious, prayed, conversed, suffered, were fired up with vision and hope as they held on to the gift of their faith in the Gospel and love for the Church through their religious vocation. As they plunged more deeply into the meaning and contemporary significance of their respective charisms, they sought creatively to build up relationships with all of God's People in ways consistent with the purpose of their communities. In practice this process led to an on-going discernment of discovering God's presence and invitation in moments of clarity and in moments of doubt. This discernment of how God leads, has led communities to deeper fidelity to contemplative prayer.

Members of religious congregations have given and continue to give significant time and energy, in addition to their ministries, to consultative processes leading to genuinely participative renewal Chapters of congregations and rewriting of Constitutions. The missionary nature of these efforts became clearly apparent in the consistent energy with which religious approach new situations and challenges in their ministries. This vision is rooted in their faith and is continuously encountered in new and

unexpected ways through an incarnated contemplation that embraces prayer and human life. This missionary energy, which stimulates the vision of members of religious congregations, combines with the renewing energies of many others within the Catholic community and beyond. Evidence of such missionary energy has been repeatedly expressed through the development of ways to express solidarity with the poor, oppressed and abandoned, to relate to followers of other Christian traditions, to followers of Judaism and other faith traditions as well as to those of no evident faith.<sup>30</sup> Concerned commitment to justice, peace, care for Creation give colour and shape to this missionary commitment.

Energy which is missionary recognizes every person and all of Creation as loved by God. The path of renewal to which Vatican II



invited religious women and men, similarly, has been marked by suffering, frustration. Yet it is always being challenged to go forward by small luminaries for a more profound relationship and integration into the Mission of God. Commitment to the poor and the struggle against situations of injustice has led to death for many religious, as well as lay people, priests especially in the last fifty years, and we have in fact, entered a new age of martyrdom.<sup>31</sup>

### **4. SIGNS OF THE TIMES: THE CONTEXT OF EVOLUTION IN THE UNIVERSE**

Let us consider for a moment some of the significant things which happened after the conclusion of the Council in 1965: spaceships left the orbit of earth, a man stood on the moon, and as the century ended, the Hubble Telescope began to send startling, exciting and thrilling photos back to earth. Now we know

that Creation is still unfolding, new stars are appearing, and stars are dying, new galaxies are being discovered. Scientists are asking if there is life someplace else in the universe?

The interrelatedness of all life challenges us to open our contemplative prayer to deeper insights about the Mystery of God – Trinity. These insights constitute a new context for our understanding of Faith and the New Evangelization. Increasing awareness of the destruction of earth, planet, oceans, and all forms of life has led to dedicated expressions of care for Creation. The emphasis on climate change suggests we should begin, from our location, a truly incarnational approach to the question that recognizes the integral relationship of God with God's Creation:

If we believe God and the world are wholly other, we shall see Creation and Providence from within that perspective. An incarnational context for understanding the God-world relationship has implications for our response to climate change. It means that we and God are in the same place and that we share responsibility for the world.<sup>32</sup>

John Haught has given particular attention to developing a theology of nature in the context of science which exposes *three infinites — the immense, the infinitesimal and the complex*. He states that there is a fourth infinite opened up already by Christian faith, namely the infinite horizon of the future.

The human spirit's quest for final liberation leads beyond all present time and past all perishing, beyond this universe and any others, toward the Absolutely New — in other words, to God, the One whose promises open up all of life and all universes to an endless and unimaginable future.<sup>33</sup>

John Paul II, drawing inspiration from *Gaudium et Spes*, describes God's Spirit as the One who directs "... the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth".<sup>34</sup> Scientific discoveries offer a radically changed worldview. Theology must engage this consensus if it is to be *faith seeking understanding*.<sup>35</sup> Some Christian theologians and missiologists ponder on God-Trinity-Creator in relation to an evolutionary, unfolding universe. Referring to the fact that Christians participate in the *trinitarian life and*

*mission of God*, Bevans and Schroeder go on to comment:

Such a trinitarian grounding is in tune with some of the most important theology being done today, and it acknowledges unabashedly the centrality of the trinitarian mystery in Christian life and theology. Christology is an integral part of mission from this perspective, but there is work as well for God's Holy Spirit to lead men and women further into God's unfathomable mystery and to allow Christians to recognize God's surprising presence outside of exclusively Christian parameters.<sup>36</sup>

Although not entirely absent from Christian Tradition, the study of the role of the Spirit has not been sufficiently developed in the Western Tradition.<sup>37</sup> Divine Mystery will always be beyond the best human understanding, and yet the lives of many illustrate how attentiveness to this Mystery resourced their communication about God to others.<sup>38</sup> Scientific discoveries can also provide facts about the universe prompting a deeper discernment and contemplation of the Divine Mystery among those attuned.<sup>39</sup> *God is the newness of everything that is and is coming to be. God is ever newness in love.*<sup>40</sup>

In this time when concrete images from the Hubble Microscope are returned to earth, scientists affirm that the stable image of an unchanging universe is not true. Some theologians recognize the need to examine our theological understanding from the starting point of new facts now acquired about the universe. Some are asking *What kind of God creates an unfinished universe*. There are those who suggest that our theological precepts of an earlier time need to be revisited and explored from the new reality that Science is laying before us. Now for perhaps the first time in history we can understand the universe as emerging and unfolding.<sup>41</sup> Of course, Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, did recognize this fact before Science could offer the kind of proof available today. And he insistently called for a *new way of seeing*, integrating his scientific knowledge and faith experience in a way that hints at the great Mystery of Incarnation.

Rahner sees the Incarnation as intrinsic to God's purpose in Creation. He understands

God creating a universe of creatures as an act of self-bestowing love, always intending to embrace the material world in the Incarnation and to bring it to its fulfilment in Christ.<sup>42</sup> Images of self-bestowing love through the Mystery of Incarnation moving toward the full realization of Christ confronts the way we have lived, acted, and understood ourselves and our relationships with others as we move forward into the future. Herein lies an important dimension of the new evangelization. Deeper awareness of the Incarnation integrated into the Baptismal unfolding of Christian life is taking on greater significance in the midst of the painful characteristics of the present time marked by widespread disruption between systems of belief and systems of cultures and forms of behaviour. Taylor, McLean and Casanova explore the disjunctions between Church and people in a secular age. Their concern suggests some considerations for the topic of the *New Evangelization*. They write of the urgency of *rethinking the entire nature of the Church and its public presence in quite different, indeed kenotic, terms*. They note that this process can also *help to orient present theological investigations toward the new discoveries needed for bearing witness to the Gospel values in this secular age*. They continue:

If the final culminating failure of these recent decades had been, as Pope Benedict acknowledged, to sacrifice the safety of its young for the reputation of the Church as an institution, this calls for a redefinition of the Church in quite opposite terms from that of recent centuries. That is, not the Church as a perfect and imperial institution, unchanging through time and hence never to be questioned. Rather, Christ himself did not hold to his heavenly majesty, but took on the form of our humanity which he exercised not as Lord and Sovereign, but through dying on the Cross as Suffering Servant (Philippians). That death was the ultimate act of love.<sup>43</sup>

In this age of secularity there have been increasing examples among religious — and here I refer to those in the United States, but recognize that this reality extends to other continents — of a divesting of institutions and the consequent loss of financial security. The poverty many retired religious experience in the United States bears witness to this loss of security.

... one of the more dramatic human issues facing the U.S. church in the coming years is: a growing crisis in the many billions of dollars in unfunded retirement and elderly care costs that religious orders of men and women, especially women, will be facing within the next couple of decades.<sup>44</sup>

Further, solidarity with the poor has led many religious to follow a path not only of chosen financial limitations and insecurity, but a path that is marked neither by recognition nor esteem. Following the Son of God who *did not consider equality something to be grasped at*, they too have abandoned those things that set them apart among the privileged both in the Church and society at large, in their ongoing search to enter more deeply into the following of Christ.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Recognition of God's tremendous freely-given love for each one, the implications of which has perhaps only gradually taken hold of our awareness, constitutes a new way of seeing that in fact provides a different starting-point for living our relationship with Christ as a new form of evangelization. Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, frequently referred to the necessity for a new way of seeing. For him, as King notes, *what matters most is his all embracing vision of the world, humanity and God, which he describes as a new way of seeing*.<sup>46</sup> In his classic study of how we see, John Berger tells us that *the way we see is affected by what we know*. He affirms that we are never looking at just one thing, rather *we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves*.<sup>47</sup>

Various scholars are increasingly pointing to the new facts being scientifically discovered with information that comes from the universe. As Delio notes, while the understanding of God of which Aquinas wrote cannot be simply amended with new insights from more recent scientific discoveries, it is also not possible yet to offer new evolutionary definitions with any final surety. Aquinas cautioned many centuries ago, *A mistake about creation will lead to a mistake about God*. Delio concludes that *we need to know the book of creation today, as science informs us, to know God*. She continues:

It seems the time is ripe to begin thinking of theology not in terms of parts but in terms of wholes: the whole person in the whole creation in the whole God. We are wholes within wholes, interrelated on every level.<sup>48</sup>

The New Evangelization and the Year of Faith are first of all about renewing our relationship with Christ. It is evident that this renewal has been unfolding over the years since Vatican II and bears the characteristics of a pilgrimage or journey.<sup>49</sup> Like all pilgrimages there are paths that are difficult, perhaps even tortuous and foreboding. The God whom we are seeking is infinite in capacity for relationship. The Incarnation is an act of profound relationship with its meaning rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and the Communion of Three Persons. It is a relationship revealed through the life of Jesus, and it is a relationship which opens to a greater inclusion of creation through the Eucharist, namely its institution at the final meal before the Crucifixion, its inclusion of the gifts of the earth and of our hands, and in its continuing presence in the humblest of circumstances. We

continue the Incarnation in time, and this realization is intimately related to the Eucharist.

The New Evangelization of this *Year of Faith* began in the Second Vatican Council and its development has been opening out in myriad ways since that time. These ways are impelled by insights drawn from science and continually nourished by the study of God through the Scriptures and through the witness of life. This Year of Faith is an invitation to realize more fully, that what happened in Jesus Christ is intended by God for the whole creation, namely *union and transformation in the divine embrace of love*.<sup>50</sup> This search for God through an ongoing deepening of our relationship with Christ, has truly been a *faith seeking understanding*. Teilhard reminds us that *Faith is a relationship*. While this relationship is not limited to a single source, it is our common experience that *we express it in creeds, stories, symbols, and practices*. Any expression of faith may show us *previously unnoticed connections among the events and people in the world in which we live*.<sup>51</sup> And so the image of the Woman whom the Rabbi met at the Western Wall:

*"Her eyes had seen more than mine ever will. She told me she had survived Treblinka. Then she wished me, 'Shabbat shalom' in Polish-inflected Hebrew. Who could hear that and then require some passing Rabbi to describe God for me?"<sup>53</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *At Western Wall, connecting with God*, Providence Journal, January 10, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder, Maryknoll, NY, 2011. And *Prophets in their own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church*, Maryknoll, NY, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:18-19 (RSV).

<sup>4</sup> John 1:1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, 2011, 41.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 4:16 (RSV).

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 4:10 (RSV).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John XXIII, "Opening Remarks" at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962.

<sup>9</sup> Richard R. Gaillardetz, Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the teaching of Vatican II*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2012, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 1:2 (RSV); cf. Gaillardetz and Clifford, 2012, 47.

<sup>12</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, (GS) n. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (EN) n. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Reading the Signs of the Times: Resources for Social and Cultural Analysis*. Edited by T. Howland Sanks, John A. Coleman. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991, 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1.

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- <sup>17</sup> Stephen Bevans, SVD, *Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theology and the Missiological Imagination*. in Australian EJournal of Theology. August 2005.
- <sup>18</sup> Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004
- <sup>19</sup> *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. David J. Bosch. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, 390-391
- <sup>20</sup> Several studies, in addition to that of David Bosch (*Transforming Mission*), have documented these shifts, among them: *Mission in Dialogue: The SEDOS Research Seminar on the Future of Mission*. J. Lang, M. Motte. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982; *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today*. James H. Kroeger, MM, Eugene Laverdière, SSS. Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994; *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History*. Angelyn Dries, OSF. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998; *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004; *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology*. Francis Anekwe Oborji. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006; *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*. Daniel G. Groody, Gioacchino Campese, (eds.), Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008; *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*. Andrew Walls, Cathy Ross. London: Darton, Longmans, Todd, 2008; *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad Gentes, Dignitatis Humanae*. Stephen B. Bevans, SVD, Jeffrey Gros, FSC. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009 *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011; *God's Mission and Post-modern Culture: The Gift of Uncertainty*. John C. Sivalon, MM. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012.
- <sup>21</sup> *The New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith*. Lineamenta, chapter 1.
- <sup>22</sup> USCCB website, Year of Faith.
- <sup>23</sup> *Homily for Opening the Year of Faith*, October 11, 2012.
- <sup>24</sup> Website for USCCB concerning New Evangelization.
- <sup>25</sup> cf. Websites for various RC Dioceses in the United States.
- <sup>26</sup> These programmes were part of the follow-up to Vatican II occurring throughout the RC Church over the years.
- <sup>27</sup> Pierre Hegy. *Wake Up, Lazarus! On Catholic Renewal*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2011, 2012.
- <sup>28</sup> This example is not limited to the United States, but is cited here because of the subject of this paper.
- <sup>29</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis (PC)*, especially nn. 1, 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Some examples include participation of Sisters as well as many clergy and lay persons in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's; the continuing participation of many in witness that stresses the seamless garment of life and the right to life; the continuing witness at the School of Americas in Columbus, Georgia, where the military from Central America are trained; and the 2012 program of *Nuns on the Bus* to express solidarity with those who are excluded from the economic concerns of society; the participation of Catholic Sisters as well as many others in efforts to end the death penalty...
- <sup>31</sup> "*Contemporary Martyrs*", Gerald M. Costello, in *Millennium Monthly*, November 2000. St. Anthony's Messenger Press.
- <sup>32</sup> *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*. Sally McFague. St. Paul, MN: Fortress Press, 2008. 63.
- <sup>33</sup> *Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature*. John F. Haught. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007, 1.
- <sup>34</sup> *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World*. 1986. n. 26.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. Ilia Delio, *Godhead or God Ahead?* in *God, Grace and Creation*. Philip J. Rossi, ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010. 3 - 22. On page 3 Delio comments: *(the) area of religion and science, like the universe itself, is expanding. The reason for the outburst of growth is due primarily to the remarkable developments in science and technology .... If science is like the rabbit/(hare) leaping and bounding across the field, theology is like the turtle/(tortoise) slowly coming from behind. The task of doing theology today in light of the new science is becoming ever the more urgent.; cf. also John F. Haught, Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007. 3 ff.; Denis Edwards, Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004.*
- <sup>36</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004. 286-304; Edwards, *op. cit.*, 117-129, cf. also Kilian McDonnell, OSB. *The Other Hand of God: The Holy Spirit as the Other Hand of God*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press (A Michael Glazer Book). 2003.
- <sup>37</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, 1, 33 - 49.



<sup>38</sup> cf. Elaine A. Heath. *The Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2008. Heath mentions such figures as Phoebe Palmer, Father Arseny, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Mechtild, Bonaventure, Julian of Norwich, Hans Urs von Balthasar, of Magdeburg, Mother Teresa and the sources of their contemplative vision that nourished their communication about God.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. for example *Evolution at the Vatican*, The Templeton Report, April 1, 2009; also *Vatican Hosts Darwin Conference*, David Willey, BBC News, Rome, March 3, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Delio, *op. cit.*, 2010, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action*, Denis Edwards. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010; *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*. Ilia Delio, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> "*Creation, Theological Imagination, and Questions about Discipleship*", Mary Motte, FMM, in *International Review of Mission*, November 2010, 237

<sup>43</sup> *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, edited by Charles Taylor, José Casanova, George F. McLean. Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> "*Bishops face the growing retirement crisis of religious orders*", Jerry Filtreau In *National Catholic Reporter*, November 20, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Phil 2:5-8; A Google search on recent General Chapters of religious congregations indicates that the theme of *kenosis* in relation to a living spiritual orientation, held an important place in these deliberations.

<sup>46</sup> Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions: *Spirituality and Mysticism in an Evolutionary World*, Ursula King. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011, 11

<sup>47</sup> *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger. Penguin Modern Classics. 1972.

<sup>48</sup> *Godhead or God Ahead?*, in *God, Grace and Creation*. Philip J. Rossi, ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 201, 3-22.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Homily of Benedict XVI for Opening of the Year of Faith, October 11, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Delio, *op. cit.*, 2011, Chapter Five.

<sup>51</sup> Faith: What It Is and "What It Isn't"

53 See n. 1

53 See n. 1.



Enzo Biemmi, FSF

## Per una evangelizzazione davvero "nuova" Una rilettura del Sinodo

### Premessa

Intendo proporvi una riflessione sulla nuova evangelizzazione alla luce del Sinodo dei Vescovi tenutosi a Roma nel mese di ottobre, una riflessione filtrata dalla mia sensibilità.

Articolo la mia riflessione in quattro passaggi: le rappresentazioni di "evangelizzazione" emerse tra i partecipanti; le "conversioni" avvenute durante il Sinodo; la vita religiosa come "luogo" di evangelizzazione; tre tratti dello stile di nuova evangelizzazione.

### 1. Tre rappresentazioni (immaginarie) di evangelizzazione emerse nel sinodo

Il Sinodo dei Vescovi è stata una assemblea di Chiesa di respiro continentale. Essa va guardata prima di tutto da questo punto di vista: un formidabile spazio di ascolto, di racconti, di condivisione di esperienze diversificate. Sono emerse diagnosi differenti sulla cultura attuale e visioni differenti di Chiesa. È stato un laboratorio di educazione alla complessità e alla parzialità dei differenti punti di vista. E non è stato difficile riconoscere rappresentazioni diverse sull'evangelizzazione e sulle condizioni che la possono rendere nuova. Ne segnalo tre, che ci aiutano a pensare.

#### a) *L'evangelizzazione come testimonianza diretta senza filtri (visione "carismatica")*

Un piccolo aneddoto è più eloquente di qualsiasi spiegazione. La prima sera del Sinodo a tavola avviene un dialogo animato tra un laico messicano, fondatore di un movimento che si occupa di formare i nuovi evangelizzatori, e una signora francese impegnata in un'associazione per l'evangelizzazione della famiglia. «Ho un sogno – le spiega il laico – Sogno che questo Sinodo non sia un dibattito sul tema e non si chiuda con un documento. Sogno che usciamo tutti nella piazza san Pietro e nei sobborghi della città di Roma, annunciamo Gesù Cristo e in queste tre settimane convertiamo tremila romani».

Come si può notare si tratta di un immaginario di evangelizzazione che poggia



tutto su due perni: l'esperienza soggettiva del testimone e la fiducia intrinseca nella Parola che egli annuncia. Si tratta spesso di un neoconvertito o comunque di una persona protagonista di una forte esperienza spirituale. L'annuncio viene a coincidere con l'esperienza di fede vissuta dal testimone e viene fatto a prescindere dalle persone alle quali ci si rivolge. Che ci siano tremila romani o tremila esquimesi, è lo stesso. Niente a che fare con tutte le attenzioni al destinatario che noi da anni abbiamo messo in atto nella catechesi, la catechesi antropologica o esperienziale. È forte l'impatto testimoniale, perché il soggetto è totalmente implicato nelle parole che pronuncia. L'entusiasmo e la fiducia connotano questa rappresentazione.

#### b) *L'evangelizzazione come riaffermazione della verità della fede (visione "dogmatica")*

Se la prima concezione di evangelizzazione poggia sull'esperienza soggettiva della fede, la seconda è tutta concentrata sul suo lato oggettivo. È una posizione che in genere parte da una diagnosi negativa della cultura attuale, la quale, allontanandosi dal cristianesimo andrebbe verso la sua progressiva disumanizzazione. L'insuccesso attuale dell'evangelizzazione è attribuito almeno in parte alla catechesi post-conciliare, troppo attenta a rispondere alle esigenze delle persone e poco rigorosa nel presentare il messaggio cristiano nella sua organicità e completezza. Per superare il gap tra la cultura e la fede è necessario tornare a proclamare con chiarezza e forza la verità e i valori ad essa connessi (i dogmi e la morale). Come si può notare, in questa prospettiva (come nella prima) non è messo in atto un reale ascolto della cultura e dei destinatari, ma resta in ombra anche l'implicazione

della testimonianza personale della fede. Il perno dell'evangelizzazione è la trasmissione del deposito della fede, preoccupazione così forte da non lasciare più percepire quanto questo "deposito" tocchi la vita di colui che lo annuncia.

### c) *L'evangelizzazione come inculturazione*

La terza rappresentazione può essere riassunta nel termine inculturazione. È provenuta dall'apporto non solo dei continenti come l'Africa, l'Asia e l'America latina, ma anche dall'Europa, soprattutto dal centro-nord Europa. L'invito che arriva da Vescovi che vivono in una cultura segnata dalla laicizzazione delle istituzioni e dalla secolarizzazione delle mentalità è di portare uno sguardo di speranza sul mondo e di non pensare che una cultura secolarizzata sia meno adatta al Vangelo di una cultura sociologicamente cristiana. Che significa annunciare il Vangelo in questa situazione? L'evangelizzazione appare come un processo complesso di assunzione non ingenua di alcuni elementi culturali per un annuncio udibile, credibile, pensabile. Questo richiede un ripensamento del Vangelo stesso (il Vangelo di sempre ma sempre ricompreso dalla comunità che lo annuncia), una sua nuova riformulazione e un suo rinnovato annuncio. In questo caso è il termine "dialogo" a prevalere: un dare e un ricevere che arricchiscono sia il testimone che colui che ascolta la Parola. Questa posizione rende l'atto di evangelizzazione più complesso, richiede una reinterpretazione sia del soggetto che annuncia, sia del contenuto annunciato. Fa del destinatario non solo l'oggetto di un'azione ecclesiale, ma il soggetto che in qualche modo contribuisce a dare forma alla stessa evangelizzazione. Avviene in uno spazio di "debolezza" e di libertà.

Tutte e tre le posizioni vanno ascoltate per quanto richiamano di essenziale. Senza l'implicazione del testimone non c'è annuncio che raggiunga il cuore delle persone; senza fedeltà alla tradizione non si annuncia il Vangelo, ma se stessi; ma senza mediazione culturale il Vangelo non sarà sentito né come "bella notizia" né come "appello alla conversione" da parte di nessuno.

## **2. Tre evoluzioni o conversioni avvenute nel corso del Sinodo (parzialmente compiute)**

Una seconda questione riguarda il senso attribuito al termine "nuova". La

questione di fondo mi pare la seguente: cosa può rendere veramente "nuova" l'evangelizzazione? Come dobbiamo diventare nuovi noi (i testimoni) perché l'evangelizzazione diventi nuova? Nel corso del Sinodo sono avvenuti su questo punto tre spostamenti, tre conversioni di prospettiva che delineano le condizioni stesse della novità dell'evangelizzazione.

### a) *Il superamento di un approccio estrinsecista o funzionale: evangelizzazione nuova come ritorno al Vangelo da parte della Chiesa*

Il risultato più consistente e maggiormente condiviso del Sinodo è stato il superamento di una concezione strumentale: di pensare cioè che il rinnovamento dell'evangelizzazione consista nel cambiamento dei metodi e delle strategie o anche di un semplice rinnovato impegno da parte degli evangelizzatori.

Se le parole della Chiesa non passano nell'attuale contesto non è primariamente perché le persone non capiscono o sono più cattive di quelle di altri tempi, né perché i metodi di evangelizzazione sono superati (lo sono, ma è una questione seconda), ma perché le parole del Vangelo non parlano più alla Chiesa stessa. La crisi della comunicazione della fede rinvia la Chiesa ad un rinnovato ascolto. Il problema dell'evangelizzazione non è un problema catechistico, ma ecclesiologicalo.

Benedetto XVI aveva utilizzato il termine "tattica" per evitare ogni fraintendimento: «Non si tratta qui di trovare una nuova tattica per rilanciare la Chiesa. Si tratta piuttosto di deporre tutto ciò che è soltanto tattica e di cercare la piena sincerità... portando la fede alla sua piena identità, togliendo da essa ciò che solo apparentemente è fede, ma in verità è convenzione e abitudine» (Discorso ai cattolici impegnati nella Chiesa e nella società, viaggio in Germania, 25 settembre 2011).

In questa prospettiva la crisi dell'evangelizzazione e l'esigenza che torni "nuova" inviano decisamente nella direzione di una verifica della fede della Chiesa stessa. Il Sinodo ha indicato chiaramente questo senso di nuova evangelizzazione attraverso l'appello alla conversione, di tutti e ciascuno dei suoi membri. E ha recuperato il termine "santità". La nuova evangelizzazione postula un *rinnovamento* della Chiesa, un anno della fede per lei.

«Sentiamo sinceramente di dover convertire anzitutto noi stessi alla potenza di Cristo, che solo è capace di fare nuove tutte le cose, le nostre povere esistenze anzitutto. Con umiltà dobbiamo riconoscere che le povertà e le debolezze dei discepoli di Gesù, specialmente dei suoi ministri, pesano sulla credibilità della missione» (Messaggio, 5).

*b) Il superamento di una prospettiva soggettiva individuale: evangelizzazione nuova come riforma della Chiesa*

Ma ci potrebbe essere un rischio, quello di ridurre la conversione a una questione individuale e di non saperla coraggiosamente estendere alla figura di Chiesa, al modo con il quale essa sta al mondo.

Il ricupero di spiritualità (l'evangelizzazione come auto evangelizzazione) non deve condurre dunque ad una scorciatoia spiritualista.

Occorre riconoscere che all'interno del Sinodo è stata data una risposta prevalentemente personale e spirituale: l'appello alla conversione dei singoli membri. La richiesta di "riforma" si è semplificata in una risposta personale di "conversione". Che questo sia un aspetto decisivo della questione, nessuno lo mette in dubbio. Non va dimenticata, però, l'altra faccia della questione, quella ricordata da Paolo VI nell'*Evangelii Nuntiandi* e richiamata da alcuni Padri sinodali: la Chiesa ha continuo bisogno di essere evangelizzata ed è evangelizzatrice non solo con quello che dice ma nel suo modo di vivere, di organizzarsi, di esercitare l'autorità, di utilizzare le proprie risorse umane ed economiche, di valorizzare al suo interno i differenti carismi e ministeri, di stabilire le relazioni, di giudicare la cultura e di entrare in dialogo con le donne e gli uomini di oggi, di sentirsi una "Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo" e non una Chiesa "di fronte" al mondo contemporaneo, ecc... La "conversione" spirituale soggettiva deve anche coraggiosamente diventare "riforma strutturale", perché il Vangelo sia comunicato dalla Chiesa in maniera coerente sia dalle sue parole sia dalla figura che essa si dà nella storia.

Ciò che fa ostacolo al vangelo nella gente, credenti compresi, non è la fragilità delle singole persone, dei preti o dei Vescovi o dei cristiani. L'ostacolo più grosso viene dalle strutture ecclesiali, dai suoi funzionamenti interni.

Vale la pena ricordare qui una affermazione chiave dell'Enciclica di Giovanni Paolo II *Ut unum sint* del 1995: «Nel magistero del Concilio vi è un chiaro nesso tra rinnovamento, conversione e riforma. Esso afferma: "La Chiesa peregrinante è chiamata da Cristo a questa continua riforma di cui essa stessa, in quanto istituzione umana e terrena, ha sempre bisogno..."» (9). Il nesso rinnovamento - conversione - riforma risulta determinante perché la Chiesa sia "sacramento", cioè segno e strumento. Nel nostro caso, il *rinnovamento* dell'evangelizzazione ("nuova") richiede innanzitutto la *conversione* dei singoli credenti (auto evangelizzazione) e prende corpo come *riforma* della figura di Chiesa, affinché tutto in essa parli del Vangelo, affinché le parole siano visibili nella forma di vita e il modo di vivere sia esplicitato nelle parole. Non è altro che la conseguenza per la Chiesa dello stesso stile di Dio: «eventi e parole intimamente connessi, in modo che le opere, compiute da Dio nella storia della salvezza, manifestano e rafforzano la dottrina e le realtà significate dalle parole, mentre le parole proclamano le opere e illustrano il mistero in esse contenuto» (*Dei Verbum*, 2).

Gli osservatori più attenti hanno interpretato il senso delle dimissioni di Benedetto XVI proprio come un invito forte per la Chiesa ad intraprendere non solo il cammino della conversione personale, ma anche della riforma delle proprie strutture.

*c) Il superamento di una prospettiva unidirezionale. Evangelizzazione nuova nel segno della reciprocità.*

Nel Sinodo è emerso un terzo senso della novità dell'evangelizzazione in quanto nuova. Potremmo inconsapevolmente pensare che noi abbiamo il Vangelo e il problema sia quello di farlo passare agli altri. Si pone qui la delicata questione del rapporto con le culture: lo sguardo che la Chiesa porta sulla cultura e il processo di inculturazione che mette in atto. Una delle evoluzioni o conversioni avvenute all'interno del Sinodo è stata questa: il passaggio da una Chiesa che sta alla finestra della storia, la giudica e ne stabilisce la terapia, a una Chiesa che sta dentro la storia come compagna di viaggio, pronta a mettere a disposizione il dono del Vangelo ma altrettanto pronta a ricevere una parola di Vangelo che il Signore riserva per lei nelle donne e negli uomini di oggi, credenti o meno.

Questo senso della reciprocità è basato sulla convinzione che Dio agisce attraverso la Chiesa come via canonica, ma non lascia circoscrivere il suo amore nei confini della Chiesa stessa. Misteriosamente ma potentemente lo Spirito è stato effuso in tutti i cuori.

È il recupero della prospettiva di *Gaudium et Spes*: la Chiesa ha tanto da dare ma anche da ricevere.

Onorare la prospettiva di *Gaudium et Spes* significa comprendere da parte della Chiesa quanto la cultura sia non solo oggetto di evangelizzazione, ma contenga in se stessa, grazie all'azione dello Spirito che la precede, una parola di Vangelo per lei. Avviene un reale dialogo, nel quale la Chiesa si appoggia alla cultura, ad alcuni suoi elementi e grazie a questi rivede se stessa e ricomprende il Vangelo diversamente e quindi impara a viverlo diversamente, a pensarlo e a proporlo in maniera inedita. Il Vangelo di sempre, ma veramente "nuovo". Infatti solo se la fede si appoggia su alcuni elementi della propria cultura può ripensarsi, riformularsi, rendersi plausibile e ragionevole, culturalmente vivibile. Appoggiandosi così alla cultura per rendere ragione di se stessa, la fede "salva" la cultura (la integra nel dinamismo della salvezza) e si situa essa stessa come ragionevole, possibile e desiderabile nel proprio contesto.

Questa concezione nel rapporto con la cultura è stata recepita nel messaggio:

«Questo sereno coraggio sostiene anche il nostro sguardo sul mondo contemporaneo. Non ci sentiamo intimoriti dalle condizioni dei tempi che viviamo. Il nostro è un mondo colmo di contraddizioni e di sfide, ma resta creazione di Dio, ferita sì dal male, ma pur sempre il mondo che Dio ama, terreno suo, in cui può essere rinnovata la semina della Parola perché torni a fare frutto.

Non c'è spazio per il pessimismo nelle menti e nei cuori di coloro che sanno che il loro Signore ha vinto la morte e che il suo Spirito opera con potenza nella storia» (Messaggio, 6).

Queste tre conversioni di mentalità (ritorno al vangelo, riforma della Chiesa, dialogo con la cultura in un atteggiamento di reciprocità) possono rendere veramente nuova l'evangelizzazione. Esse sono più preziose di un ricettario dell'agire pastorale. La domanda seria "cosa dobbiamo fare per evangelizzare" scava qui nel profondo la sua risposta: chi vogliamo essere?

L'evangelizzazione è nuova nella misura in cui parte da un rinnovato ascolto del Vangelo (conversione), "riformula" il volto della Chiesa in modo che diventi icona del Vangelo (riforma), ci porta a stare volentieri e in modo dialogale dentro la nostra storia e la nostra cultura (inculturazione).

### **3. La vita religiosa come "luogo" di nuova evangelizzazione**

Operate queste tre chiarificazioni diventa più chiaro che ciò che è primario nell'evangelizzazione non sono tanto le parole esplicite annunciate, ma la testimonianza personale e comunitaria messa in atto. Questa è la domanda decisiva: non cosa fare di nuovo, ma come essere in se stessi luoghi e spazi di vangelo. Possiamo allora introdurre la nozione di vita religiosa come "luogo" di evangelizzazione. A questo proposito ci viene una indicazione preziosa (una vera sorpresa) già dal Messaggio del Sinodo, al numero 7.

Il testo, dopo i primi 6 numeri di introduzione, fa entrare sorprendentemente in scena, ponendoli a specchio, i due "luoghi" (così sono definiti) in cui il Vangelo si manifesta, prende corpo, si dona: la vita nella famiglia e la vita consacrata. La vita familiare è definita come il luogo in cui il Vangelo entra nella quotidianità e mostra la sua capacità di trasfigurarne il vissuto nell'orizzonte dell'amore. Questo avviene certo, dice il testo, attraverso gesti tipicamente cristiani (segni della fede, prime verità, preghiera), ma soprattutto attraverso l'esperienza dell'amore dato e ricevuto. Se la vita familiare è il "luogo primo" di esperienza ordinaria del Vangelo, il secondo è quel luogo complementare che mostra in anticipo il compimento del cammino della vita e "relativizza" (rende relative alla comunione finale con Dio) tutte le esperienze umane, anche quelle più riuscite ("segno di un mondo futuro che relativizza ogni bene di questo mondo", dice il testo).

È importante che famiglia e vita consacrata siano definiti "luoghi" e non come agenti, cioè spazi di esperienza: fanno *sperimentare* il vangelo come esperienza e come promessa. Prima di essere luoghi in cui se ne parla, sono luoghi in cui si vive la grazia del Vangelo con due sottolineature complementari e inscindibili. Verrebbe da dire che solo due cose sono necessarie per scoprire il Vangelo: venire al mondo dentro una famiglia che lo vive;

avere il dono della testimonianza di quelle altre persone e famiglie che ne segnalano il compimento, non fuori i limiti della storia, ma all'interno di essi.

In questa feconda prospettiva proviamo ora a precisare in quale senso la vita religiosa possa essere luogo di nuova evangelizzazione. Indico tre tratti che ci possono specificare per essere "luoghi" di evangelizzazione.

#### a) Custodire un'assenza

Diventiamo "luogo" quando assicuriamo per noi e a favore di tutti lo spazio della cura di Dio. Custodiamo un'assenza, perché impediamo che tutto il tempo sia pieno di cose, di attività, di parole. Proteggiamo lo spazio vuoto, incavo, dell'attesa. Nelle comunità religiose è sempre avvento, attesa di colui che continuamente ci viene incontro. L'immagine delle lampade accese è adeguata. Siamo luoghi di vangelo, per noi e per tutti, quando siamo uomini di desiderio. Il termine desiderio, secondo Galimberti, viene dal *De bello gallico*. I *desiderantes* erano i soldati che stavano sotto le stelle ad aspettare quelli che, dopo aver combattuto durante il giorno, non erano ancora tornati. La radice è *sidera*, stelle. Da qui il significato del verbo desiderare: stare sotto le stelle ed attendere. Il desiderio è l'attesa di un incontro, di un ricongiungimento, di una relazione. Il termine "primato di Dio" è da noi il più utilizzato ma forse inadeguato, come l'altro della radicalità. Ogni forma di vita cristiana ha nel suo centro il primato di Dio. Ci possiamo congedare da ogni schema tra ministeri e carismi nell'ordine del "più" e del "meno", del minimo indispensabile e del radicale. Il peggior servizio che possiamo fare alla vita religiosa è di collocarla nella linea del "più": "più da vicino, più radicalmente...". Abbiamo bisogno, a questo proposito, di una nuova teologia della vita religiosa. Il nostro specifico è di vivere la vita cristiana come tutti i discepoli del Signore, evidenziandone una dimensione: quella relativa al desiderio, all'attesa, alla cura dell'interiorità, alla contemplazione.

La vita religiosa offre la novità del Vangelo quando protegge la vita dall'intasamento delle cose e delle abitudini e la tiene aperta al dono che sempre le viene incontro e che solo la rende vita piena. Ecco perché è essenziale che i nostri ritmi di vita, gli ambienti delle nostre

comunità, tutte le nostre attività diventino spazi di custodia di una assenza.

#### b) Segnare una differenza

Questa seconda dimensione riguarda la possibilità di sperimentare e di far sperimentare nella vita religiosa la differenza cristiana, come dice Enzo Bianchi<sup>i</sup>. Riguarda uno stile di vita sobrio, che si basa sull'essenziale, che si protegge dal superfluo, che vive nella povertà evangelica. È una conseguenza del punto precedente. Si sta in attesa e si manifesta durante l'attesa che solo Dio riempie la nostra vita, lui solo è all'altezza del nostro desiderio. Anche il celibato per il Regno e l'obbedienza mostrano la differenza cristiana. Questo è un segno quanto mai eloquente in un mondo che torna a cercare ciò che è essenziale. Va nella linea di quella "ecologia della persona" di cui ha parlato il Papa Benedetto XVI<sup>ii</sup>. Non possono essere le cose a dare senso alla nostra vita. Possiamo anche recuperare il significato autentico di *fuga mundi*, non come disprezzo del mondo, ma come indicazione per il mondo da noi amato di quanto ci umanizza e di quanto invece ci disumanizza.

#### c) Mostrare una promessa

Il terzo tratto riguarda la fraternità. Noi diventiamo luogo di evangelizzazione nuova se mostriamo che sappiamo vivere insieme, cioè se già da ora mostriamo quello che sarà il mondo nel sogno di Dio, un mondo di figli e fratelli. In questo senso la vita di fraternità è custodia di una promessa. La fraternità reale che stabiliamo senza sceglierci è luogo per vivere di una promessa e quindi diviene speranza per tutti. Il convivere nella vita religiosa non è per scelta, ma per chiamata. Veniamo da storie diverse, da formazioni e sensibilità diverse, abbiamo caratteri diversi, siamo tutti segnati da limiti, difetti, piccole manie. Siamo semplicemente umani. La composizione ormai internazionale delle nostre comunità aumenta la posta in gioco. La perfezione delle relazioni non sarà mai raggiunta nelle nostre comunità, ma questa è la ferita del segno, il luogo pasquale della testimonianza. Siamo chiamati non a testimoniare l'armonia del paradiso terrestre prima del peccato originale, ma la convivenza dentro i limiti, le differenze, le fragilità, le povertà individuali e collettive. Le nostre comunità, sempre più multietniche, sono un formidabile laboratorio di questa fraternità della

differenza. Non siamo chiamati a mostrare comunità ideali, ma comunità umane, luoghi di accoglienza e rielaborazione dei limiti. È così che si è profeti nella storia.

*In sintesi. La vita religiosa diventa luogo e tirocinio di evangelizzazione nuova quando custodisce una assenza e protegge una apertura; segna una differenza a favore di una vita che ricupera la sua umanità; mostra nella fraternità delle differenze la promessa affidabile del traguardo verso cui tutti, per grazia, camminiamo.*

*Queste tre dimensioni ci fanno luoghi di vangelo e non solo parole di vangelo.*

#### **4. La nuova evangelizzazione come stile**

Ma c'è un altro punto che mi pare importante: quello dello stile con il quale si evangelizza, perché conta il modo e non solo il contenuto. Potremmo dire che non basta evangelizzare, ma bisogna evangelizzare in modo evangelico. La fede cristiana ha un suo stile dal quale non deve abdicare neppure per essere più efficace. Questo appello è venuto in modo esplicito da alcuni Padri. Lo stile è una questione di spiritualità e abbiamo più che mai bisogno in questo momento di una spiritualità dell'evangelizzazione.

Segnalo tre tratti dello stile che vanno salvaguardati nel compito dell'evangelizzazione<sup>iii</sup>.

##### *a) Vedere Dio in tutte le cose*

L'espressione è di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola. Vedere Dio in tutte le cose significa vedere che egli agisce in tutti i cuori. I cristiani hanno occhi per vedere dove Dio agisce al di là di tutti i circuiti ecclesiali. Il tema del Sinodo ("nuova evangelizzazione per la trasmissione della fede") è stato a buon diritto considerato inadeguato da alcuni Padri sinodali. Noi non trasmettiamo la fede, hanno detto. Solo il Signore Gesù la comunica e il suo Spirito è l'unico evangelizzatore competente. Noi ci mettiamo a disposizione di un processo che non ci appartiene, sul quale non abbiamo il controllo. L'icona biblica di Filippo e l'eunuco, evocata nel Sinodo, è quanto mai istruttiva. Quando Filippo sale sul carro scopre che è già stato preceduto dallo stesso Spirito che lo ha mandato e che egli, Filippo, incontra nell'inquietudine di quell'uomo e nel testo della Scrittura dal quale l'eunuco è stato attirato. Lo Spirito ha una falcata di vantaggio sulla Chiesa,

come gli Atti degli Apostoli inequivocabilmente documentano. È sempre più in là. È bello dunque interpretare l'evangelizzazione come una azione di riconoscimento, di rivelazione e di svelamento. L'evangelizzatore "riconosce" Dio già presente. Il destinatario dell'annuncio si scopre abitato e custodito da una Presenza ("svelamento"), grazie alla testimonianza dell'evangelizzatore e al dono delle Scritture ("rivelazione"). In questo gioco di riconoscimento – rivelazione – svelamento avviene il miracolo di una evangelizzazione vicendevole. In fondo si tratta di far scoprire che il dono di Dio è già nel cuore di queste persone, in modo che possano, come Giacobbe, svegliarsi dal sonno e dire: «Il Signore era qui e io non lo sapevo!» (Gen 28,16).

##### *b) Amare basta*

La parola decisiva del Vangelo, la più convincente, è la carità. È anche l'obiettivo ultimo della Chiesa: inserirsi nella corrente dell'amore di Dio per l'umanità. Il terreno dell'amore è la parola ultima del Vangelo<sup>iv</sup>.

In genere pensiamo che la carità sia il passo preliminare per preparare il terreno dell'annuncio, sia una specie di pre-evangelizzazione. Essa è anche e soprattutto l'obiettivo ultimo dell'evangelizzazione, il suo esito finale. La carità basta, perché la carità è Dio.

##### *c) Fare dell'annuncio del Vangelo il più grande atto di amore*

Perché allora annunciare il Vangelo? Proprio perché è il più grande atto di amore che possiamo fare. È nota l'affermazione di Paolo VI nell'*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, richiamata dall'*Instrumentum Laboris*.

«Non sarà inutile che ciascun cristiano e ciascun evangelizzatore approfondisca nella preghiera questo pensiero: gli uomini potranno salvarsi anche per altri sentieri, grazie alla misericordia di Dio, benché noi non annunziamo loro il Vangelo; ma potremo noi salvarci se, per negligenza, per paura, per vergogna – ciò che s. Paolo chiamava "arrossire del Vangelo" – o in conseguenza di idee false, trascuriamo di annunziarlo?» (EN 80).

Una buona interpretazione di questo testo è la seguente: Dio può salvare e salva al di là del nostro annuncio; ma se noi non annunciamo, potremo essere salvi? Non nel senso che non evangelizzando manchiamo a un dovere, ma nel senso che il nostro non

evangelizzare manifesta che per noi il Signore Gesù non è il bene più prezioso. E allora è legittima la domanda sulla nostra salvezza. L'amore è dare agli altri la cosa più preziosa. È un'altra prospettiva dell'evangelizzazione, davvero nuova: né per necessità (Dio è generoso, sa come salvare tutti), né per dovere, ma per eccesso di gioia e di gratitudine per quello che siamo per grazia diventati. Ciò che motiva l'evangelizzazione e la rende nuova, in fin dei conti, è il suo scaturire non dalla necessità di salvare, né dal dovere di farlo, ma da un'intrinseca "necessità": la gioia di donare quanto abbiamo di più prezioso.

La vita religiosa si è sempre posta su questo crinale, dell'annuncio implicito e inequivocabile dell'amore che basta a se stesso; dell'annuncio esplicito come atto massimo di carità, come condivisione di ciò che abbiamo di più prezioso, perché la nostra gioia sia piena (1Gv 1,1-4). La carità come Parola a tutti comprensibile; la Parola come massimo della carità. Lo ricordava la *Novo millennio ineunte*, 50: «La carità delle opere assicura una forza inequivocabile alla carità delle parole».

*Sintesi. Evangelizzare in maniera evangelica significa allora rimanere fedeli a questo stile: vedere Dio in tutti, amare gratuitamente e senza altri fini, donare il Vangelo come l'atto più alto di amore.*

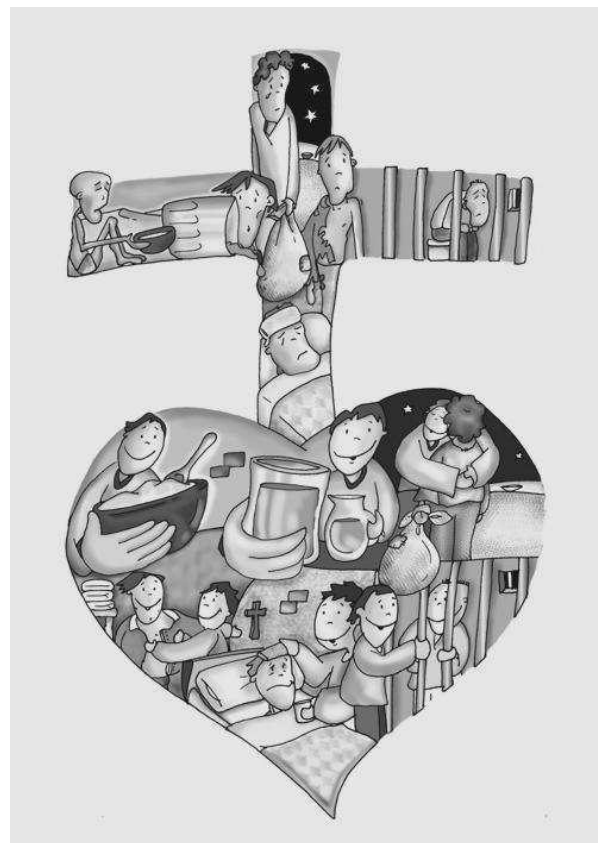
## Conclusione. Due tratti di Chiesa emersi: umiltà e carità

Nel Sinodo sono risuonate spesso due parole: umiltà e carità. Alcuni vescovi, in particolare quelli di area orientale o che si trovano a guidare delle Chiese in forte minoranza, hanno invitato a essere una Chiesa più umile. L'umiltà ha due facce: quella della consapevolezza dei propri limiti; quella che nasce dalla convinzioni che non siamo proprietari del Vangelo, ma solo servi, e che l'unico che apre i cuori è lo Spirito Santo. La carità è l'amore per l'uomo, la passione e la compassione per tutte le persone. Umiltà e carità mi sembrano proprio le due coordinate della nuova evangelizzazione.

<sup>ii</sup> « Accanto all'ecologia della natura c'è dunque un'ecologia che potremmo dire "umana", la quale a sua volta richiede un'"ecologia sociale"» (Benedetto XVI, *La persona umana, cuore della pace*, Messaggio per la celebrazione della XL giornata mondiale della pace, 2007).

<sup>iii</sup> Questi tre tratti sono debitori della stimolante riflessione del catecheta gesuita belga André Fossion, che ha riflettuto a più riprese sulla ricerca di una spiritualità dell'evangelizzazione. Particolarmente stimolante è stato una sua recente conferenza tenuta alla Facoltà teologica di Milano dal titolo *Annonce et pro position de la foi aujourd'hui. Enjeux et défis*. Seguo fondamentalmente le sue intuizioni.

<sup>iv</sup> Vale la pena richiamare un testo di Madre Teresa di Calcutta. «Il nostro proposito è di portare Gesù e il suo amore ai più poveri tra i poveri, indipendentemente dalla loro estrazione morale o dalla fede che professano. Il nostro metro per soccorrerli non è la loro fede, ma il loro bisogno. Noi non tentiamo mai di convertire al cristianesimo quelli che aiutiamo, ma nella nostra azione portiamo testimonianza della presenza d'amore di Dio, e se per questo cattolici, protestanti, buddisti o agnostici diventano uomini migliori - semplicemente migliori - siamo soddisfatti. Crescendo nell'amore saranno più vicini a Dio e lo troveranno nella sua bontà... Alcuni lo chiamano Ishwar, altri lo chiamano Allah, altri semplicemente Dio, ma tutti dobbiamo renderci conto che è lui che ci ha fatti per cose più grandi: per amare e per essere amati. Ciò che conta è amare». Ci troviamo qui nel campo della profezia. Siamo un passo più avanti del compito di evangelizzazione, o meglio, siamo nell'esito finale dell'evangelizzazione. Siamo già profeticamente nel futuro di Dio, dove tutte le religioni avranno terminato il loro compito e con esse anche la Chiesa. La fede infatti passa, e anche la speranza. Solo la carità rimane.

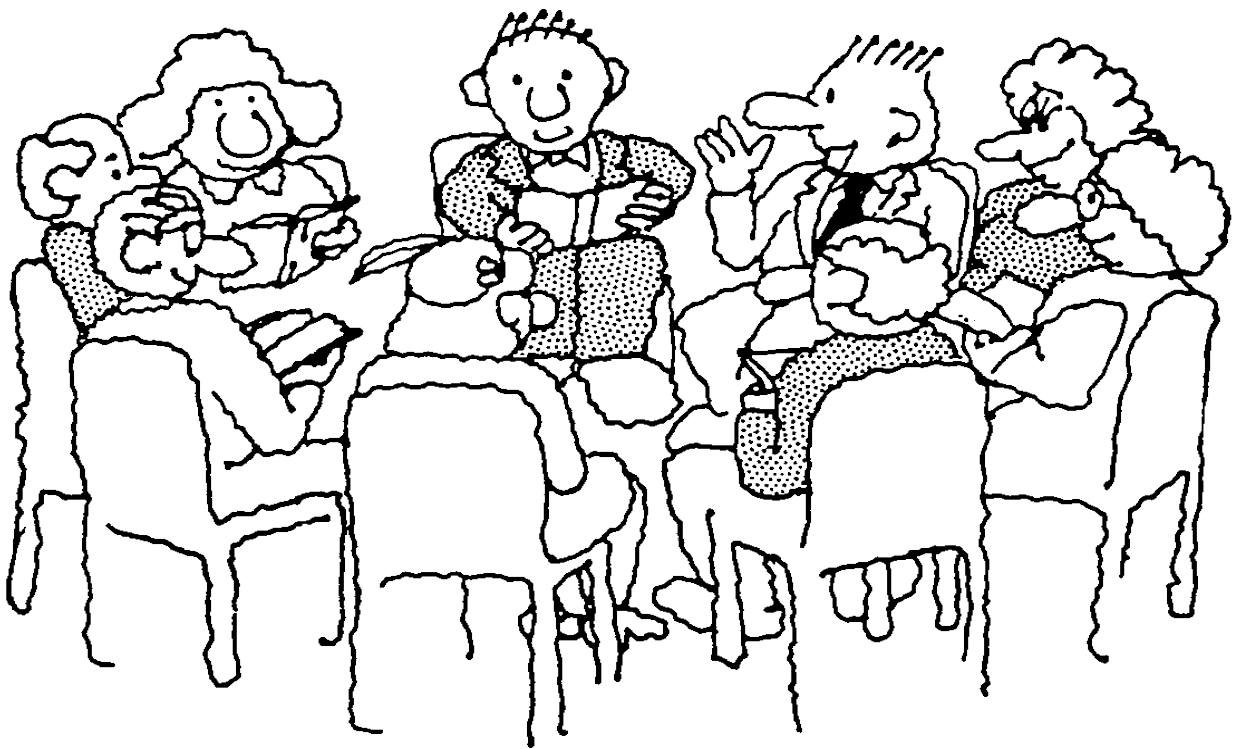


<sup>i</sup> BIANCHI E., *La differenza cristiana*, Einaudi, Torino 2006.



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# ***PANELS***



## ***A Panel with our Speakers***

On Friday, 26 April, Sr Toni Harris, OP, the very intuitive Facilitator of the Seminar 2013 invited the Speakers, who were still present in the Aula, to come forward and to give their final reflection on the whole journey made together during these past days.

### **1. Sr. Susan Smith's comments on: *Mary Motte***

"Mission is an act of dialogue because God's inner nature is dialogical".

1. Prior to Vatican II Mission a monological one way reality in which those who had were sent to those who had not.
2. Geographically — West to East  
North to South
3. Culturally — White to Brown
4. This way of mission was unconsciously expansionist and monological, it was one way. It tolerated cultural/religious superiority that made religious/cultural dialogue problematic
5. If our way of mission is dialogical then our relationship are informed by mutual respect. Hierarchy is subverted, inclusivity is fostered.
6. As John Paul II emphasized in RM the Spirit is present in all cultures. This involves dialogue with the other.
7. The Spirit is present in creation too. We need to reach gently to all creation as Mary Motte said earlier
8. Cosmic presence of the dialogical God recalls for us the words in Ephesians --- to reconcile all in Christ.
9. The dialogical nature of God means that our work if evangelization is about deep calling to deep as the Psalmist tells us.

### **2. Sr. Agnes Lanfermann:**

New Evangelization A Journey of Mutual Transformation

With passion — she proclaimed

Pastoral/Social work ... with others as an Oasis in the Desert of life

Being a healing presence, listening to god in order to have the language to talk differently about God — the spirit of god speaks within me and he is in the other.

Care and respect for creation

Discovering God in the vulnerability — in everyday life

Awakening and reawakening energy flows where energy goes — “they threatened us with their Resurrection. The messenger must embody the message — “Witness and live it, teach adult and bless the children”. In the past the Catholic Church taught children and blessed adults. Today New Evangelisation calls to teach the adults who will live and teach the message.

### **3. Fr. Guylain Prince:**

“The Joy of Knowing God – Reality of Quebec

Enthusiastic

Role of music in New Evangelisation with conversion — simplicity plus humility

When we listen we will talk about God the un heard, the unseen, the untouched in God’s broken world needs our love, hope and faith.

The shift we need to make to go humbly tot eh people at the marginalized.

We must accept and recognize the demographic shift

— Go out to work with the youth and the vulnerable.

#### **Challenges:**

- a) Conversion of heart from our contemplative stance, Mutual Transformation
- b) Ecology — journey from head to the heart — make the shift — the world that we care must be cared for by none but us
- c) Recognizing and respecting the other religion, culture especially the indigenous religion

Is the Church responding:

- Slowly
- Greater commitment

#### **Openness to:**

**N** — Nurture the Incarnate Word in me and recognize the Him in the others

**E** — Empowered we encounter others as they are with openness to Mutual Transformation

**W** — “Walk the Talk

### **4. Fr. Noel Connolly:**

I was particularly struck by the five stories that Agnes Lanfermann told in her talk, *New Evangelisation: A Journey of Mutual Transformation*. I found the Sisters’ stories challenging and felt personally moved and alive. I was challenged by Maria Goetzens’ life and work with the homeless in Frankfort but the story I would like to concentrate on today is the story of the

Dutch Sister who was “growing old gracefully” and of how she had learnt to be at peace with the present day and open to the questions posed by people like Marx, Freud and Nietzsche. I would like to meet that woman. I remember a conversation with an elderly colleague in Australia. He was in his nineties and concerned that he might be shifted to a home because he wasn’t always continent and fell occasionally. Over a whiskey one evening he told me, “Noel, old age isn’t for the fainthearted.” I believe growing old and dying gracefully is the ultimate test of our faith.

I was also struck by Mary Motte’s *A Journey Forward from Vatican II*. While it was a wonderful story of the development of mission theology, I felt it was also a story of suffering, struggle and hope. It seemed to me that Mary embodied a lot of the tested, mature hope that I find among women religious in Australia. The last thirty or so years have not been easy. Around 1970 Eugene Cuskelly wrote a book entitled, *Now Cowards in the Kingdom*. He wrote it to encourage us to have hope at a time when religious were starting to leave in significant numbers and the questions that have challenged us for the decades now were only emerging. But many of us have stayed hopeful in our fight to justice. We have stayed faithful to Vatican II almost against the trend. We have loved the Church even when it was difficult. I think love and hope like that will never be lost. They say the Gospel challenge is to be faithful and not necessarily successful and I feel many of us have lived up to that challenge.

But now a new challenge emerges. I have had a wonderful life. Mission has expanded my humanity. I feel at the peak of my powers, “intelligent, hopeful and occasionally witty and charming” but one thing I am not is young. I don’t feel or think young although I may occasionally act like an adolescent. And I would like to humbly suggest that SEDOS is not young either.

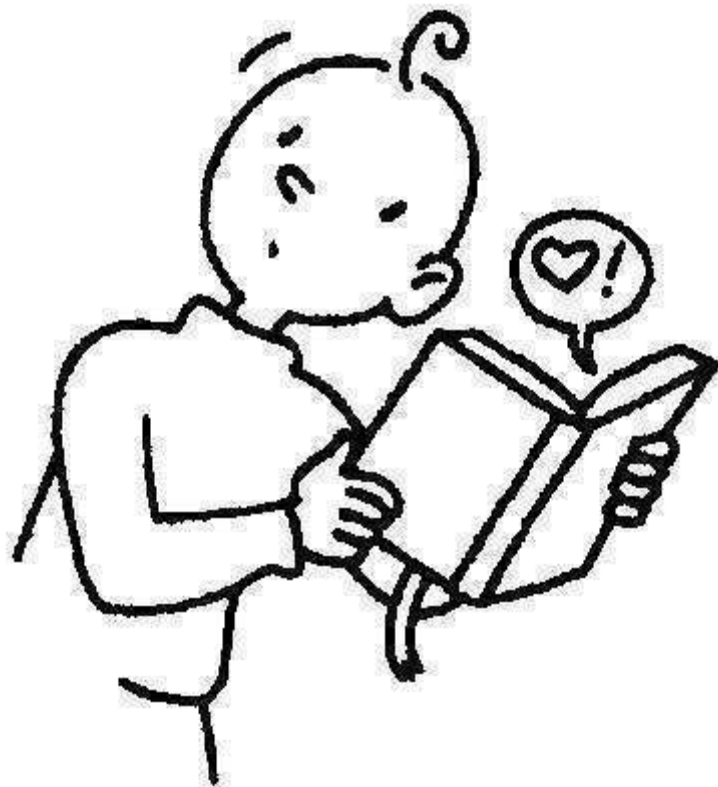
We have something to say and much to give but I think we need to develop partnerships with laity and with young people, religious and lay.

## **5. Mary Motte’s reflection**

Questioning of meaning of New Evangelization  
And pursuing of deeper meaning  
The courage to listen to the Stories of the People, and  
openness to discover How God is speaking; e.g. through  
those who have no credentials  
Importance of Relationships  
“They threatened us with Resurrection” (Esquivel)  
Amazed at rich interrelationships among Presentations

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# ***REFLECTION SESSION***



# Question 1 – Implications for SEDOS

## ***SEDOS NEEDS TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE***

- Mission is lived out in wider ways today with co-workers, collaborators. We need SEDOS to be more inclusive of laity and young people so that we can work together for mission.
- Consolidate SEDOS as a place of shared reflection, dialogue and search for new ways of being a missionary church where pro-active new initiatives could be shared, owned and launched to wider communities. Once concrete suggestion to extend and develop SEDOS offering its collaboration to other bodies such as:
  - *Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences*
  - *Mission Office AMOR (Asia-Oceania Meeting of Religious)*
- There needs to be more participation of young people, not only people from general councils but also people from the grassroots. Invite younger people and lay people. Why were there so few Italians and Africans present? We would like SEDOS to be publicised more.
- Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese and African sisters could participate in the SEDOS seminar and learn.
- We are multipliers and we have to bring this to the grassroots.
- . We have religious talking to religious – open up.
- SEDOS is open to lay associations recognized by the Church.

## ***REVISIT FORMATION BECAUSE OF PARADIGM SHIFT***

- Can SEDOS raise the issue of missionaries moving in non traditional directions and not being prepared for the shift in culture?
- SEDOS should make efforts to find the language understood by the youth.
- Help us to reflect on evangelization of our structures. How do we start the process?
- Studies should be based on dialogue and experience and draw on the experiences of congregations. How do we get feedback about how a topic has been received in the congregations and what does SEDOS do with the feedback?
- Formation – we need elements for guidance.
- We need to work on the development of new theology.
- We need the participation of male members.

## ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE***

- Does the purpose of SEDOS as articulated 50 years ago still hold or does it need to be changed?
- Image of a butterfly – chrysalis to butterfly. Is the name SEDOS the right name for this time? In the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary it might be good to have a new name. The name PEMA was suggested – **P**romoting the **A**ctivity of **M**issionary ... New consciousness.

- Look to the future. Rethink SEDOS. In 50 years mission and missionary congregations have changed. Rethink with this reality how we move forward.
- We need SEDOS for the next 50 years.
- SEDOS needs to continue in a Trinitarian and humble way. The magazine should be continued. Formation is important.
- Explore mission in and of the Holy Spirit in the outside world.
- Community where they can live liberating relations of equals
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### ***IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT SEMINAR***

- Have religious, not leadership, in attendance, therefore **have the seminar in places where people live**, include younger religious and other voices. Include the laity, bring in the voices of associates and those working at the grass roots. They would bring in other themes, social consciousness and interculturality.
- Looking back to look forward. **New ways of being a missionary church.** Collaboration with other networks. Include the laity and youth.
- Mission in future will require **new methods**. Maybe the seminar could include workshops. We need a span of ages, holding different treasurers, to move forward.
- Composition of the assembly – make it more inclusive. Have not only speakers from religious life but also others. Talk about contemporary reality not only the past or future.
- Should we **rethink where the seminar is held** to allow other voices be present? Think about other locations.
- Priest don't know how to work with lay professionals, do the sisters? The Irish Christian Brothers and the Marists have put large resources into educating laity in the charism of the congregation. This might be a good theme.
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## **Question 2 – Profile of Missionary**

*(Responses in French)*

- We need openness to change and to what is new. Interculturalism. We need to be aware that we have a lot to receive and a lot to give.
- Gaze positively on life, the world and people. Listen.
- Listening. Be inspired by the Spirit.
- Servant, listening and re-reading the signs.
- Be credible and coherent. Words put into practice. Knowledgeable of faith, humble, listener.
- Living among people. Listening. Contemplation, capacity to reflect, humility.

*(Response in Spanish)*

- Relationship

*(Responses in English)*

- Contemplative, listening presence, dialogue, give and receive.
- Vulnerable person full of joy

- Rooted in love of God's creation. Present to life in every form.
- Maturity, readiness to be challenged
- Awareness of new cosmology and theology and the implications for mission
- Vision, Hope
- Sense of humour
- Looking for the seeds of the gospel in the new culture
- Be with people in even greater solidarity.
- Attitude of inclusion, all peoples, cultures, beliefs – not only Catholics or those interested in our faith

## Question 3 – Implications for Formation

*(Responses in Spanish)*

- Formation in international communities to live in international communities
- How can we offer this possibility to the young?

*(Responses in English)*

- Formation – the vision has to cover all areas of community life not just formation but also finance, community etc.
- Develop an image of God that opens people to one another
- Deep personal knowledge and experience of Jesus
- Fall in love with the people and countries you are going to
- Passion for mission relating to people
- Ability to grow
- Move away from life in common to life lived in communion
- Shift from formation to integration
- Formation houses need to be in close connection with people.
- Intercultural living, people need to be helped to gain skills
- Review what we are teaching about Trinity and Incarnation
- Be open to new discoveries about the universe
- We need immersion experiences, clinical pastoral education, community engagement and early exposure to other cultures



# ***Closing Message of the President***

***Good morning, Sisters and Brothers!***

**W**hile it almost feels as if we just arrived in Nemi, when I consider all that has taken place in a few short days it seems to me as though we have been here for a very long time. In these four days, we have been fully engaged in a process of mutual transformation, guided by some very astute and faith-filled women and men. I think that I can speak for all of us when I say that 'it was good for us to be here'.

When I welcomed you to our 2013 Seminar on Tuesday afternoon, I said that we gathered together as a "learning community", and "a discerning community of faith, seekers on a journey who desire to live our discipleship of Jesus with integrity, with passion and with joy". More than ever, I believe that is precisely who we are (a learning and discerning community) and, because of it, we have allowed the Spirit to open our ears to hear with greater clarity and to open our hearts to a new impulse to carry the Word in the depths of our being as we move towards "the other" in genuine respect, acceptance and love. For in the end, love is all there is.

We have heard many words throughout the course of these days and some of them will continue to resonate within us long after we leave Nemi. As we go today, we carry the presentations with us in our memories and on our memory sticks/ pen drives, with the intention of sharing what we have heard with our brothers and sisters, near and far. But we also go with the awareness that our "sharing" with others will be incomplete because we can never adequately share the richness of an experience – an experience that is far more than words can express.

There are some words, expressions and sentences that I will carry from this SEDOS experience, not because I never heard them before but because I heard them in a new way and need to ponder their implications and the questions they raise for evangelization today. At the risk of being too repetitive (because Toni has already captured many of these words for us this morning), I will share just a few:

Immigrants in the Digital culture		Missio Dei/God's Mission	
mutual transformation		Bi-polar Church	
Trinitarian mission	God is dialogic	relational	communion
Secularism – our adolescent child		Positive attitude to the world	
Beauty – Joy – Hope		care for Creation in an evolving Universe	
Interreligious dialogue with the indigenous peoples			
Jesus is surprising: he does not set conditions/ he is open to 'the other'			
Jesus went towards "the other": those on the margins			
(the poor, the disenfranchised, unbelievers, women, those excluded from the community for various and sundry reasons ...)			
Listen	Contemplative Stance		Receptive dialogue
Interconnectedness		interrelatedness	
To drink people's water		Be present	
Inclusive	Spirit-filled	volcanic/ on fire – passionate	
"They threatened us with Resurrection."			
Vulnerability		Humility	
Mission: "deep calling unto deep"	"... to reconcile all things in Christ." (Eph)		
Seeing with new eyes		Seeing God in all things	
"God is the newness of everything that is and is coming to be.			
God is ever newness in love." (Delio)			

There was a great deal of energy in this room this morning. Hopefully, this energy will extend outward – that each of us is committed to carry forward the challenges, the questions, the desire to search together (to dream together) and to engage with others (youth, laity) for the best ways to live and love as disciples of Christ Jesus actively engaged in the Mission of God today – screaming the Good News – in the here and now.

The temptation for us is to expect that some other person or group (such as SEDOS) can and will do all the ground work for us to make our dreams and desires a reality. The fact is: that in itself is only a dream. The real work is in our hands.

Arlindo mentioned earlier that there are many young religious studying in Rome. They could be here with us to share their wisdom of being natives of the digital culture – and to learn from our wisdom and experience as well. It is a mutual engagement that is needed. But – where are they? Have they been invited? Would their present 'world view' consider participation at SEDOS as important? I hope so, but I am not sure.

On a practical note: participation in a 4-day seminar is costly. Are our congregations prepared to sponsor some young people and/or other lay partners (who cannot afford it) to attend?

Throughout the year, SEDOS has offered some very good morning or afternoon conferences on various themes leading up to this seminar. Sometimes these are well-attended but at other times they are not. What can we do about this?

Perhaps the bigger challenge for us is to create ways within our own sphere of influence (to encourage members of our Congregations) to engage with the laity, with youth, in conversation around some of these important issues. Can we promote a similar SEDOS experience in other parts of the world so that the richness of such a seminar could be accessible to a wider participation? Can our communities become spaces/places for evangelization? Can we take the risk to ask some 'dangerous questions' that could lead us to personal conversion, communal conversion and structural conversion? This is the challenge for me. What is the challenge for you?

- a) Is there a personal commitment that you can identify in your heart – at this moment – that has the potential for being shared with your community at home and with your lay partners?
- b) Is there a commitment to continue growing as a life-long learner in a learning and discerning community with our own brothers and sisters that can foster our ongoing need for personal, communal and structural conversion and transformation?
- c) Is there a potential *concrete action* emerging in your heart that could capture the imagination of your sisters and brothers so that our communities can become places of evangelization, welcoming spaces to engage with laity, with the youth, with those on the margins? Can we walk the talk that we have been engaged in this morning?

Ours has been, and must continue to be, a pilgrimage of engagement and mutuality. The Holy Spirit has preceded us here and it is this same Spirit who will carry us forward to discover the "new" in evangelization and proclaim it with joy.



Sr. Georgeanne M. Donovan, S.M.S.M.  
President, SEDOS — 27 April 2013

# SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR 2014

## NEMI: 20-24 May, 2014



### The meaning of the LOGO

I offer my reflection on the logo.

**Three stars, three lines** denote the God of Surprises

**The Trinity** who leads us to community (Trinitarian patterns!)

**The person/missionary** in the world — a response to this God is a heart filled with love for God and the world. The heart moves us to action, to being a God presence in the world.

#### Colours:

Yellow: for divinity, for the glory of God

Red: passion and love

Blue: remember we are entering the depths of the Mystery

White: something new, not yet revealed.

Love and peace,  
Janice RUFF, SMSM