

# Bulletin 2019

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SEDOS



## MISSION IN LAY CONTEXT

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*which commit themselves to deepening their understanding of Global Mission.*  
*It encourages research and disseminates information*  
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## ***EDITORIAL***

**Dear Readers,**

SEDOS organized a two-day Autumn Seminar at the UISG headquarters on *Discovering Mission in the Lay-Context*. The reason for this event lies in the fact that it is not always easy for religious missionary Congregations to cooperate in mission with lay missionaries.

Understanding that lay people in the Church can also have a real missionary vocation, or just like to support, in one way or another, the “regular” missionaries. We listened first to Idy Balberan who talked about her calling as a young Christian worker, and who ended up being the international treasurer of her organization.

The Church is seeing the rise of lay movements who in their own way are missionary. Maybe the future of the Mission is with the Laity. Pope Francis made an appeal to lay people to be more active in the Church: “The future of the Church ... calls for a much more active engagement on the part of the laity.” (Philadelphia, September 2015) We therefore asked the lay celibate movement of the Society of Christian Doctrine, from Malta, to explain their experience in Mission a bit more. The General Secretary, Ruben Pace, was so kind as to introduce us to their world.

The director of the Lay-Center in Rome, Donna Orsuto, gave us a deeper insight into how the Church documents have always paid

attention to the laity. She gave us many examples of great spiritual masters who nurtured their vocation, and talked about the best practices for the mutual sharing of spiritual gifts between religious Congregations and the Laity.

After this introduction to the world of the laity and their participation in Mission, Fr. Lazar Stanislaus, SVD, brought us many valuable information on the way his Congregation is cooperating with the laity in and for Mission. His talk can be found on our website.

Besides these talks at the Seminar, we have selected an African example of the future of lay people, by Désiré Baire. And lastly, a Spanish article on the challenges of the laity in our time.

The SEDOS Annual General Assembly was well attended and gave a good overview of its many activities and its healthy financial situation. We have 84 members, with as new members this year: Salesians (SDB), Marist Fathers (SM), Congregation of Jesus, Mary, Joseph (CJMJ). We bid farewell to Sr. Veronica Openibo, SHCJ (President), Sr. Kathy Schmittgens, and Sr. Lissy Sebastian, RNDM; and welcomed Sr. Mary T. Barron, OLA (Vice-President) and Sr. Mary Sreeja Chittilappily, SND.

***Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year!***

## The Calling of a Young Christian Worker

Greetings to everyone. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to God, to you Reverend Fathers, Religious Brothers and Sisters and to everyone who is here at this Autumn Seminar 2019 for giving me this opportunity to share my discovery of mission in the lay context. I am 34 years old, a graduate AB Guidance Counselling at Father Saturnino Urios University, the Philippines. I have been self-employed, running a small family owned restaurant business named Shalom Beef and Seafood House in Butuan City, but at present I am working for the International Coordination of the Young Christian Workers (ICYCW) as international treasurer and development worker.

### How did I discover my calling as a young lay missionary?

It all started at the age of 14 because I wanted to join a choir group in our local church. Most of the members were my friends who sold vegetables, fish, fruits and other things in the market. These young people always attended the workers' Mass on Sunday at 7:30 in



ICYCW 10th International Congress

the evening and were members of a local Young Christian Worker group in Butuan. The only reason I wanted to join was to sing in the choir. I was a very shy person then. I didn't know how to communicate with people. I was afraid to express my opinion, and I didn't care much about the people around me. But when I joined the YCW movement I gained lots of friends and became more outgoing. I started asking about things I didn't understand around me. I became curious. I became confident in dealing with people. I became very active in

inviting young people like me to take part in any activities we organized for young people.

The formation and training that I received helped me to face difficulties with confidence. During those days, we did the "Review of Life" in our group, following the method of *See-Judge-Act*; so we talked about what was happening in our life, our fears, our future plans, our difficulties, and family situations. This **Seeing** led us to the root of the problems we faced and was followed by the **Judge** stage which involved asking what is right and wrong, first according to our human Judgement and then in the light of the Teaching of Jesus Christ. We then asked the Lord for guidance and decided how to **Act** to make a change in the situation.

### What did lay mission mean to me?

This simple but effective process, *See-Judge-Act*, enabled me to have, as a young girl, my own idea of what lay mission means. I saw it as the calling of ordinary people who were not in a religious congregation, who were neither a priest, nor a sister,

to carry out voluntary work out of love, where you were able to share things with others, people in need of your help, to do it with a pure intention without thinking of some reward. This was my simple idea.

### My experience and responsibility as a young lay missionary?

My first responsibility was to become the **leader in a cell group of the YCW** composed of 3-5 members. This is where we did our Review of Life (ROL). I also became **Vice President of the choir group**. In this role I

encountered simple difficulties which I had to deal with. It taught me how small things can be important for young people and to pay attention to these details. Next, I became the **Diocesan President of YCW**, where I had to handle bigger responsibilities which included making plans and decisions for the movement, looking for sustainable funds for our activities. This was a big challenge because I was expected for example to give a seminar outside of Butuan which turned out to be a joyful opportunity. In this role I was very close to the young people who shared lots of things especially problems with their parents or family members. I felt my mission was to find ways to help them, to try to understand both parties because many of the cases I encountered involved a lot of miscommunication.

My next step for me was to become **National President of YCW** in the Philippines where I experienced bigger and greater difficulties which I can really say helped me a lot to become a responsible and better person at the service of others. This time I had the responsibility to train young people who were new to the movement. But as a volunteer leader, I had to look for a job to sustain my personal needs and even financial support for some of the movement's activities. I moved to the HQ in Davao City for 3 years and took part-time jobs on Mondays to Saturdays, this included being a fast food worker, service crew, mobile phone sales agent, house helper, selling things at the market or on the street. I always made sure to dedicate my Sundays and some evenings after work to the movement's formation, training, and other activities and especially to sit down to do the "Review of Life". Through this, in all these different jobs I also began to see lay mission in terms of knowing, supporting and caring for my fellow workers, a mission to be lived out in the circumstances of everyday life and not just as special activities around the Church.

### **What are your motivations or reasons to serve others voluntarily?**

Serving others has helped me to become a fruitful person and more responsible in life. I

always remember the words of our chaplain: "If you do not forget the work is the Lord's work, He will never forget you". and "you are not there just because you want to, but because God wants you to share the blessings and talents he has given to you". This wisdom motivates me to offer my service because I know for sure that although my journey as a leader is not easy, I know God guides me. If I sometimes feel at a loss in making decisions, he sends good people to put me back on track.

I was trained in the YCW by our former leaders but I was also accompanied spiritually by our chaplain who always told me: "IDY listen to the Holy Spirit", although sometimes I asked how can we listen to the Holy Spirit?

There came a time in my life when I felt confused, asking questions like, "Why am I doing this? I sacrificed being away from my family, working hard to sustain the young people around me, sometimes deprived of a good night's sleep, conducting training courses, giving formation and other sessions, listening to the young people with their problems and helping them to face the challenges that they encounter, all of which I did voluntarily. But through this, the happiness I felt was unconditional. Without all those people, and all those experiences, I realize I would have been lost. My life had no direction and I do not know where I would be now if I had not become involved in serving others.

### **Give some Personal Examples based on your experience**

Now I want to share my experience of mission in the other countries I have visited as a member of the ICYCW International team. It was amazing to learn how other young lay people serve their community and fellow workers.

#### *My experience in Madagascar 2017*

The first mission I did was very challenging. The person who should have welcomed us at the airport was not able to get there because there was a landslide. Then we had to change our plan and travel by van, because the internal flight to Diego had left already. We travelled

26hrs by van to visit the group of young people in Diego.

At the Review of Life a group of 4-6 young women who are involved in prostitution shared to me their stories. They were accompanied by one of the leaders and one of the chaplains in the parish who are trying to help them to make a change in their life inspired by the Teaching of Jesus.

I also got to know a young person who told me: “Here many of us wake up in the morning to go to work so as to put food on our table so that we do not sleep with an empty stomach”. I really felt the difficulties they experience in their day to day life. But even so these young leaders are able to contribute by helping others in need.

I also met Sig, a young leader who walks 200 kilometers to visit a group of young people to give them a training session and to motivate them not to give up even when life is very hard. It's a huge distance mainly in the mountains and most of the time he walks barefoot to save his shoes. He does this 2 to 4 times a year during his holidays. I asked him why he did it and he said to me: “I was helped once and given training, and now it's my turn to share what I learnt with others. He also added: “If I do not do this who will do it for them?”

#### *My experience in Tchad.*

I visited a local group in Moundou 8 hours away from the centre where these young people are workers, working students, drop outs from school, unemployed, full time students. During the visit I was given an opportunity to talk to them, to listen to them sharing different realities. They especially like to hear about what is happening to young people in other countries and the challenges they face. I will never forget a big young man, 19 year-old, asking me: “Idy, can you help me to develop my life?” I wanted to be very honest, so I paused for a moment. I was a bit shocked and worried about what answer to give him. Then I told him to do the “Review of Life” in his local group where he could sit down to understand what is really at the root of the problem he faces and with the help of his group to make a reflection. Then to undertake personal action

and to get involved in group action to see how you can support each other. And then in the next “Review of Life”, to make a review of your action.

What emerged from our sharing was that I got some key points about their struggle. It was not just about work and money. What they need is support from their family, friends and other people who have good expertise in IT, mechanics and other trades.

Some of the young people were also building things for the church, making a place where they can put the garbage and helping build a water station They were supporting lots of activities in the church.

#### *My experience in the Dominican Republic.*

There I met a group of young people, many of whom are students and some are working students. They are supported and accompanied by their lay chaplain who helps them to organize activities to keep them active and involved, such as cooking. One of the big challenges the young people face is being too busy at work so that they no longer have time to be in the community. Because of this many of them are led into harmful ways, like taking drugs and some of them experience depression.

#### **Others Experiences**

I also met a young person who had no motivation in life. Even though she had a good education, a good job and a family, she had lost her purpose in life. She said: “I don't want to wake up in the morning because I have no inspiration.” This is the very opposite to a young person who has to wake up in order to put food on the table.

A lot is happening if we have time to listen to the people around us.

#### **Life in Rome:**

To serve at the ICYCW I had to move from the Philippines to be based in Rome.

Life away from our country is very different: the food, the weather, the people, the culture. For the first six months I remember really asking myself: “Why am I here Lord?”. At that time we were just three young people at the international secretariat with no chaplain, and the three of us all new. We only spoke English



and we were in Rome for the first time. Can you imagine? Yes, we have people supporting us from different countries but for the day to day we are all by ourselves. If we go to the market, or if someone calls the office, and they speak Italian we don't know how to answer. We can only say, "Please send us an email so that we can use google to translate it". Also living together in one house we experienced our cultural differences which was quite challenging, but I was happy that we have former chaplains who always gave their support and were willing to listen to me whatever the challenge. They helped me to see difficulties as opportunities. I can say my life in Rome is very colourful now.

In January 2018 our secretariat was finally complete. We have a new part time Chaplain from Barcelona, Fr. Joan Ramon Marin, a new secretary general Agnes Monica from Uganda, and our president Berhanu Sinamo from Ethiopia. We are coordinating around 54 countries with 200 thousand young people around the world.

Being a YCW leader is not just talking about the dignity of the young worker. We have to help them to understand that their life is of value and that God wants us to share that life with others. This is our mission. We value simple personal action, which is attainable and realistic. This helps them to develop their confidence, talents and strengths in a very specific way.

### **What are the challenges as a young lay missionary:**

1. Many young people don't have any kind of training.
2. Cultural differences need to be understood. Between Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, for example.
3. Some lay people and religious don't seem to know how to listen. It's as though they know everything.
4. Some don't support an existing group. Instead of motivating and empowering these young people to grow, they create their own group, and so it becomes a competition.
5. Many don't understand leadership. We need to train someone because we want someone to replace us. Some do not want to give the young

people responsibility. They hang on to their position.

6. Some also don't allow young people to make mistakes. If they find a mistake they don't give them a chance to correct things.



**ICYCW International Chaplaincy Training**

### **What are the positive things?**

1. I have the opportunity to help and support others.
2. I have met different people who have helped me to understand life and that happiness is not all about materials things
3. Life became more fruitful

But the big challenges are still there today. I can still see in my own country and in other countries around the world that many young people don't have the chance to develop their talents and understand the value of the life that God wants for them.

*I would like to take this opportunity to ask you: Please don't forget to put young people in your plans for the future!. They need help and support. Young people are not only the future of the Church, but also the present.*

*Following God is not easy, but knowing Him helps me to think that every struggle in life bears fruit in goodness.*

*Thank you very much.*

## **The SDC Experience in Mission**

***(Mr. Ruben Pace is the Secretary General of the lay celibate organization, Society of Christian Doctrine, Malta.)***

*Verbum Dei caro factum est*

### **Introduction**

The SDC was founded in Malta by a diocesan priest, St George Preca (1880 – 1962) in 1907. He defined the specific charism of the “Society of Christian Doctrine” within the Church as that of celibate, lay people who through ongoing formation are well-formed in the Christian way of life and Catholic faith. Thus, through their life in the world they can witness prophetically and render a life-long apostolate of catechesis and faith formation to children, youths and adults. Thereby they seek holiness and glorify God.

#### **Missionary inspiration**

The vernacular name of the SDC in Malta is M.U.S.E.U.M. an acronym: *Magister Utinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus*. (Teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel.)

The acronym arises from a heart of a Founder who is ablaze with missionary zeal even though he never travelled outside the Maltese islands. (Possibly due to his ill health(?)). Yet, he instilled this zeal in the first members who opened several Centres in different parts of the archipelago within a few years.

In the fifties, this vision of spreading the Gospel in the whole world started becoming a reality as the first members accompanied several Maltese who emigrated to Australia.

Eventually in the eighties and the following decades the SDC spread to Africa, (Sudan (El Obeid 1983 – 2004) and Khartoum (1985? – 2009); Kenya (Ruiru (1989) and Mpektoni (1991 – 2006)); to other European countries ((London (Brixton 1988); Albania (Korce (1993) and Durres (2016); Poland (Poznan

2010) and in the first decade of this century to South America (Perù (Lurin (2003) and Carabayllo (2017), and Cuba (Sagua la Grande).

Still inspired by the dream that ‘the whole world follows the Gospel’, the SDC is actively pursuing possibilities of sending members to the Philippines and to USA.

Going forth to other countries

The relatively short experience of the SDC’s presence outside Malta shows that the Lord provided several ways for the SDC to spread to different countries.

As already mentioned, SDC members accompanied Maltese migrants to Australia.

In other countries, the SDC responded to direct invitations from the local Bishops.

Maltese missionary priests and religious, most of whom received faith formation in the SDC Centres when still young, also played a role in inviting the SDC to other countries.

The SDC arrived in other countries through local lay people who came to know the SDC and firmly believe that it can help the local church to continue spreading the Good News.

On the other hand, the SDC went to Albania as part of a national response to the plight of the people in Albania following the fall of the communist regime.

In all cases, members of the SDC Administration team visit the identified Diocese and parishes beforehand. Contacts with local Church authorities, generally the Ordinary, are established. Generally 2 – 3 visits held prior to sending members.

As the SDC is an organisation of the public right and has no pontifical approval yet, it seeks permission to establish itself in a particular Diocese from the local Bishop.

Living the SDC vocation in another country

When establishing ourselves in another country, we do so as lay people. There are 4 main steps in the process:



### **a. A residence for the members**

The first issue to be addressed is finding a residence for SDC members to live. Bishops who invited the SDC to their diocese, very often offered a residence for the members to settle in.

Religious often supported the SDC, with members often living in the same compound or convent e.g. with the Comboni Fathers in Sudan, with the Franciscan Capuchins in Kenya and with the Dominicans in Durrës, Albania.

Sometimes the local parish priests host the SDC members in the presbytery. (e.g. Brixton, UK and Poznań)

In other times the SDC rented a place for members to live (current situation in Puente Piedra, Perú)

Although members are not asked to live together, they do tend to do so for practical purposes. A community of members does not follow the timetable of a religious community with set time for prayers etc. However, members do tend to gather together during meal times.

Eventually the SDC always seeks to purchase its own property to serve both as a residence and as its Centre dedicated for faith formation. Besides the private residence area, a Centre needs to include areas for formal faith formation sessions, others for sports and informal meetings and a chapel for prayer and celebrations.



**Catechesis in Poland**

### **b. Language**

The second step is to learn the local language and to start getting accustomed to the local culture.

Members thus enroll in courses to learn both, just like any lay person would do. Hence courses in language schools or universities are followed.

### **c. Work**

The lay dimension of the SDC vocation implies that members are to be gainfully employed. This would allow the member to support himself, the SDC community and the SDC apostolate as well.

Finding employment often proves to be challenging depending on the economic situation, the standard of living of the country and local employment laws. In this regard the SDC has been supported by both religious and Bishops who often offered employment to members within Church institutions and schools.

When members are not able to work or when the salary they earn is not enough to meet their needs (both personal and apostolate), the General House supports them. Most of the income of the SDC comes from donations by the members themselves. It also receives donations from other benefactors. The SDC does not do any fund-raising activities, nor does it accept remuneration for its apostolate.

### **d. Setting up the SDC apostolate**

The SDC collaborates with the parish priests. Apostolate is coordinated with local parish priests. Often, we are asked to help in the Rite of Christian Initiation programs.

Eventually the SDC seeks to set up its own dedicated Centre for faith formation. Whilst still helping a lot in the catechetical program of the parish, its aim is to establish continuous formation of the young, particularly during the post-confirmation years. The SDC also hopes that some of the locals would then accept the call to embrace the SDC vocation.

Most of faith formation is carried out with children and teens. However, SDC members are also involved in faith formation of adults. Setting up our own dedicated Centre for faith formation is often a challenging step as some Bishops and parish priests do not fully grasp the lay dimension of the SDC charism. It is not easy for some to accept the idea that faith formation does not take place during school hours in the parish school or during Sunday school in the parish premises. This is not easy for parents either.

The faith formation programs followed vary depending on the Diocese. Sometimes faith formation program is set by the Diocese, in others the members set up the faith formation program. In Peru and Cuba, the faith formation program compiled by our members is now being used in several parishes.

We also collaborate in formation of catechists. This is very strong in Peru and Cuba where members are regularly asked to share their experiences and deliver talks on different aspects of catechesis. Members in the UK publish resources online and an online newsletter for catechists (*Echo*). In Malta, the SDC has been publishing of a bimonthly journal (*Gwida għal min Jgħallem*) for catechists for more than 60 years.

#### Link with religious communities

The SDC establishes links with the local religious communities in the parish or in the area. So SDC members participate in fraternity meetings and Sunday night gatherings.

This not only helps the members' wellbeing as they build meaningful friendships but it also allows sharing of experiences. The SDC has learnt a lot from the expertise of other congregations who have more experience in the missions than the SDC. This was particularly true in Sudan, where the SDC learnt a lot from the Maryknoll Fathers and in Australia and Peru where the SDC was supported by the MSSP fathers. (Missionary Society of St Paul).

#### Missionary formation of members

Ongoing formation for SDC members is part and parcel of the SDC vocation. The General Households courses in missiology for members to continue sustaining the flame of missionary zeal.

The first part of the course offers formation in the basic elements of Missiology and any member can participate.

The second part of the course is open for those members who envisage that they will be in a Centre abroad within the next 10 years. Here issues related to living the SDC vocation in a different culture are dealt with.

The third and last part of formation is specific for those members who have actually been chosen to go abroad. (Sometimes it involves accompanying the member on an individual level.) Here, specific issues are addressed with particular reference to the country where the member is being sent.

Throughout the course the SDC seeks the help of religious who deliver talks and reflections on the subject matter and others, who share their experience. The latter are often retired missionaries, or missionaries who happen to be on vacation in Malta.

Experiential formation is also important. Thus, any SDC member can ask for the possibility of spending a number of weeks in one of the Centres other than that in his country.

A 2-3-week experience is included in the formation course for candidates, i.e. the young people currently in formation to become members.



Members & Youths - Kenya Centre

#### Choice of members to go abroad

Members who wish to go abroad are invited to write a letter to the Superior General informing him about their wish. Members would generally have gone through a discernment process with their spiritual director prior to writing this letter.

The Superior General, following consultations, will then hold individual meetings with the member. SDC aims to have a minimum of three members in each community.



Catechesis activity in Cuba

### Challenges faced

SDC's response to a culture where God may be perceived as irrelevant.

*Deculturation:* the SDC mode of apostolate evolved within Maltese culture. Challenges include a high mobility of young people in formation which is less of a challenge in Malta due to the small size of the country. (27 km x 14.5 km)

Recruiting new local vocations. Till date the vast majority of SDC members are Maltese or are descendants of Maltese families. Very few members who are not Maltese or have no Maltese connection.

*Lack of vocations:* Sustaining members and strengthening all Centres. Dilemma between continuing apostolate in Malta, a country that is becoming more secular, and establishing SDC presence abroad.

The lay nature of the SDC: not easy for people, even persons within the Church; to perceive how a celibate lay person, is neither a priest nor a brother and lives a particular vocation without professing any vows. (Religious consecrated persons seem to grasp more the idea of having a lay society where members live a particular charism).

### Blessings received

Each missionary experience has enriched the SDC.

Every missionary experience is a tangible sign that the SDC vocation can be lived in different countries, circumstances and cultures. It has helped us appreciate the universal nature of the SDC vocation. It has also allowed us to understand and interpret our charism better.

Every Centre in every country is a sign that the SDC is alive and growing, even if growth is accompanied with growing pains.

We are blessed to have the opportunity to share our charism within the local church, thus enriching it with yet another gift of the Holy Spirit.

We are blessed with the presence of every child, every young person and every adult whom we accompany in his journey of faith. In him we behold the face of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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### A Prayer For The Missions

*O God, Father of the blessed Jesus Christ, as exhorted by your Son, we ask you to send workers to teach those who are in the ignorance of faith, that these poor people come to know you, the only true God, and the same Jesus Christ, whom you have sent in the World as its Savior.*

*We know that you want all people to be saved, and we also know that one can do nothing without your grace; therefore, full of trust, we call upon us your holy Name.*

*Only one thing is necessary for us: salvation of our souls, and we shall truly save our souls if you look at us as objects of your mercy.*

*Knowing that you are always merciful and forgiving consoles us, and so we entrust our spirit into your hands. To you alone and always all honor and all glory, o Omnipotent God. Amen.*

**St. George Preca, founder of SDC**



## Discovering Mission in a Lay Context

The topic, “Discovering Mission in a Lay Context” is timely especially because more than ever lay women and men are sharing in various ways in the charisms of religious orders. All of the baptized are challenged to discover creative ways to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. In order to approach the chosen theme in an orderly manner, this reflection is divided into three parts.

*First*, I will offer a brief comment on the question “who are the laity?” The goal is to “see”, to explore, in light of Sacred Scripture and our tradition some key ideas about the primary vocation of the lay women and men in the church and the world.

This will set the context for the *second* part, where I will consider how we might nurture the spiritual dimension of the lay vocation in light of contemporary challenges. This requires us to “judge”, to discern the signs of the times, and discover how God calls lay people to live out their vocation.

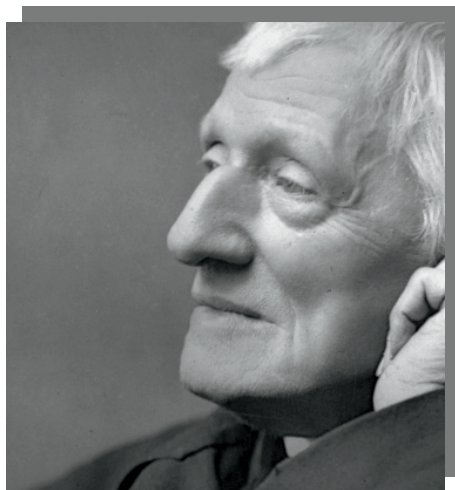
Finally, in the *third* part, I will highlight some practical ways that laity and religious can mutually support one another in living out the call to be “missionary disciples” today. Through this mutual sharing of spiritual gifts, charism can be carried forward together for the building of the Church and society.<sup>1</sup> I will conclude with a brief reflection on the Icon of the Descent of The Spirit that in visual form pulls together the themes developed here.

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<sup>1</sup> I chose to develop this topic in three parts, using the formula “see, judge, act”. It seems appropriate to use this methodology that was developed by the Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967), when as a young priest, he encouraged young working-class Catholics to connect their faith with social action. Quite simply he encouraged them to “see”, to observe what was going on. Then he encouraged them to “judge” or to evaluate or discern what was going on in light of gospel values and finally to act in constructive ways that would engender transformation. See Joseph Cardijn, *Laymen Into Action* (London, Geoffrey Chapman, Ltd, 1964).

### 1. Who are the Laity?

When Saint John Henry Newman got into a heated argument with his bishop about the role of the laity in the Church, he wrote about it later in his diary. This is how he remembered the conversation. His bishop asked, “at one point something like, ‘Who are the Laity?’” The gist of Newman’s response is “that the Church would look foolish without them” though he probably responded more tactfully because he added, “—*not* those words.”<sup>2</sup>



If you and I meandered over to Santa Marta and asked Pope Francis “who are the laity”, his response probably would be that they are “missionary disciples” along with all the baptized. Specifically, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, he states,

*In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to*

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<sup>2</sup> See the Memorandum of 22 May 1859 in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. Charles Stephen Dessain, *et. al.* (Oxford, 1978-84), vol. XIX, p. 141. See especially the Introductory Note, pp. xiii-xvi. This passage is often quoted without Newman’s tactful addition, “—[he adds] *not* those words.”

*envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.... Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization . . . . Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".*"  
(*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120)

In the past, there have been times when some have watered down the radical nature of Christian discipleship for lay women and men. For example, key biblical passages on discipleship like the encounter of Jesus with the rich young man (Mk 10:17-31, Mt 19:16-30, Lk 18:18-30) have been interpreted in a narrow way with almost exclusive reference to vocations to the ministerial priesthood and religious life. Yet a careful examination of discipleship passages in the New Testament, especially the so called "hard sayings of Jesus," reveal that often these were directed to the crowds and not necessarily to a particular group of persons.<sup>3</sup>

The word "*laikos*" is not even found in the New Testament, rather the Greek substantive is used to describe an entire people consecrated to God through baptism (see 1 Peter 2:9). It is clear that Jesus instituted a structured community (Matt 16-18) and St. Paul described different roles within the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12, Rom 12), but the New Testament as a whole precludes a specific spiritual path exclusively for the laity.

The call to discipleship, the call to follow Jesus, is the underlying factor of every Christian vocation.<sup>4</sup> We follow Jesus Christ,

though, not as mere individuals, as a "community of disciples", to quote Saint John Paul II, in an oft overlooked passage in his first encyclical letter, *Redemptor homini*:

*Therefore, if we wish to keep in mind this community of the People of God, which is so vast and so extremely differentiated, we must see first and foremost Christ saying in a way to each of the community: "Follow me." It is the community of the disciples, each of whom in a different way - at times very consciously and consistently, at other times not very consciously and very consistently - is following Christ.*<sup>5</sup>

To summarize briefly this first point, we are all part of a *community of disciples*. We are all called to be a "*missionary disciple*".

## 2. How are the Laity called to nurture the spiritual dimension of their vocation and mission?

This brings me to my second point: "how" can laity best incarnate gospel values in the world in which we live, a world that is at times hostile or indifferent to the Good News of Jesus Christ? *The Letter to Diognetus* (c.150–200 A.D.) captures perfectly the tension we face:

*Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by either country, speech or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they use no peculiar language, they do not follow an eccentric manner of life. ... They reside in their own countries, but only as aliens [one translation says: like foreigners with a permesso di soggiorno!]; they take part in everything as citizens and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their home, and every home a foreign land.*  
(*Epistola Diognetus* V, 1–5 passim)

<sup>3</sup> Carlo Maria Martini, "La spiritualità laicale nella prospettiva biblica e teologica," in *La Spiritualità dei laici* (Roma: Editrice A.V.E., 1982), pp. 23-24. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, "The Gospel as Norm and Test of all Spirituality in the Church," *Concilium* 9 (November 1965), p. 10. See Alexandre Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church*. Translated by David Smith (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 5. Faivre somewhat modifies his views of the French edition, *Les laïcs aux origines de l'Eglise* (Paris: Centurion, 1984) in "Naissance d'un laïcat chrétien: Les enjeux chrétiens d'un mot" in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 33 (1986): 391-429.

<sup>4</sup> See especially my article "Lay Spirituality," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, second edition, (Detroit: Gale; Washington, D.C.: The

Catholic University of America Press, 2002), vol. 8, pp. 412-19. This is the main source for the first two parts of this conference.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, March 4, 1991, n.21 as quoted in Avery Dulles, *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 7 [emphasis mine].

This anonymous letter exhorts Christians to fully embrace their responsibilities in the world, “for God has appointed them to so great a post” (V, 9). They are to become for the world what the soul is to the body. Just as the soul animates the body, so Christians are called to bring the life of Christ to the world.

When we reflect on this beautiful passage in the context of the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* on the laity, a number of themes emerge. First of all, not only the laity but the entire church is meant to be a “sacrament of salvation” in the world. The Second Vatican Council embraced what Yves Congar would call a “total ecclesiology” where the equality and fundamental unity of all is respected.<sup>6</sup> Through baptism, we are all part of the people of God and we have all been called, gifted and sent.

At the same time, *Lumen Gentium* does suggest that there is a distinguishing mark of the lay vocation and mission, namely its secular character. This brings me to my second point. The so called “secular character” is not simply an anthropological or sociological reality, but a profoundly theological one. It is the existential situation in which lay people live out their baptism and respond to God’s call, namely as primarily in the midst of the world—in the context of family life, work, civic responsibilities. These concrete situations of everyday life present opportunities for growth in holiness (*Lumen Gentium* 41) and are the specific way that lay women and men participate in the one mission of Christ.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, encourages *all* Christians—laity, priests and religious—to see religious and temporal activities as one vital synthesis and to guard against a split between faith and life. Specifically, *regarding the laity*, the Council Fathers caution that those who neglect family, work and responsibilities in society place their salvation in jeopardy (GS 43). Family life and faith are to be united, and work, far from

separating one from Christ, is a path for living out one’s baptism. (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4). This emphasis on the integration of faith and life is one of the key contributions of the Second Vatican Council to the spiritual dimension of lay mission.

In a more poetic way, Teilhard de Chardin expressed the same point:



*God, in all that is most living and incarnate in Him, is not far away from us, altogether apart from the world we see, touch, hear, smell and taste about us. Rather He awaits us every instant in our action, in the work of the moment ... There is a sense in which he is at the tip of my pen, my spade, my brush, my needle -- of my heart and of my thought. By pressing the stroke, the line, or the stitch...to its ultimate natural finish, I shall lay hold of that last end towards which my innermost will tends.”<sup>7</sup>*

If the primary call of the laity is to embrace family, work and political responsibilities, then what are the distinguishing characteristics of the spiritual dimension of their mission? Teilhard de Chardin brings us to the heart of the matter. Centuries earlier, Teresa of Avila expressed it in a different way by simply saying, “God walks among the pots and pans”.<sup>8</sup> (*Foundations*. 5,8). When you understand the

<sup>6</sup> See Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Translated by Donald Attwater (London, 1965, Second Revised Edition).

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin* as quoted in Thomas Corbishley, *The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (London: Collins The Fontana Library, 1974), p. 111. Cf. also Ursula King, *Christ in All Things* (London: SCM Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Foundations, The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, Vol. III, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, (Washington, DC: ICS, 1985), chapter 5, 8, pp. 119-120.



context, you see that she means finding God through seeking his will in the tasks of everyday life.

We must have the courage to ask lay people: what are your pots and pans? Can you find God there? It is in seeking and finding God's will in the daily tasks that the laity are called to live out their vocation. Sometimes we are trying to get through the day, the week, the family chore, so we can get on to what really matters. We tolerate the drudgery tasks, we accept that we have to do them, but we try to get them off our list as quickly as possible. The point is that these are exactly what we should be doing, as one writer says, "giving loving and leisurely attention to the everyday geographical details of ... life" and work.<sup>9</sup>

This is probably one of the most difficult, yet most important spiritual truth for lay people to grasp. Too often in the past, family and work responsibilities have been seen as an obstacle to developing a strong spirituality. The reality is, however, that all time and space have a sacred dimension because they are shot through with God's presence. Salvation is worked out precisely in and through relationships at home, at work, in the political and social sphere.

At the same time, traditional building blocks of Christian spirituality remain important to establish a firm foundation for lay missionary disciples. Just like Christians in the early church and throughout the centuries, the laity today nourish their spiritual lives through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which is the font and summit of the Christian life. The celebration of the Eucharist flows into a eucharistic way of life, a life lived in thanksgiving, praise of God and self-giving love to God and to others. This eucharistic way of life finds nourishment in prayer grounded in meditation of Sacred Scripture. The task before us is to find creative ways to assist laity in rediscovering the centrality of the sacraments, Sacred Scripture and prayer in our fragmented

and frenetic society where the link between faith and life is under constant threat.

Finally, our experience of globalization and our call to engage seriously in environmental stewardship encourage us to a spiritual path that challenges every aspect of our lifestyle. With *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that any authentic spiritual path will include an "ecological conversion".<sup>10</sup> This implies a greater simplicity of life and concern for those on the peripheries. Like the early Christians, the laity today are called not to abandon the world, but to transform it in light of the kingdom of God. This means incarnating the Gospel in concrete ways by supporting whatever promotes the dignity of the human person and courageously resisting all that is contrary to Gospel values.

### **3. Charisms carried forward: best practices for the mutual sharing of spiritual gifts between religious Congregations and Laity**

In this *third* and final part, I will highlight some practical ways that laity and religious can mutually support one another in living out the call to be "missionary disciples" today. Through this mutual sharing of spiritual gifts, charisms can be carried forward together for the building of the Church and society.

*First, Recognize and nurture the primary vocation of the laity.*

Lay women and men are not called to be pseudo-religious. Each of us has our vocation. It is important for members of religious congregations to ask: how are we helping lay people to live out their vocation and mission? Is their contact with my congregation helping them live out their vocation at home, in their families, at work, in embracing their civic responsibilities? There is a danger that a lay person can become so absorbed with their

<sup>9</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant. An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans 1992), p. 152.

<sup>10</sup> See Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si, On Care for our Common Home*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html). See also the "Youth manifesto Manifesto of Youth at WYD 2019 for the care of the common home Ecological Conversion in Action" <http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/Pdf/Manifesto%20-%20ENG%20-%202021.01.2019.pdf>

association with a religious order that they neglect their primary vocation.

*Second, recognize that your spirituality, your charism, can and does nourish lay people, especially if they are working in your institutions: in your hospitals, schools, or other ministries.*

This is, I think, the most exciting part of this mutual interdependence among religious and laity. Together, religious and laity, can share spiritual gifts and can carry a charism forward together.

After all, charisms, in the word of one commentator, are

*the “great gospel ideas”<sup>11</sup>, the inspired ways of discipleship that have stood the test of time and have proven fruitful, that have inspired generations of Christians to recognise and to love their God, and to undertake the mission of the Church. They have given them a story to join, a community of mission to which to belong, a work to do, a way to pray, face of God to see. They have been built around inspired and inspirational people, indeed saints. They have grown into rich and wise schools of spirituality. These charisms are treasures of the Church; they are the Spirit alive in the Church.*<sup>12</sup>

Lay people can benefit from sharing in these spiritual gifts. It is truly a movement of the Holy Spirit that lay people feel drawn to associate with religious orders. This sharing of spiritual gifts does not happen automatically. It takes a lot of forward thinking, strategic planning and flexibility with the help of the Holy Spirit. As the Jesuit Michael Buckley notes, “Stability and change are not opposed;

they are coordinate. You can only change what remains the same; as Gilson remarked many years ago, the only way you can keep the same fence is if you paint it often! Change is a necessity if the same thing is to continue.”<sup>13</sup> I once read that a good symbol of both adaptability and stability are the skyscrapers in San Francisco that are built on roller skates: structures that promote change and not inertia are the best ones for those who wish to follow Jesus today. Strong, rigid buildings are the first to fall in an earthquake, but buildings that can sway manage to flow back into position undamaged. The challenge is to “move with the times”, while simultaneously maintaining your own specific charism.<sup>14</sup>

In the small group sessions, I will ask you to share about your experience of sharing spiritual gifts with laity. I did want to also give you a few examples before moving to the conclusion. First, Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, a Sister of St. Joseph of Orange, California, speaks about her experience of sharing her charism with those who work in the Sisters’ health care institutions through taking them on a spiritual pilgrimage to see “the original convent, the place where Jesuit Jean-Pierre Medaille called them to service, and the place where sisters were guillotined in the French Revolution”. In an interview, she said, “I love to connect people to our mission: ‘I don’t care what religion you come from; here is ours, and it’s all about the healing ministry of Jesus.’” She continues, “People from all faith traditions loved it and were able to connect the mission of St. Joseph Health to whatever their tradition was. *You just saw people blossom in their own spirituality.*”<sup>15</sup> What I think is particularly significant in Sr. Jayne’s words is the last line: through deep contact with the Sisters of St. Joseph charism, lay people blossomed in their own spirituality.

A second example comes from the sharing of spiritual gifts in Catholic Schools. In his excellent paper on this topic that I quoted

<sup>11</sup> The phrase is Claude Maréchal’s, the then Assumptionist Superior General, who delivered an excellent paper on this topic at the 56<sup>th</sup> Conference of Superiors General, in Rome, in 1999: *Toward an effective partnership between religious and laity in fulfilment of charism and responsibility for mission*, As quoted in Michael Green’s Paper “Lay Spirituality and Charism” 13 (July 2009):  
<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/415085/8704084/1285486893283/Green+Lay+Spirituality++Charism.pdf?token=nUfyMRAPfHhpnIGSr6ee%2FA5PjpA%3D>.

<sup>12</sup> See Green, “Lay Spirituality and Charism”, p. 9.  
<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/415085/8704084/1285486893283/Green+Lay+Spirituality++Charism.pdf?token=nUfyMRAPfHhpnIGSr6ee%2FA5PjpA%3D>

<sup>13</sup> Michael Buckley, “The Charism of Religious Life,” *Review for Religious* 1986, p. 659.

<sup>14</sup> See Michael Casey, *A Guide to Living in the Truth. Saint Benedict’s Teaching on Humility*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>15</sup> See:  
<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/spirituality/ministry/news/fever-sisters-serve-health-care-ensuring-their-charisms-will-endure>

earlier, Michael Green notes that the best spiritual families inspire people who are teaching in their schools to go deeper and join them intuitively. He says, *(and I quote him here)*:

*They provide ways of incarnating Christ-life into time, place, mission and the hearts of people. As a founding charism moves over time to become a spiritual tradition, it develops a wealth of accumulated wisdom and resources into which others can tap, to learn from those who have walked and are walking the same spiritual path. It gives people a story to enter, a group to which to belong, a mission or work to share with others. It provides them with a literature to read, songs to sing, an accessible language and symbols to use, and saints from whom to draw inspiration. These are pegs onto which our faith hats can be hung. While not ends in themselves, they do often provide powerful means to receive and to promote the gospel of Jesus – a do-able discipleship. [he continues]*

*In the context of a Catholic school community, the potential benefits of belonging corporately to such a spiritual tradition or movement are immense. If it is one that suits that school community and its present realities, one that is attractive to its members, then it can provide a graced way to give compelling life to the gospel. First, it will give people a means of deepening their personal and their communal spirituality, a way of quenching their God-thirst, a path to meeting Jesus. Second, it will give a treasure chest of resources, solid formation programmes, literature, symbols and rituals, strategies for ministry, extra-parochial and extra-diocesan links, and collected wisdom, from which the principal and staff can draw. It becomes the glue that binds the community and gives it focus in its mission.<sup>16</sup>*

*Conclusion: waiting in the upper Rome together for the coming of the Spirit*

I would like to conclude by reflecting with you on the Icon of the Descent of the Spirit. Icons are windows into the divine. This Icon of

the Descent of the Holy Spirit can take us to a liminal space where we can discover what it means to be missionary disciples together in our world. Today, we need to stand together with Mary, that first lay woman (in the words of Yves Congar) and with the whole Church, we need to implore the Father to send us again the gift of the Spirit. As St. Bonaventure says, “The Holy Spirit,” goes “to where He is loved, where He is invited, where He is awaited.”<sup>17</sup> It is important to remember though, that we are gathered in the cenacle, it is not just to enjoy one another’s company. We are gathered to be sent on mission.



Getting too comfortable in the upper room (or anywhere) is one of the biggest obstacles for communicating our faith to others. In another context, Saint John Henry Newman warn about the dangers of getting too comfortable: “Nothing is so likely to corrupt our hearts, and to seduce us from God, as to surround ourselves with comforts,—to have things our own way,—to be the centre of a sort of world, whether of things animate or inanimate, which minister to us....”<sup>18</sup>

The task before us is challenging and without the Holy Spirit, we cannot go on, but with Mary, our Mother, teaching us docility to

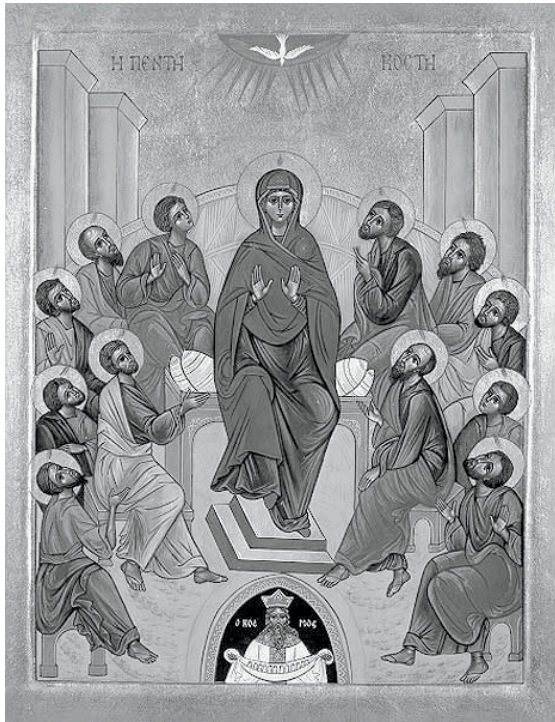
<sup>16</sup> Green, “Lay Spirituality and Charism” <http://static1.l.sqspcdn.com/static/f/415085/8704084/1285486893283/Green+Lay+Spirituality++Charism.pdf?token=nUfyMRAPfHhpnIGSr6ec%2FA5PjpA%3D>

<sup>17</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Sermon for the IV Sunday after Easter*, 2. As quoted by Raniero Cantalamessa in his second Advent address to the Roman Curia.

<sup>18</sup> John Henry Newman “The Duty of Self Denial” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* VII, 7, p. 98.



God's call and the help of the Holy Spirit, we will be missionary disciples together, also in these days that are paradoxically both difficult and full of hope.



This icon of the descent of the Spirit, along with the icon of the Holy Trinity, is venerated in the Orthodox Church on Pentecost Sunday. The icon portrays in visual form some of the themes that we have been examining today. I have chosen a 20th century icon. At first glance, this icon is a bit puzzling for there is a sense of tranquility which is in stark contrast with the Pentecost story itself. And yet, we have the rays above, symbolizing the presence of the Spirit.

### Community as a gift of the Holy Spirit

The icon reminds us that we need Christian community: the Spirit comes when the disciples are gathered in prayer. But notice, in this icon the disciples are not chatting with one another, they are together in community, but they are all listening. What does this say about community? One thing it says is that community is first of all a gift of the Spirit, it is not built upon mutual compatibility, shared affection or common interest, but upon having

been given a heart set aflame by the same divine fire. It is God who brings us together in community and who makes us one.

### Unity not uniformity

The icon emphasizes another point: that unity does not require uniformity. We can thank God for the diversity of vocations, even for the diverse ways of living out your charism. This is depicted beautifully in this icon by the unique manner of each evangelist. Their hair, eyes, gestures, even the way they cross their legs and feet are quite different! You really see their individual characteristics. But notice the beautiful harmony. No color dominates, yet each figure is distinct. We need to create spaces that allows the gifts of each person to flourish, whether they are religious or lay.<sup>19</sup>

We know from tradition that the Holy Spirit at Pentecost descended not only on the twelve, but on all who were there. This is emphasized by the openness at the bottom of the row of apostles. As Leonid Ouspensky notes, "the rows of the apostles are not closed at the bottom. They are open for us. The Church is not restricted either by the apostolic circle, or by the apostleship in general, or by the hierarchy. ... The unclosed structure of the icon at the top and bottom is this very openness of the Church: at the top the communion with the Uncreated Trinitarian Being through the Holy Spirit, and on the bottom, the communion with the whole world through us." We continue those rows of apostles and shall continue them until the end of the ages...<sup>20</sup>

### Called to Mission

This community of love is not fashioned to sit around and enjoy one another's company. There is a mission involved. When the Spirit draws people into community, he sends them out into the world so that all people can share in the redemption accomplished by Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> See Henri Nouwen, *Praying with Icons*. This book, which I read many years ago (and which I no longer own) is the inspiration for what is written here.

<sup>20</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 31 (Nov. 4, 1987), pp. 330-331.

How is this mission portrayed in the icon? Notice the fellow with a crown on his head in the middle of the icon. He has a veil in his hand, symbol of someone waiting to hear the good news. He is the personification of the people waiting to hear the good news. He waits to hear the Good News from those in the circle.

### **Cultivating a Marian attitude**

A final point about the icon. Note that the Blessed Virgin Mary is seated among the apostles. This Marian presence reminds us of the importance of cultivating a “Marian culture”. This is a corrective to excessively institutional views of the Church and of harsh striving for success in the world. The Marian dimension shows us what the Church is to be.

### **Invoking the Holy Spirit**

So to conclude, as we reflect on how to “discover mission in a lay context” with specific reference to the spiritual dimension, let’s have the courage to wait together in the cenacle, after the pattern of Mary and the Apostles. The Spirit will come, with all the graces and charisms needed for the upbuilding of the church and for our mission in the world. It is only in and through the working of the Holy Spirit that we can become missionary disciples:

*Without the Holy Spirit God is far away.  
Christ stays in the past,  
The Gospel is simply an organization,  
Authority is a matter of propaganda,  
The Liturgy is no more than an evolution,  
Christian loving a slave mentality*

*But in the Holy Spirit  
The cosmos is resurrected and grows with the  
birth pangs of the kingdom.  
The Risen Christ is there,  
The Gospel is the power of life,  
The Church shows forth the life of the Trinity  
Authority is a liberating science,  
Mission is a Pentecost,  
The Liturgy is both renewal and  
anticipation,  
Human action is deified.<sup>21</sup>*

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## *The Two Hands of Yes and No*

One Family's Encounter with the  
Surprising Power of Active Nonviolence



*My grandfather would be proud of how  
the Linn's have carried on his work.  
Arun Gandhi*

John Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, Dennis Linn

(Gift from ORBIS BOOKS)

<sup>21</sup> Patriarch Ignatius, Metropolitan of Latakia addressing the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1968.

## Lay Partners in Mission

### 1. The Role of the Laity

Like all the documents from the Second Vatican Council that took their names from the first words of the document itself, the Decree on *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is reflected in the first sentence of the document, which says, "To intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God, the most holy synod earnestly addresses itself to the laity, whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church..." (AA 1) At first, the Council Fathers could not decide what name to give this Decree. Although many were suggested, they settled on the Apostolate of the Laity, even though many Fathers disagreed with the word *apostolate* because it was a word that was associated mainly with the priesthood in the 20th century. The primary purpose of this document was to examine how the laity of the Church, while remaining united to the hierarchy of the Church, could assist in bringing the Catholic Church to the modern world. The document articulates clearly, *The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members.* (AA 2)

Thus, it emphasized the duty of all members to participate in the mission of actualizing the kingdom of God. By virtue of their secular character, the Holy Spirit capacitates the lay people in a special way to establish His kingdom on earth. "The Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." (*Lumen Gentium* 36) Lay people have a specific role and duty, together

with the hierarchy, to establish the kingdom of God. This is a challenge to all lay people as they are inspired by the Spirit to be involved in the mission of the Church.

Many centuries ago, Pope Innocent III could say, in the Lateran Council of 1215, that "it remains for the laity to obey and not to command authority." But, this was rewritten to say: "The lay person is one who has the right to pray, pay and obey." Well, this is again rewritten today: "the laity are partners in God's mission." The document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* insists that, "Bishops, pastors of parishes, and other priests of both branches of the clergy should keep in mind that the right and duty to exercise this apostolate is common to all the faithful, both clergy and laity, and that the laity also have their own roles in building up the Church. For this reason they should work fraternally with the laity in and for the Church and take special care of the lay persons in these apostolic works." (25) John Paul II took this aspect forward with the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988), "The lay faithful are seen not simply as laborers who work in the vineyard, but as themselves being a part of the vineyard." (8) Pope Francis is more emphatic in his catechesis, exhortations and addresses that the lay people are not second-class members at the service of the Church hierarchy, but are disciples of Christ. He said that the Church needs missionaries, not 'clericalized' laity, thus lay people have a mission with their vocation and profession to be involved in the mission. All are called to be "missionary disciples", (EG 24, 120, 173) this can be accomplished through many ways and being partners in mission with religious congregations is one of the ways.

### 2. Sharing the Charisms

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* interprets the charisms in the



light of the *Confessio Trinitatis* in the spiritual life, in communion and in mission. The charisms are gifts of the Spirit in order to think with the Church (*sentire cum ecclesia*) and to live in the image of the Trinity. He said to all the consecrated societies, “You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished.” (VC 10) The charisms which are cherished in the consecrated societies are to be passed on to the local communities, and these local communities could be an Order, Institute, Society or Association sharing the same charisms. All these various groups are called by Pope Francis a “Charismatic Family”. In his *Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People* he said that the laity shares the same ideals, spirit and mission as consecrated institutes. He added, “ ‘charismatic family’, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.” (III.1) Thus, the charismatic families are all the “groups” who share the same charism of the Founder of that Congregation/Institute. The charism which is the gift of the Spirit creates an open, welcoming and missionary family. The charismatic families are growing today, expressing the fruitfulness of the charisms. “A vision in the charismatic family leads beyond the disconnected elements, dynamics, contents, different initiatives, to the search for the burning spark and the heart which integrates the different elements and generates new vitality.”<sup>22</sup>

Knowing the importance of the charismatic families, the religious congregations in Rome come together twice a year to deliberate on the role of lay groups that are associated with each congregation/institute. Knowing the importance of lay people in mission, today we can call them as lay partners or collaborators. Pope Benedict XVI said (August 10, 2012) that lay people “are being called upon to reflect on ‘ecclesial and social co-responsibility’”. He

further explained, “Co-responsibility requires a change in mentality, particularly with regard to the role of the laity in the Church, who should be considered not as ‘collaborators’ with the clergy, but as persons truly ‘co-responsible’ for the being and activity of the Church.” The term ‘co-responsible’ should not lead us to dispute; in fact, it gives more clarity on their role, duty and commitment to God and to the Church. Sharing the charism, they become co-responsible partners in continuing the mission of God.



**Mumbai Lay Partners**

The question arises who is a lay partner? What is his/her identity? Well, we are using this term to accommodate various groups and individuals who support, sympathize, share, and collaborate with a congregation/institute’s charism and mission. The identity has to be developed by a person sharing its spirituality and being involved in missionary activities. Having grown with its charism, lay partners do their mission and ask the congregations to collaborate with them to deepen the understanding of *missio Dei*.

### **3. Lay Partners and SVD**

During the first general chapter of our Society, the capitulars had discussed an “institute of secular cooperators to help the missions” (January 27-28, 1885). Right from the beginning, our founder Arnold Janssen sought the cooperation of lay people to continue the missionary activities. The Society has discovered lay partners as a genuine treasure in doing mission. Over the years, although mission was continued with lay partners, not

<sup>22</sup> “A Path Towards Communion”, Planning 2017-2010, Associazione AMCG, Famiglie Carismatiche, Roma, 7.

much emphasis was given to create an association or a group. The 15th general chapter called us to share our spirituality with lay people, especially those with whom we work (94). The 16th and 17th general chapters made recommendations on collaboration with the laity in mission and called for promoting the participation of the laity in our assemblies and chapters on PRM or general levels, our initial and ongoing formation, and in our administration. More importantly the 17th general chapter made a resolution on the lay associate groups. Over the years, many lay partner groups have emerged cherishing the charism of our Society and inspired by our Saints Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz.

#### **4.1 Lay Partners Groups**

The 18th general chapter, in its resolution 1.1.4 (reconfirmation of 17th general chapter resolution 1.2.3), gave the criteria to recognize lay associates. In following these markers, until now 20 groups are officially recognized by the provinces/regions/missions (PRM). There are approximately 184 lay partners groups existing in our Society. But to calculate the exact number of these groups is rather difficult; some groups are functioning under the patronage of one name and have several groups in each district or parish. According to the latest reports, some of the groups are functioning well and others are not performing to a satisfactory level. And more difficult is to know the exact number of persons affiliated with the lay partner groups because strict norms are yet to be established for joining the groups. The challenge is to animate these groups, appointing spiritual directors or animators to accompany these groups. There are potentialities and passion among lay people. These can be tapped only when an organized group is formed with guiding principles and a concrete action plan to continue the SVD charism with vigor and enthusiasm.

Some provinces have expressed that although some groups have all potentialities to be lay associates, it is difficult to recognize them

officially due to various local concerns. We see the trend of forming new lay groups who are interested to share the charism of the Society. They are inspired by the spirituality, traditions and the spiritual depth of the founding generations of the Society. Other than the devotions and prayers, we see that Trinitarian Spirituality, Logos Spirituality and spirituality of the cross are some of the highlights that attract the lay partners. More interestingly, the missionary practice to reach out to the four prophetic dialogue partners is captivating the lay partners; these four dialogue partners are people who have no faith community and faith seekers, people who are poor and marginalized, people of different cultures and people of different religious traditions and secular ideologies.

Some of the groups who are exercising various ministries are incredible. These lay partners have convictions, fire in their hearts and high motivation to reach out to others. They consider it as a privilege and challenge to be in an SVD lay partner group as well as to continue their professional work and normal family engagements. But their conviction is tremendous and commitment is very high. Some persons who have discontinued from our seminaries and found another vocation are convinced of their lay missionary service and they have experienced the spirituality of the Founder and the charism of the Society, thus they are inspired to do missionary service through another way, forming groups with their friends. Personally visiting and interacting with the lay partners in the Philippines, Poland, Italy, India, South Africa and Vietnam, etc., and sharing and discussing with them their goals and activities, were always encouraging. These occasions were in the spirit of how the SVDs and the lay partners are rooted in the Word. The inspiration and sustainability comes from the Word. The lay partners cherish the Word; accompanying them and being co-responsible together in their missionary activities is important to strengthen their commitment to God's mission. Here, I would like to illustrate three lay partner groups who do excellent service as missionary disciples.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The details of the three lay partner groups are provided

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### 4.1.1 Auxiliary Missionaries of the Divine Word (MAVD), MEXICO

#### Origin or beginning

As a clear and definite response to Christ's command to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel to all people, a small group of lay men and women met Fr. Manuel Myvett SVD, the then Mission Secretary of the province in Mexico, in September 1981. Then, with the spirit of passion for mission and impelled by the Spirit, the Auxiliary Missionary Movement of the Divine Word (*Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino*, MAVD) was born in February 1982. In MAVD, there are dynamic and hardworking people committed to the Gospel, willing to be leaven and communicate it in the situation in which each one works, and actively collaborate with the Church in its universal mission work. Their missionary project consists of: awareness, animation, promotion and missionary cooperation.

#### What they do and where they go

The first missionary field is the family and the relatives with whom they live daily. In the second place are the indigenous communities of their country, and the Mission Ad Gentes. They meet periodically in different base groups to prepare themes, to enrich spiritually, and thus to be able to give an example of their life. They go for mission in the Holy Week or during summer to the indigenous communities of the State of Hidalgo in the Diocese of Hujeutla de Reyes and to the Parish of Santiago Apóstol de Anaya, in Chiapas. In Ch'oles they visit communities of the parish of San Fernando de Guadalupe in Salto de Agua and San José in Playas de Catatzajá, in Oaxaca, also in the highlands of Juarez in the parishes of San Juan Yaeé and Santa Cruz Yagavila, where they started their mission in 1983. Finally, they go to Sonora, in the parish of Tubutama, diocese of Nogales, and to the 12 communities of Camotlán which belong to the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Manzanillo, Colima.

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by the leaders of these groups.



Society of the Divine Word (SVD)



#### Formation

In MAVD, they commit themselves personally and formally with the mission, by forming "BASE GROUPS" in various locations in the country. In these groups the missionaries are responsible and dedicate themselves:

- To form, evangelize, and deepen their faith with regular meetings, in the place and time that each one accepts.
- To promote everything related to the missions in local and / or parish communities.
- To pray for the mission of the Church throughout the world.
- To write or to be in contact with the Mexican missionaries who work abroad.
- To go for mission at least once per year, either during the Holy Week or summer.
- To assume during one year, a concrete social-missionary commitment in the realities of each base group.

## To be the Mission

**In their Words:** An important part of our charism is to visit the most distant and needy communities. We are going **to be the mission and not to do the mission**. The main thing is to share life and respect all that is to be visited. During the year, two mission experiences are carried out at the national level: during the Holy Week and the Summer Mission.

**The Holy Week Mission:** It takes place every year during the Holy Week where they inculturate, share life, encourage sharing of the Word of God through Lectio Divina, give different themes for reflection, introduce various dynamics, conduct games and help in the celebrations of the Holy Week. They have a missionary medical-dentistry team which is totally dedicated to give free health services and medicines during the whole week.

**Summer Mission:** During the last week of the month of July and in the first week of August of each year, the mission experience is organized in a specific selected and previously evaluated place in any field of mission. At this time different activities are carried out such as: catechesis, biblical circles, preparation for the sacraments, formation of choirs, liturgy, youth groups, etc., according to the need of each place. Also they help to teach: embroidery, tailoring, vegetable gardening, music, literacy, crafts, electricity, plumbing, etc. After 35 years, they are aware that God wants something from them. They have made their journey with the missionary family of St. Arnold Janssen, a family that loves One Triune God, which embraces the world with its many faces, to form through them a single heart in His name.

### Their Collaboration with the SVD

The principal objective of the group is to help in the personal and group commitment of faith through the lay, missionary and universal perspective. By being aware of God's invitation to holiness and a complete fulfillment of their lives, they live their vocation in Christ.

They find a special motivation in the Spirituality, in the commitment of the missionaries of the Divine Word and in the

missionary Family of St. Arnold Janssen. Together with them, they seek to be a support for the animation and missionary cooperation in their country and in the world. They support missionary tasks and works of the MAVD group to which they belong, on a national level and within the framework of their time and possibilities, and the apostolic works of other missionary organizations and movements.

Parishes are the ideal places where they really incarnate their missionary commitment. It's very important to have a deeper and a reliable missionary commitment, by feeling greatly responsible for the missionary realities which no one thinks of or where no one wants to go. They are very sensitive to everything that has to do with **mission ad gentes**, and they raise awareness about the missionary **ad gentes** vocation of the Church.

They accept a specifically missionary apostolate among the indigenous people's areas and in other regions or realities of Mexico that cry out for the arrival of the kingdom of God. They are keen to support constantly in prayer and in material needs the missionaries of the Divine Word and the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, but in a very special manner with the newly consecrated missionaries. They contribute to SVD/SSpS formation houses through their prayers, donations and by other means by being aware of the fact that all their help contributes to the future missionaries of Mexico for the world.

### 4.1.2 Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Mumbai

#### History

The Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) began in October 1999 as a small group of lay volunteers, who helped to propagate the programs conducted by Atma-Darshan, a SVD Center for Spirituality and Counseling in Mumbai, India. The group was initiated by Gregory Pinto SVD, the then director of Atma-Darshan, who is currently a member of the SVD General Council. Edward D'Mello, SVD was instrumental in naming this group as Disciples of the Divine Word, in short DDW. The purpose of the group evolved over the years and today it has a three-fold purpose: (a)

to know, learn and integrate aspects of Arnoldus spirituality relevant to our personal and family lives; (b) to grow as a team; and (c) to reflect over, pray for, and reach-out to the poor and marginalized. On October 03, 2014, the India Mumbai (INM) Provincial Superior and his leadership team recognized DDW as a Lay Associate Group of the Society of the Divine Word, India Mumbai Province (INM).

### Structure and Membership

India is a land that symbolizes unity in diversity. DDW members come from across a range of social, cultural, age and educational backgrounds. Presently, we are 47 members who meet once in 45 days to plan, evaluate and execute activities. Our meetings begin with a prayer followed by the recital of the Quarter Hour Prayer. The President leads and facilitates all meetings and activities as per the agenda; that is followed by group discussions and Holy Eucharist. Meetings generally end with a fellowship-meal. Every year, the commitment is renewed at the Eucharistic Celebration on the feast day of St. Arnold Janssen. In 2018, the Mission Cross was bestowed on members who had completed 3 years or more in the group.



### Major Activities

**Spiritual Enrichment:** To deepen our Spirituality we have regular Bible classes, retreats, recollections and talks on Arnold Janssen Spirituality. The focus of DDW is on

SVD Spirituality - Trinitarian and Logos, rooted in the communion of the Triune God and is a participation in Christ's mission. It recognizes that our life has a greater value than what we do.

**Mission Support:** We promote and support mission awareness and nurture missionary vocations, in particular the Society of the Divine Word. Many of our members, through SVD Mission support offices, sponsor SVD seminarians for their formation at the various SVD seminaries in India.

**Mission Animation:** Our members are involved actively in the different ministries in their local parishes as well as in the Archdiocese of Bombay, viz. Bible apostolate, Small Christian Communities, Parish Pastoral Council, Prayer groups, Liturgy, Lectors, Music Ministry, Justice and Peace Commission, to name a few. Some members are actively involved as resource persons in assisting the staff of Atma-Darshan (INM) in their week-end programs, viz. Empowerment Retreat for Widows, Family and Couples Retreat, etc.

**A Passion for JPIC:** At the very beginning of DDW, members visited tribal villages in the Diocese of Khandwa (INC) and provided financial help toward the education of poor children. Currently, our members are reaching out not only to Mumbai Province (INM) but also to all SVD provinces and the one region in India. Upon invitation, members travel in small groups to the mission to identify the immediate need and report their experience at the meeting. On evaluation, the DDW members carefully work out financial and other resources in consultation with the province. After project completion, the province provides a report to us on some areas where we are now assisting.

**Empowerment:** SVD missions strive towards the holistic and sustainable development of the poor tribal people. DDW has initiated a support system with the missions in the four provinces and one region in India, addressing social, economic, educational and developmental issues of these marginalized people with a special focus on women and children. Members visit the missions regularly and share their time, talents and resources with the self-help groups, teachers and social



workers. Based on the analysis of their report, responsibilities are shared among the members.

**Education for poor children:** Amid challenges and prospects, SVDs promote primary education of the poor tribal children of the inaccessible rural areas in India. Tribal children stay in the hostels to do their formal studies as their homes are in the distant hills with no access to transport. To empower these children with education we are helping financially in the building of hostel facilities for children, especially for girls, as well as computer lab rooms, library books, toilets and shower blocks, etc.

**Healthcare:** DDW networks with Vikas Deepti, Odisha (Physically challenged children's home), to provide care and treatment that include physiotherapy and surgical correction of deformities for the disabled children. Some members collaborate with Asha Jyothi, Hyderabad, to support and care for children affected and infected with HIV/AIDS.

### **The Road Ahead...**

“No one has the right to be happy alone” is the motto of DDW. A call to be a missionary is a call from Christ to deepen our own faith and share it with the people around us. Besides the social activities that we are involved in, we give priority to our growth as disciples. We are learning to integrate our personal lives with Arnoldus Spirituality and to deepen our commitment to the SVD missions as lay partners. We need to expand our understanding of mission. Our practical involvement needs to be enriched by both academic and spiritual reflection. We need to grow in our identity as DDW and grow into the spirit of what it means to be associate members of the SVDs.

Being a disciple is a challenge. Collaboration is not always easy – sometimes amongst us, sometimes with the SVDs. Keeping the dialogue channels open has helped us in overcoming the communication and relationship blocks. What has helped us in the process is the strong faith experience that together we can do much and that in times of difficulties an answer always emerges. Many of the group members have truly felt the power of Christ to meet the challenges and move forward in the mission. We believe in the

‘power of togetherness’. When the experience of unity is accompanied by confidence, we can work together, serve together, and pray together, trusting in the Lord always. May the heart of Jesus live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people.

### **4.1.3 The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ), Manila**

#### **The Beginnings**

In August of 2009 during the Centennial Celebration of the SVDs in the Philippines, then SVD Superior General Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD addressed the XVDs (ex-seminarians/priests): “Our Founder St. Arnold Janssen had considered to establish another order to express the lay charism among his congregations, but the plan did not materialize in his lifetime. Perhaps St. Arnold Janssen’s plan could somehow be actualized.” Several mission-oriented men and women in Philippines took the challenge and organized among themselves to form a lay society, The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ).

The founding Chairman and President were Mr. Joseph Pernia and Mr. Eli Segundo, respectively. The latter, following his demise in 2012, was succeeded by Mr. Tyrone Cimafranca. In September 2010, the Constitution and By-laws of LSSAJ were ratified by a General Assembly. Fr. Restituto Lumanlan, SVD is the current Spiritual Director. This Association was recognized as the official lay association by the Philippines Central province (PHC) in January 2014.

#### **Unique Message: Faith Life Disconnect**

The fundamental insight behind the creation of the LSSAJ is that the disconnect between faith and life is the root cause of the failure of personal spirituality and of the social problems in Philippine society. Faith has become a set of devotions and rituals rather than a way of life. Thus, contradictions abound in Philippine society between the bases of our Christian faith and rampant acts of corruption, social injustice, oppression of the weak and poor, environmental abuse and criminality. Should not a predominantly Christian country in Asia have more righteous citizens behaving in



accordance with their Christian beliefs? Surely, Christian values provide a more encompassing and deeper foundation for righteous living than mere human values. Christ became man to show us the way to righteous living not only in theory but also in practice in all his humanity. Thus, LSSAJ finds meaning in responding to some of these challenges in our society.

### **Important Activities**

**Collaboration with SVD:** The following are some of the activities that are done in collaboration with the SVDs; we enjoy doing our mission and there are significant effects because of this active collaboration.

- Doing mission work for the Indigenous Peoples together with SVDs
- Mangyans in Mindoro, Aetas in Pampanga and Dumagats in Rizal
- Active member of VIVAT International, Philippines (National Executive Team)
- Gives Legal assistance to SVDs via lawyers - members
- Active in Education, Value Formation, Skills and Capacity Building and Alternative Learning System (ALS)
- Yearly participation in the SVD 4CD Camp in Divine Word College Calapan
- Monetary assistance to Divine Word Seminary
- Attended Jubilee Celebrations of SVDs in the Philippines
- Membership on Board of Divine Word Colleges
- Assistance/consultancy to Divine Word College Vigan to increase enrollees
- Collaboration/coordination with SVD Mission Secretary and other coordinators on four Characteristic Dimensions

### **Spirituality Exercises**

- Spiritual Formation for the members
- Gave retreat to non-teaching and teaching personnel at Divine Word College, Vigan
- Facilitated Community Reflection – ‘The Love of Jesus impels us’

### **Conducted Feeding Programs**

- Active in AJKC(Arnold Janssen Kalinga Center) for the homeless

### **Conducted Faith Transforming Life Sessions**

- Conducted these sessions in the Divine Word Colleges and University, in Bangued, Calapan, Laoag, Legaspi, San Jose, Semirara, Urdaneta, Vigan and Holy Name University in Tagbilaran

### **Social Issues**

- Conducted Symposium on Mining, Good Governance and Poverty
- Involved in Pilipino Movement for Transformational Leadership in preparation for 2016 Philippine Election
- Networking with Church, Government and NGOs in the rehabilitation of drug-dependents
- Providing assistance to families of Drug Victims

### **Formation**

- Formation of LSSAJ to strengthen families and protect life
- Formation of LSSAJ Youth

### **Disaster Relief**

- Disaster Relief for earthquake victims in Bohol
- Disaster Relief for Yolanda victims in the Eastern Visayas in collaboration with the SVD Philippines Southern Province

### **Environment**

- Caring for Mother Earth, clean air, water and land, planting of trees

### **Poverty alleviation projects**

- Some of our members provided employment directly and by referral
- Giving Skills Training to poor people in LSSAJ chapters
- Microfinancing in Manila and in Cavite
- Established cooperatives in Dasmarinas, Cavite and Pampanga

### **Leveraging on Arnoldian Connection**

We collaborate with the Arnoldian congregations, especially the SVD, with their schools, parishes, and missions nationwide. They offer LSSAJ a national platform for effectively carrying out its advocacies. Collaboration is naturally synergistic with their

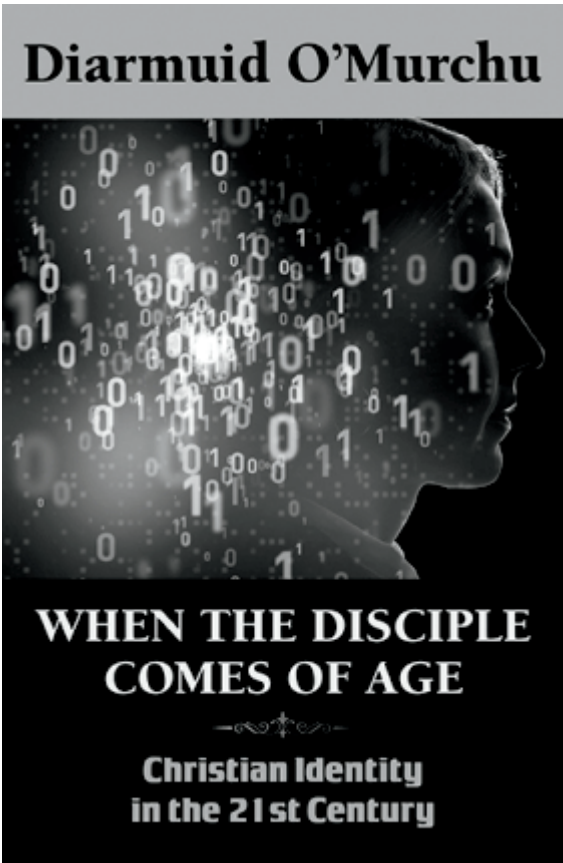
religious and spiritual inputs complemented by our lay and secular perspective in development work. The 17th SVD General Chapter in Rome has boosted collaboration between the SVD and LSSAJ, having now an explicit SVD orientation towards collaboration with laity. We have created a committee on collaboration that will work with a counterpart committee of the Philippine Central Province. This should naturally expand to the Southern and Northern Philippine Provinces.

**Conclusion**

The role of the laity is an essential component in actualizing the *missio Dei*. Today, lay people are gifted with many talents, abilities and gifts; many are professionally trained, well-educated and are great innovators. Being in the secular world brings a lot of reflections on the contemporary situation, the Church, and the way the Church and religious congregations function. Some of the lay persons and the lay partners groups are filled with passion and commitment, thus the religious congregations who share their charism with the lay people are much more enriched to see the new horizons, new ways and new possibilities as these groups bring newness to the congregations and to the local community. The religious congregations who are making progress in promotion of lay partners groups have become more effective in the missions and also found themselves more meaningful in their interactions with the laity. Along with the recognition of the lay partners, our duty is to give good formation; this would strengthen their orientation and commitment. The religious congregations should be able to share their ‘space’ – the institutions, buildings and houses for the activities of the lay partners. These groups being independent would be very significant, they make decisions on their activities, programs and finances. Religious congregations are only to give them animation and support. That makes room for the lay people to take more initiatives and to be innovative.

The charism of a religious congregation would continue as well as become more effective to the extent that it strengthens the lay partners groups in its mission areas. Through their involvement in mission, they become true missionary disciples in action. The above examples are witness to this fact.

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(Gift from ORBIS BOOKS)

## Vers le futur avec les laïcs

### L'Association Missionnaire de Marie Immaculée (AMMI)

### à la suite d'Eugène de Mazenod

#### Introduction

Depuis Vatican II, la réalité des associations dans l'Eglise est désormais un mode de collaboration irréversible du laïcat à la même mission apostolique de l'Eglise. Un certain nombre de documents y soulignent des précisions importantes sur la place et le rôle des laïcs dans l'Eglise, notamment: le décret sur l'apostolat des laïcs « *Apostolicam, Actuositatem* » ainsi que l'exhortation apostolique de Jean-Paul II, *Christifideles laici*.

Par ailleurs, le canon 215 du code de 1983 énonce le droit de libre association des fidèles. Dès lors, depuis plusieurs années, beaucoup d'instituts de vie consacrée ont accueilli, dans la mouvance de leurs charismes, des laïcs désireux de vivre leurs baptêmes selon la spiritualité de leur fondateur.

Dans cette perspective, les Constitutions et Règles des OMI stipulent : « *Le charisme de saint Eugène de Mazenod, don de l'Esprit à l'Eglise, rayonne dans le monde. Des laïcs se reconnaissent appelés à y participer selon leur état de vie, et à le vivre selon des modalités qui varient suivant les milieux et les cultures. Ils participent au charisme dans un esprit de communion et de réciprocité entre eux et avec les Oblats. Pour vivre de façon plus intense la mission de l'évangélisation selon le charisme oblat, des laïcs se regroupent en associations.* » (R. 37 A).

#### 1. Brève historique de l'AMMI

Des initiatives de trois genres différents ont conduit à la création de l'Association Missionnaire de Marie Immaculée (AMMI).

Il y eut d'abord les résolutions des Chapitres généraux du temps du Fondateur. Le Chapitre général de 1893, inspiré par les mesures prises par les Oblats de France et d'Angleterre, approuva deux résolutions visant, l'une, la fondation d'une association ou d'un tiers-ordre et, l'autre, la création d'une association pour le soutien financier des juniorats. Le Chapitre de 1898 admettait l'Association missionnaire mariale de la Province d'Allemagne au partage des prières, suffrages et bonnes œuvres de la Congrégation.

En 1896 paraissait à Paris une brochure ayant pour titre « *Association des Oblats de Marie Immaculée* ». On ne sait toutefois pas si cette association a jamais pris corps. En 1929, Mgr Augustin Dontenwill, Supérieur général depuis 1908, adressait à la Congrégation sa circulaire 141 sur l'Association. Il y eut, à la suite de cette circulaire, une véritable expansion de l'Association à travers toute la Congrégation, comme le montrent les rapports de plusieurs Provinces au Chapitre général de 1947. Les capitulants de ce Chapitre, qui élirent le P. Léo Deschâtelets comme Supérieur général, demandèrent à celui-ci d'exposer en détail dans une circulaire les conditions d'engagement, les bénéfices spirituels accordés aux membres, les messes à dire, etc. Le P. Deschâtelets remplit ce mandat par sa circulaire 182 du 25 janvier 1948, intitulée *L'Association Missionnaire de Marie Immaculée*.

L'élément le plus positif de cette circulaire était l'insistance qu'elle mettait sur la formation spirituelle des membres. Un nouvel élan était donné. Les revues missionnaires des Provinces étaient considérées comme l'organe de l'Association.

## 2. Qu'est-ce que l'AMMI ?

Pour bien comprendre l'AMMI, il faut relire la circulaire de Mgr Dontenwill qui la définissait en ces termes :

*« L'Association de Marie Immaculée est comme une prolongation de notre Congrégation parmi les fidèles; elle veut grouper, autour de nous, les amis de nos entreprises et, surtout, de nos missions.*

*Ses membres se proposent de travailler, par les moyens en leur pouvoir, à nous soutenir et à nous venir en aide dans notre apostolat missionnaire.*

*Sous la protection de Marie Immaculée, Mère de Miséricorde, ils deviennent les apôtres-auxiliaires des Missionnaires Oblats; ils font, en quelque sorte, partie de notre famille religieuse, prenant part à ses joies et à ses deuils, à ses combats et à ses luttes, se réjouissant de nos succès, faisant connaître de plus en plus notre Congrégation, lui gagnant de nouveaux amis, propageant ses publications, lui amenant des vocations et soutenant de leurs aumônes son apostolat.*

*[...] Par elle, nous disséminons dans le monde des groupes d'âmes qui nous sont dévouées, regardent notre famille religieuse comme la leur, prennent à cœur ses intérêts et dirigent vers elle des vocations de plus en plus nombreuses »* Lettre circulaire no 141, dans *Cire, adm.*, IV (1922-1947), p. 151-152.

Ainsi donc, le groupe des laïcs ainsi constitué dans une association bien définie s'engage à vivre le charisme de Saint Eugène de Mazenod.



**Saint Eugène de Mazenod.**

Selon la Règle 37a : *« Le charisme de Saint Eugène de Mazenod, don de l'Esprit à l'Eglise, rayonne dans le monde. Des laïcs se reconnaissent appelés à y participer selon leur état de vie, et à le vivre selon des modalités qui varient suivant les milieux et les cultures. Ils participent au charisme dans un esprit de communion et de réciprocité entre eux et avec les Oblats. Pour vivre de façon plus intense la mission de l'évangélisation selon le charisme oblat, des laïcs se regroupent en associations (...). »*

Une recommandation est même faite à tous les Oblats en ces termes : *« Fidèles à la tradition oblate, les communautés auront à cœur de promouvoir l'Association Missionnaire de Marie Immaculée pour la formation du laïcat et la participation à la spiritualité et à l'apostolat des Oblats ».* **(Règle 37b)**

L'associé, vivant à la suite d'Eugène de Mazenod, a donc une quintuple identité : passionné du Christ, passionné de l'Eglise, passionné de la mission, vivant un lieu de communion avec les Oblats et vivant un style de vie simple et en communauté (R. 37 a)

### ***L'Associé est un passionné du Christ***

C'est en réponse à un appel du Christ que les laïcs associés vivent leur baptême, éclairés par le charisme d'Eugène de Mazenod. Dans un esprit de famille, ils partagent entre eux et avec les Oblats la même spiritualité et la même visée missionnaire. Ils sont disciples à la suite des Apôtres. Ils témoignent de la présence vivante du Christ Sauveur au milieu du monde. Ils approfondissent leur relation au Christ par la fréquentation de la Parole de Dieu, la méditation, la prière et la liturgie. L'Eucharistie et l'Evangile sont la source et le centre de toute leur vie. Marie, qui donne le Christ au monde, est leur modèle.

### ***L'Associé est passionné de l'Eglise***

Comme le Fondateur, les laïcs associés aiment l'Eglise, Corps du Christ, Peuple de Dieu, signe et instrument de Jésus-Christ dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. Us désirent construire en Eglise, pour répondre aux défis du monde d'aujourd'hui et aux appels nouveaux.

### ***L'Associé est un passionné de la mission***

Passionnés de l'humanité, les laïcs associés ont foi en la dignité de chacun devant Dieu. Ils voient la réalité du monde avec le regard du Christ Sauveur et Evangéliste. Pleinement engagé dans les réalités séculières, ils font de la famille une des priorités de leur mission, qu'ils vivent avec audace, initiative, créativité et persévérance. Us ont un souci de proximité, d'attention et d'écoute des personnes. Us vont vers elles. Us font une option privilégiée pour les pauvres aux multiples visages. Ils nomment, dénoncent et combattent les injustices, tout en se préoccupant de prendre une part active dans l'histoire de leur peuple.

***Les laïcs associés vivent un lien de communion avec les Oblats, normalement avec une communauté.***

Ce lien peut être vécu diversement selon les situations, mais il est essentiel. Les Oblats et les laïcs associés reconnaissent qu'ils ont besoin les uns des autres; ils vivent une relation de réciprocité dans l'ouverture, la confiance et dans le respect de la vocation de chacun.

Chacun approfondit le charisme d'Eugène de Mazenod selon sa vocation spécifique et enrichit l'autre de ses découvertes et expériences. Oblats et laïcs associés vivent la complémentarité dans la croissance mutuelle. Ils se retrouvent ensemble pour relire leur vie et leurs engagements dans le monde à la lumière de la Parole de Dieu et du charisme du Fondateur.

### ***Etre Associé suppose un style de vie simple***

Ce style est caractérisé par une manière d'être ensemble, empreinte de charité, de fraternité et d'ouverture aux autres. Les Associés sont des personnes de prière. Conscients de leur pauvreté devant Dieu et devant les autres, ils vivent en solidarité avec les gens de leur milieu. Diverses modalités d'engagement formel ou informel sont possibles selon les Régions et selon la volonté des associations laïques.

Ce qui l'amène à vivre le charisme d'Eugène de Mazenod.

### **3. L'AMMI-RDC et ses objectifs**

Selon nos Statuts, l'objet de l'AMMI est de travailler en collaboration avec les OMI à la poursuite des objectifs de notre Fondateur Saint Eugène de Mazenod, à savoir « l'évangélisation des pauvres » et la promotion de tout homme et de tout l'homme. La spiritualité est christocentrique et mariale.

***Les objectifs spécifiques de l'AMMI se résument en ces termes :***

- Travailler dans les domaines de l'éducation, la formation, l'orientation et l'encadrement des jeunes.
- Promouvoir la santé, le développement et la promotion humaine dans toutes ses dimensions.
- Soutenir les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans leur pastorale, notamment apporter le Christ aux pauvres.
- Accompagner les personnes vulnérables (ex-prisonniers, enfants de la rue, etc.) pour leur réinsertion sociale.

A cela s'ajoutent quelques devoirs :

- Appui aux œuvres missionnaires de la congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée.
- La promotion de la vocation Oblate.
- La collaboration aux activités Missionnaires Oblates.

L'AMMI-RDC existe depuis bien longtemps, mais il faut préciser que c'étaient des actions individuelles de certains missionnaires Oblats, parfois pas bien comprises, mais surtout pas du tout formalisées. Les Associés étaient parfois liés à un prêtre.

Mais c'est depuis quelques années que l'on a cherché à asseoir effectivement l'Association sur des bases légales et juridiques. Ainsi, après plusieurs rencontres de sensibilisation à Kinshasa, Idiofa et Kikwit, une Assemblée générale a été convoquée du 11 au 12 juillet 2014 par le Supérieur Provincial, P. Abel Nsolo.

Au cours de cette Assemblée, les candidats associés ont élaboré, débattu et approuvé les Statuts et élu le Comité provincial pour un mandat de trois ans. Le 13 juillet, les premiers associées (24) ont émis leurs premiers engagements devant le Père Pinon, Conseiller général venu de Rome. En février 2015, un deuxième groupe de 22 associés ont émis leurs engagements à Kikwit et le 31 mai, 29 associés agrandissaient le groupe de Kinshasa.

En principe, le 12 juillet, 6 autres candidats vont rejoindre l'Association à Kinshasa et 50 le feront le 15 août à Idiofa.

Au 15 août, nous serons plus de 130 associés en République démocratique du Congo.

#### **4. Perspectives d'avenir**

Pour répondre à nos objectifs spécifiques, le Comité actuel se propose, au cours des deux années à venir, de :

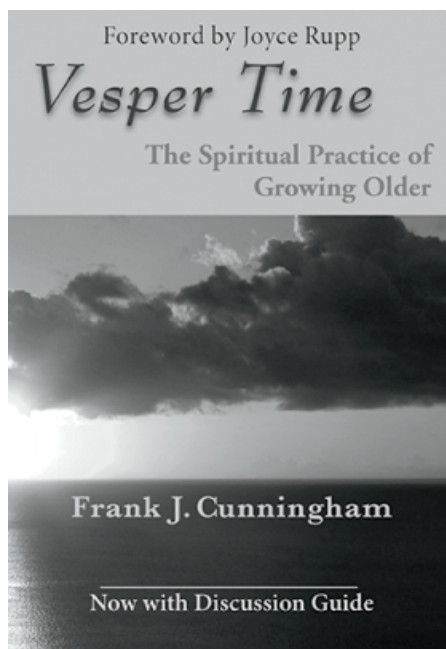
1. Continuer l'implantation de l'Association, notamment dans les diocèses de Lolo, d'Isangi ainsi que dans la Mission d'Angola.

2. Mettre en place des activités génératrices de revenus pour l'Association et le soutien aux activités missionnaires Oblats.
3. Lancer des initiatives de communion fraternelle et devant susciter des vocations oblates, notamment les campagnes d'évangélisation ou missions populaires ainsi que des concerts avec la participation des chorales de nos paroisses oblates.
4. Des visites auprès des prisons et des formations religieuses, notamment le pré-noviciat d'Idiofa, le noviciat d'Ifwanzondo et le scolasticat de Kinshasa.

Cela implique un véritable engagement de tous et de chacun. Et la formation initiale reçue nous met dans les dispositions d'y arriver.

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**(Translation will be available at our website)**



**(Gift from ORBIS BOOKS)**



## La Misión del Laico Ante Los Desafíos del Siglo XXI

*"Soy católico cristiano y amigo de hacer bien a todo el mundo; que para esto tomé la orden de la caballería andante que profeso, cuyo ejercicio aun hasta hacer bien a las ánimas del purgatorio se extiende".<sup>1</sup>*

Uno de los aspectos que más me llaman la atención del laico, Miguel de Cervantes, es su fe y religiosidad manifestada a lo largo de las páginas de su obra universal, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*.

En el Siglo de Oro Español, ciertamente, y como veremos a continuación, apenas se hablaba de la importancia del laico en la misión eclesial, pero, ello no resta importancia a la fe comprometida de la que sí eran conscientes la mayoría de los laicos de esa época. Razón por la cual, me parece oportuno traer a la memoria algunas de las citas de esta grandiosa obra literaria para hablar sobre la misión laical.

En su compañía, vamos a exponer esta misión en tres grandes bloques. En el primero, nos referiremos a la misión del laico a lo largo de la historia. En el segundo, presentaremos la esencia de donde parte la misión y la realidad que la alimenta, así como sus tentaciones y desafíos. Y en el tercer y último bloque, analizaremos cómo es el mundo postmoderno y globalizado en el que vive el laico y, desde ese conocimiento, plantearemos los retos a los que se enfrenta, así como la necesidad de la formación y el diálogo ecuménico e interreligioso para realizarlo con mayor fruto.

### 1. Retazos históricos sobre la tarea misionera del laico

Hablar sobre la misión del laico a lo largo de la historia nos obliga a señalar, en primer lugar, la dignidad de la que ésta parte: ser imagen de la misión trinitaria. El Padre ha enviado al Hijo, y el Padre y el Hijo han enviado al

Espíritu Santo, para hacernos partícipes de sus proyectos de vida y amor, y para salvar a la humanidad<sup>2</sup>.

El papa Pío XI, y después sus sucesores y el concilio Vaticano II, han puesto de manifiesto esta realidad, promoviendo el apostolado y la teología del laicado y enfatizando que, en el Pueblo de Dios, todos ingresamos como laicos, pues nadie ha sido bautizado cura u obispo<sup>3</sup>.

De forma semejante, este era también el sentir de la Sagrada Escritura, dado que, en el Antiguo Testamento, *laikos* era referido al pueblo elegido y llamado de una forma especial por Dios, en contraposición a los pueblos paganos. Y, en el Nuevo Testamento, tal como



relata la primera carta de Pedro, este término adquiere, por el bautismo, una designación honorífica; pues los *laikos* son aquellos que forman parte de un “*linaje elegido, sacerdocio real, nación santa, pueblo adquirido*” (1 P 2, 9. Cf. 1 P 2,5.9-10; Ap 1,6; 5,10). De lo que se deduce que, el Cuerpo eclesial está constituido por una gran riqueza y variedad de carismas y ministerios (cf. 1 Co 12, 4-31) y, por lo mismo, no se concibe a sí mismo como clerical, visto “desde arriba”; o como laico, visto “desde abajo”.

#### 1.1. Época oscura para la misión eclesial del laico

<sup>2</sup> Cf. AG 2; EN 14; RMis 2. 3. 18. 21. Lectura de siglas: AG [Concilio Ecuménico Vaticano II, Decreto *Ad gentes*]. EN [PABLO VI, Exhortación apostólica: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 diciembre 1975)]. RMis [JUAN PABLO II, Carta encíclica: *Redemptoris missio* (7 diciembre 1990)].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CONCILIO ECUMÉNICO VATICANO II, Constitución dogmática *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 10.

<sup>1</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, cap. 48. Prt. I.

La importancia que la Biblia y el Magisterio actual dan a la vocación misionera del laico, no resta lo que el estudio teológico sobre esta misión debe aún decir y desarrollar, dado que, a lo largo de la historia eclesial, su tarea misionera ha estado bastante relegada a un segundo plano. Así, y comenzando por el análisis de la etimología de la palabra "laico", nos encontramos con un significado antiguo y ambiguo. Laico es "aquel que no tiene noción de una cosa". Y, a esta definición indeterminada, se suma la de los escritos de Clemente de Roma (90 d.C), quien relata que el *laikos* es aquél que no pertenece a la clase elegida del clero.

En definitiva, casi desde los comienzos de la Iglesia, los laicos fueron designados negativamente. Eran los no clérigos, los no monjes. De lo cual se sigue que, la estructura "de comunión" de la iglesia y el sacerdocio común de los fieles, además de no estar estudiados en profundidad, también fueron prácticamente ignorados. Así lo podemos constatar, aun con mayor rigor, desde que Constantino declaró al cristianismo religión oficial de su imperio, donde todo el pueblo pasó a formar parte de Iglesia y, con ello, se perdió la fuerza originaria que tenían las primeras comunidades cristianas. Seguidamente, con el Edicto de Milán, los obispos comenzaron a gozar de los mismos privilegios que los altos funcionarios del imperio, por lo que la diferenciación teológica entre clérigos y laicos se convirtió además en un contraste sociológico. Los primeros pasaron a ser una clase poderosa y, los últimos, el pueblo sencillo sin una misión concreta que realizar<sup>4</sup>.

Además, con la llegada de la Edad Media y la proliferación de la espiritualidad monástica, el monje comenzó a ser percibido como un modelo de santidad que el laico debía tratar de imitar. Y, sumándose a esta disparidad, estuvo la bula *Clericis laicos* (1296) de Bonifacio VIII; quien, debido a su relación política con los estados europeos, declaró que los laicos habían sido siempre enemigos de los clérigos.

Estas situaciones tensas entre el clero y los laicos provocaron movimientos anticlericales en la Baja Edad Media que se irían endureciendo en la Edad Moderna. Y, como consecuencia de todo ello, la teología, desde el IV concilio de Letrán (1215) hasta el concilio de Trento (1545-1563) tomaría una posición unilateral de los ministerios respecto del laicado. Lo cual, a su vez, hizo que, la eclesiología, en lugar de caracterizarse por su dimensión comunitaria, se convirtiera en una jerarcología<sup>5</sup>.

Esta situación comenzó a experimentar un cierto cambio a finales del siglo XVII e inicios del XIX, pues comenzará a darse mayor relevancia al papel del laico. Aunque, todavía el laico estará prácticamente restringido a ser un ayudante del sacerdote.

## **1.2. Brisas de esperanza en el siglo de la vanguardización**

El siglo XX denominado por algunos como el "siglo de la vanguardización" debido a la explosión de avances en la ciencia, la tecnología, la democracia y los derechos civiles; ha sido también, como señalábamos más arriba, el siglo de la nueva concepción de la misión del laico en la Iglesia.

En los inicios del siglo XX, Pío XI, el "papa de las misiones", hará que la misión del laico comience a tener el protagonismo que se merece, promoviendo tres acciones importantes: la separación de la iglesia y el estado; la retirada de la política de los clérigos y la publicación la encíclica *Ubi arcano* (1922), donde pondrá de relieve la importancia del apostolado y la misión laical. Además, esta encíclica insiste en que de la misión de los laicos no radica en una participación extraordinaria de estos en el apostolado jerárquico, sino que tiene sus propias raíces en el bautismo, la confirmación y el matrimonio. Igualmente, añade, los ámbitos seculares donde se mueve el laico: el trabajo, la familia y los negocios, poseen, gracias al orden creacional, su propia dignidad y legitimidad<sup>6</sup>.

Este impulso a la misión del laicado será después ampliada y ratificada por el concilio

<sup>4</sup> W. KASPER, "Berufung und Sendung des Laien in Kirche und Welt" ("Vocación y misión de los laicos en la Iglesia y en el mundo"), *Geschichtliche und systematische Perspektiven, Stimmen der Zeit*, 205 (1987) 579-593. 580. 583-585.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, 580. 583-585. 587.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, 580. 583-585. 587-588.

Vaticano II. De hecho, la constitución dogmática *Lumen Gentium*, antes de hablar sobre la jerarquía, dedica el capítulo segundo a hablar del pueblo de Dios. Todos los bautizados, señala, participan en el ministerio profético, sacerdotal y real de Jesucristo. Después, en el capítulo cuarto se reafirma la identidad del laico y su plena participación en la misión de la Iglesia<sup>7</sup>. Y, también, en esta misma constitución, se pone de relieve la relación fraternal entre sacerdotes y laicos, como signo de una eclesiología de comunión y de corresponsabilidad. "Común es la dignidad de los miembros (de la Iglesia) por el hecho de su regeneración en Cristo; común es la gracia de adopción filial; común es la vocación a la perfección; ya que no hay más que una salvación, una esperanza y una caridad, sin división" (LG, 32).

Hoy día, el papa Francisco, continuando con la herencia de sus predecesores, recuerda que los laicos son "los protagonistas de la Iglesia y del mundo; a los que nosotros estamos llamados a servir y no de los cuales tenemos que servirnos"<sup>8</sup>.



## 2. La índole sacramental y contemplativa del laico misionero

*"Ea pues, manos a la obra, venid a mi memoria cosas de Amadis, y enseñazme por donde tengo que comenzar a imitaros; mas ya sé que lo que él hizo fue rezar, y así lo haré yo ... Y lo que le fatigaba mucho, era no hallar por allí otro ermitaño que le confesase, y con quien consolarse"*<sup>9</sup>. Mas, *"Encomiéndate a Dios (Sancho) y (ten)... firme propósito de acertar en cuantos negocios te ocurrieren,*

*porque siempre favorece el cielo los buenos deseos"*<sup>10</sup>

Miguel de Cervantes, una vez más, a través de este texto de su novela, nos da fe de su práctica sacramental y de oración. Acojamos, pues, este testimonio como punto de partida para hablar sobre estos aspectos en la misión del cristiano.

### 2.1. El laico llamado a la misión por el bautismo

El sacramento del bautismo, esbozábamos líneas más arriba, es la fuente de donde dimana la identidad misionera. Esta identidad, decía san Juan Pablo II, en su exhortación sobre el laicado, nos la ha dado Cristo Jesús. Pues en Él, muerto y resucitado, el bautizado llega a ser una "nueva creación" (*Gál 6,15; 2Cor 5,17*), manifestando, a través de la misión que se le confía en este sacramento, la santidad de su ser en la santidad de todo su obrar<sup>11</sup>.

En virtud, por tanto, del sacramento del bautismo y también del sacramento de la confirmación, cada cristiano tiene un deber-derecho y una participación, a su manera, en la vocación al apostolado; convirtiéndose así, y por medio de su trabajo, en un discípulo misionero para la Iglesia y para la santificación del mundo. Por consiguiente, el laico debe ser consciente de que no es un simple obrero que trabaja en la viña, sino que forma parte de la viña misma<sup>12</sup>: "Yo soy la vid; vosotros los sarmientos" (*Jn 15,5*).

Además, por el bautismo, la misión del laico participa del *triplex munus* sacerdotal, profético y real de Jesucristo. Así, por el oficio sacerdotal se ofrece a sí mismos y ofrece todas sus actividades, incluso el descanso corporal y espiritual al Señor. Por el oficio profético, Jesucristo le hace su testigo, dándole el sentido de la fe y la gracia de la palabra. Y, llamándole, a través de su vida cotidiana y de las condiciones generales del mundo, a hacer resplandecer la novedad y la fuerza del

<sup>7</sup> Cf. LG, cap. II y IV.

<sup>9</sup> FRANCISCO, *carta del papa al presidente (cardenal Marc Armand Oueltet), Pontificia Comisión para América Latina (CAL)*, Vaticano, 19 de marzo de 2016.

<sup>9</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, *o. c.*, cap. 26. Prt. I.

<sup>10</sup> Idem, cap. 43. Prt. II.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, Exhortación Apostólica *Christifideles Laici* (CHL), 17. LG, 39-42. FRANCISCO, *Discurso a los participantes en la plenaria del Pontificio Consejo para los Laicos*, n° 9-14, 7 de diciembre de 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. CONCILIO VATICANO II, Decreto *Apostolicam actuositatem* (AA), 2. JUAN PABLO II, CHL, 17. RM, 71. FRANCISCO, *Discurso a los participantes... Laicos*, n° 9-14. ID, Exhortación apostólica *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), 120.

Evangelio, entre creyentes y no creyentes. Y, por el oficio real, está llamado, de modo particular, a restituir el valor originario a la creación. Saneando las estructuras y las condiciones del mundo, impregnando de valores morales la cultura y, en fin, ordenarlo todo para el bien del hombre<sup>13</sup>.

## 2.2. Tentaciones, limitaciones y desafíos en la misión del laico

*“Nuestras obras no han de salir del límite que nos tiene la religión cristiana que profesamos. Hemos de matar en los gigantes a la soberbia, a la envidia en la generosidad y buen pecho, a la ira en el reposado continente y quietud del ánimo”*<sup>14</sup>.

Estas tentaciones que plantea D. Quijote a Sancho, ciertamente traen como consecuencia grandes limitaciones en la misión. Pero existen otras contingencias de las que no se suele hablar, pero que, sin embargo, también son grandes gigantes a los que hay que hacer frente, para dar la dignidad que se merece a la misión del laico.

Por ejemplo, tal como destacan los últimos papas, hay que hacer frente al clericalismo que, durante siglos, se ha mantenido por parte de algunos sacerdotes. En éste, suele ocurrir que el cura clericaliza al laico y, a su vez, por falta de aduleza o por comodidad, el laico pide ser clericalizado. Lo cierto es que, con estas actitudes, han surgido dos problemas en la misión del laico: no cumplir con sus responsabilidades específicas en el mundo profesional, social, económico, cultural y político; y alejar las realidades del mundo de la iluminación del Evangelio y del aporte de los clérigos. Por otro lado, el laico corre el peligro de reivindicar protagonismos en las jerarquías eclesiales y en las labores específicamente pastorales, y dando a entender una Iglesia deformada y apartada del ámbito social<sup>15</sup>.

En lo que respecta a la tentación del clericalismo, ésta, separa la fe y la vida, porque

entrega al clero la responsabilidad exclusiva de la evangelización y aleja al Evangelio del mundo. Bien porque lo encierra en el ámbito clerical, bien porque lo lanza al mundo, pero con el riesgo de diluirlo, dado que no cuenta con los laicos, que son quienes conocen y están más en el mundo<sup>16</sup>.

## 2.3. Contemplar para poder evangelizar

*“¿Y qué haré si no tengo rosario? En esto le vino al pensamiento cómo le haría, y fue que rasgó una gran tira de las faldas de la camisa, que andaban colgando, y dióle once nudos, el uno más gordo que los demás y esto le sirvió de rosario el tiempo que allí estuvo, donde rezó un millón de aventarías”*<sup>17</sup>.

La devoción a la Virgen María es una constante en la vida cristiana de los cristianos y, de un modo singular, en España. Ya Gonzalo de Berceo destacaba dos características en la religiosidad popular mariana: la idea de protección y de servicio. Y así lo podemos constatar también en la devoción que nos muestra el laico Miguel de Cervantes a través de su Quijote.

En la religiosidad actual, también el laico, además de recurrir a María para realizar su misión, la toma como modelo de oración y contemplación. Mirándose en Ella, reconoce la necesidad de encontrarse con Dios y de estar en "un continuo subir al monte del encuentro con Dios para después volver a bajar, trayendo el amor y la fuerza que derivan de éste, a fin de servir a nuestros hermanos y hermanas con el mismo amor de Dios"<sup>18</sup>.

El laico misionero debe saber que no se puede transmitir el Evangelio sin conocer lo que significa «estar» con Jesús y vivir en el Espíritu de Jesús la experiencia del Padre. Pues sólo a partir de esta experiencia de «estar» con Él, se puede recibir el impulso para el anuncio, para la proclamación, y para compartir lo que se ha vivido como bueno, positivo y bello.

Además, sabe que sólo el amor de Jesucristo puede atraer hacia sí a los hombres con los que se encuentra cada día en el lugar donde desarrolla su trabajo; porque sólo en la relación

<sup>13</sup> Cf. LG 35-36. AA 6; AG 15. PABLO VI, EN, 73. CATECISMO DE LA IGLESIA CATÓLICA (CIC), 901. 904-905. 909. FRANCISCO, *Discurso a los participantes... Laicos*, n° 9-14.

<sup>14</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, *O. C.*, cap. 8. Prt. II.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Discurso a la Conferencia Episcopal de las Antillas*, 7 de mayo de 2002, 2. BENEDICTO XVI, *Diálogo con los sacerdotes en el Encuentro internacional de sacerdotes*, 10 de junio de 2010. FRANCISCO, *Discurso al Comité de Coordinación del CELAM*, 28 de junio de 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Discurso... Antillas*. BENEDICTO XVI, *Diálogo con los sacerdotes... FRANCISCO, Discurso al ... CELAM*.

<sup>17</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, *O. C.*, cap. 46. Prt. II.

<sup>18</sup> BENEDICTO XVI, *Mensaje para la cuaresma 2013*.

intensa con Él se aprende «el arte del vivir». Un «arte» que abre a la esperanza, porque el Señor ha vencido a la muerte y su Espíritu actúa con fuerza en la historia<sup>19</sup>. Una historia en la que debemos apuntar más alto, hacia esa santidad que lejos de hacernos menos humanos, permite que nuestra debilidad se encuentre con la fuerza de la gracia<sup>20</sup>.

La oración y la contemplación son, pues, el manantial de dónde brota la fuerza para la misión. Porque, como recuerda el papa Francisco, cada vez que hacemos la señal de la cruz y cada vez que decimos "Padre nuestro", estamos renovando las raíces que nos dan origen. Este Padre, para el que cada uno de nosotros somos hijos amados y no personajes virtuales, hace que, en vez de triunfar el miedo y la incertidumbre en la misión, afloren el bien y la esperanza<sup>21</sup>.

La oración, además, le permite al laico misionero estar en continuo discernimiento y diálogo con la Trinidad. Para poder preguntarle al Espíritu Santo qué espera Jesús de él en cada momento y en cada opción que debe tomar. De este modo, tanto el laico como la misión que realiza, se convierten en un camino de santidad; en un proyecto del Padre para reflejar y encarnar el Evangelio<sup>22</sup>.

Asimismo, en la vida de oración del laico, debe ocupar un lugar preeminente la liturgia y, primordialmente, la celebración de la Eucaristía. La liturgia es la expresión principal y más poderosa de la nueva evangelización, y la

que ayuda a elevar los corazones de los hombres y mujeres hacia Dios<sup>23</sup>. A través de estas celebraciones y de su función pedagógica, experimenta que el sujeto educador es el mismo Dios, y el verdadero maestro en la oración es el Espíritu Santo<sup>24</sup>.

### 3. El reto misionero en un mundo globalizado y postmoderno

*"Vos, Sancho, iréis vestido parte de letrado y parte de capitán, porque en la insula que os doy tanto son menester las armas como las letras y las letras como las armas. -Letras -respondió Sancho-, pocas tengo, porque aún no sé el A, B, C; pero bástame tener el Christus en la memoria para ser buen gobernador. De las armas manejaré las que me dieren, hasta caer, y Dios delante"*<sup>25</sup>.

El ambiente social en que vivió Cervantes también tenía sus dificultades. Pero, está claro que, este buen laico, sabía que confiar al Señor los avatares y complicaciones de su vida diaria era la mejor opción que podía tomar.

El laico de hoy día, como acabamos de ver en el punto anterior, también sabe que necesita la

oración para ser misionero en esta sociedad postmoderna. Ahora bien ¿qué situaciones son las que perturban al hombre del siglo XXI? Si escuchamos la opinión

pública, quizá nos convenza de que la principal amenaza es el terrorismo. Sin embargo ¿es este realmente el problema más acuciante, o más bien otros que no aparecen en las noticias, pero que, sin duda, perturban la estabilidad psíquica y espiritual de la persona?



<sup>20</sup> Cf. XIII ASAMBLEA GENERAL ORDINARIA DEL SÍNODO DE LOS OBISPOS, *Mensaje del Sínodo para la Nueva Evangelización*, 7-28 de octubre de 2012, n. 6 (en lo sucesivo vamos a citar este documento con las siglas MS. NE). ID, *Proposiciones del Sínodo para la Nueva Evangelización*, Ciudad del Vaticano, octubre de 2012, nn. 9. 26. 33. 35. 36. 39. 42. 57 (en adelante este documento vamos a citarlo con las siglas Prp.S. NE). RMi, nn. 13. 26. 51. 78. 80. 91. Este texto, teniendo como fuente el Sínodo para la Nueva Evangelización, fue escrito por M<sup>o</sup> JESÚS HERNANDO con la colaboración del Foro de Misiones que, durante varios años, se ha reunido en la sede del IEME, para estudiar, profundizar y reflexionar en la teología misionera.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. FRANCISCO. Exhortación apostólica *Gaudete et exultate* (GEx), n. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. ID., *Homilía en Palexpo (Ginebra)*, 21 de junio de 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. ID., GEx, n. 19. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Prp. S. NE, n. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. SC, 10. MS. NE, n. 3. Prp.S. NE, nn. 11. 26. 34. 36. RMi, nn. 22. 74. M. J. HERNANDO, *Foro IEME sobre la Nueva Evangelización*.

<sup>25</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, *o. c.*, cap. 42. Prt. I.



Nos referimos, por ejemplo, a la lucha del ser humano por la solidez de las cosas y de los acontecimientos. Necesita que todo deje de estar en una continua fluctuación y devenir. De igual modo, observamos que hay quienes consideran los propios bienes como signo de predilección divina, en vez de una llamada a custodiar la creación para poder servir con responsabilidad a la familia humana<sup>26</sup>. De la misma forma, intuimos que, en medio de esta vorágine y empoderamiento, la persona siente la necesidad de dar sentido a su vida y de encontrar la verdad.

Ante todo ello ¿qué hacer? ¿cómo actuar? Quizá, una de las reacciones que podemos adoptar, nos la aporta el cardenal Francisco Javier Nguyễn van Thuán. Él, cuando estaba en la cárcel por afirmar su fe en Cristo, reflexionando sobre su situación, se dio cuenta de que no podía desgastar sus fuerzas esperando que le liberaran y, por ello, tomó la decisión de vivir el momento presente, colmándolo de amor y aprovechando cada instante que se le presentara para realizar acciones ordinarias de manera extraordinaria<sup>27</sup>.

Realizar acciones ordinarias de manera extraordinaria puede ser el mejor método para dar sentido a la vida en este mundo postmoderno, esforzándose por no absolutizar determinados paradigmas culturales, y preocupándose por los intereses de las personas antes que por los de las cosas. Se trata, en definitiva, de volver la mirada hacia la fragancia genuina de las realidades que nos rodean, para que nuestras relaciones con los demás sean de verdad personales y no virtuales<sup>28</sup>.

Es la hora de realizar una misión en comunión, para determinar cuál es el mejor servicio que podemos hacer. Y, también ¿por qué no?, de escuchar la llamada a "remar mar adentro", hacia la misión *ad gentes*, para poder descubrir la vida de muchas otras personas que, aun no reconociendo en ellas el don de la fe,

buscan con sinceridad el sentido último y la verdad definitiva de su existencia y del mundo<sup>29</sup>.

### 3.1. Cultivar la mente y el espíritu para responder a los desafíos de la misión

*"La de Ja caballería... es una ciencia -replicó don Quijote—... que el que la profesa ha de ser jurisperito y saber las leyes de la justicia distributiva y conmutativa ... hade ser teólogo, para saber dar razón de la cristiana ley que profesa fíclara y distintamente adondequiera que le fuere pedido"*<sup>30</sup>.

Al igual que el caballero D. Quijote, uno de los retos importantes que debe afrontar el laico en su vocación misionera es de la preparación y la formación de manera madura y responsable, para poder ser competente en la misión. Formación que debe estar apoyada y sustentada por una capacitación integral a nivel humano, espiritual y pastoral, que tienda al desarrollo de las virtudes humanas fundamentales, tales como la lealtad, la solidaridad, la fidelidad y, en general, la coherencia entre fe y vida<sup>31</sup>. En ella, sin duda, adquiere un valor especial la reflexión y formación bíblico-teológica iluminada por la Tradición de la Iglesia<sup>32</sup>.

Asimismo, san Juan Pablo II, en su discurso ante las Naciones Unidas, refiriéndose a la ciencia, la cultura y la educación y, tomando como referencia el aforismo aristotélico del *genus humanum arte et ratione vivit*, ponía de manifiesto que la cultura y el deseo de aprender forman parte de la dimensión espiritual y trascendente del hombre. Este, aseveraba, es el modo concreto de ser y existir del ser humano; porque la cultura, además de tener un valor inmanente, enriquece su dignidad y explicita su vocación al conocimiento y la búsqueda de la verdad<sup>33</sup>. De igual modo, el papa Francisco destaca que las culturas profesionales, académicas y científicas proporcionan a la nueva evangelización la oportunidad de realizar un diálogo entre fe y

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Z. BAUMAN, *Modernidad líquida*. Fondo de Cultura Económica de España, Madrid 2017, 39-40. 59. 174-176. C. GEFFRÉ, "El futuro de la religión entre el fundamentalismo y la modernidad": *Debate*, 98-110, 99-105.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. F. J. NGUYEN VAN THUÁN, *Cinco panes y dos peces: mi gozoso testimonio de fe desde el sufrimiento en la cárcel*, México 19999, 21. MS. NE, n. 6. Prp.S. NE, nn. 6. 56. 57. RMi, nn. 2. 28. 38. 86.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. FRANCISCO, *Homilía en Palexpo (Ginebra)*, 21 de junio de 2018. C. GEFFRÉ, "El futuro de la religión...", 99-105.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. MS. NE, n. 6. Prp.S. NE, nn. 6. 56. 57. RMi, nn. 2. 28. 38. 86. FRANCISCO, *Encuentro Ecueménico. Discurso en el Centro Ecueménico de Ginebra*, 21 de junio de 2018.

<sup>31</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, o. c., cap. 18. Prt. II.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, CHL, 35. RM, 72. FRANCISCO, EG, 160.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Discurso de la Unesco*, París el 2 de junio de 1980.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. ID., *Allocuzione all'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite per l'educazione, la scienza e la cultura (UNESCO)*, de 2 de junio de 1980.

razón, así como a desarrollar una nueva apologética y una nueva credibilidad, con el fin de que el Evangelio pueda ser acogido y escuchado por todos<sup>34</sup>.

Además, el laico, en esta toma de conciencia respecto de su misión en el mundo de la cultura y de la ciencia, también debe reconocer que existe una profunda corresponsabilidad entre el Dios de los filósofos y científicos, y el Dios de Abraham, porque toda verdad, incluso parcial, si es realmente verdad, se muestra como universal. El Dios de la Creación, el Dios de la Revelación y el Dios de la Historia de la salvación es el mismo y, por consiguiente, Aquel que fundamenta y garantiza que sea racional e inteligible el orden natural de las cosas sobre el que basan sus teorías los científicos<sup>35</sup>.

De igual modo, ha de ser conscientes de que, aunque en algunos casos, dejándose llevar por las ideologías, la ciencia pone su acento en la producción; sin embargo, mayoritariamente tiene la tarea de ayudar al hombre a "crearse a sí mismo", reconociendo en la religión el camino por medio del cual el ser humano puede responder a sus preguntas más profundas. Y, por su parte, la Iglesia, que tiene como una de sus prioridades la verdad del hombre, debe hacer que la fe se inculte en todos los contextos<sup>36</sup>. Porque, como afirma el físico Paul Davies, en este mundo, dominado por formidables progresos científicos y tecnológicos, es necesario una guía espiritual, pues la ciencia sola no puede proveer adecuadamente a nuestras necesidades espirituales; y, a su vez, cualquier religión que se niegue a abrazar los descubrimientos científicos difícilmente sobrevivirá en el siglo XXII<sup>37</sup>. El laico, por consiguiente, para poder realizar con mayor competencia su misión, debe cultivar su inteligencia, pues una razón que es débil degrada al hombre<sup>38</sup>.

Fundamental es también que el laico conozca la función que ejercen los medios de

comunicación y las redes sociales en toda su novedad y complejidad. Y, junto a ello, que sepa aprovecharlos tanto si realiza su labor misionera en el seno de su diócesis, como si lo hace en la misión *ad gentes*. Hoy, es en este arcópagos donde se cruzan multitud de vidas, de interrogantes y de expectativas, y desde donde se abren nuevas oportunidades y posibilidades para la proclamación del Reino de Dios<sup>39</sup>.

### 3.2. Misionero de la Iglesia en el corazón y las realidades del mundo

*"Procura (Sancho) descubrir ja verdad por entre las promesas y dádivas del rico como por entre los sollozos e importunidades del pobre... muéstratele piadoso y clemente; porque, aunque los atributos de Dios todos son iguales, más resplandece y campea, a nuestro ver, el de la misericordia que el de la justicia"*<sup>40</sup>.

Cervantes conocía bien las miserias de su mundo. Para las de hoy, el papa Francisco nos pide que salgamos sin miedo a ellas, para ofrecer la misericordia y la vida de Jesucristo. Porque, afirma, "prefiero una Iglesia accidentada, herida y manchada por salir a la calle, antes que una Iglesia enferma por el encierro y la comodidad de aferrarse a las propias seguridades"<sup>41</sup>. Asimismo, nos insta a estar unidos y trabajar en comunión, pues, aportando la riqueza que cada uno posee daremos más fruto y nos será más fácil llevar la gracia sanadora del Evangelio a la humanidad que sufre<sup>42</sup>.

La familia es otra de las realidades nucleares que el laico debe tener presente en la actualidad. Tanto para ocuparse de transmitir la fe en ella, como para que cada uno de los miembros que la forman estén presentes en el mundo de la educación, la sanidad, la economía, la política, etc<sup>43</sup>.

La realidad de la juventud es, sin duda, otro lugar donde el laico debe realizar su misión. Prueba de ello es el reciente sínodo sobre ella, que se acaba de concluir en Roma, y en el que el papa propone una escucha real a los jóvenes,

<sup>34</sup> Cf. FRANCISCO, EG, n. 132-134, 242-245, 257.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, Encíclica *Fides et Ratio*, n. 33-35.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. GS 5,33. JUAN PABLO II, *Incontro con i docenti e con gli studenti dell'Ateneo torinese*, 3 de septiembre de 1988.

<sup>37</sup> P. DAVIES, "Science and Religion in the XXII Century", en *Dizionario Interdisciplinare di Scienza e Fede*, 2286.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A. STRUMIA, *L'uomo e la scienza nel magisterio di Giovanni Paolo II*, Cásale Monferrato 1987, Pieme, 17-51.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. MS. NE, n. 10. Prp.S. NE, nn. 18. 51. RMi, nn. 37. 83.

<sup>40</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, *O. C.*, cap. 42. Prt. I

<sup>41</sup> FRANCISCO, EG, n. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Id., *Encuentro Ecueménico... de Ginebra*.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. MS. NE, n. 7. Prp.S. NE, nn. 21. 27. 41. 45. 46. 48. 51. RMi, nn. 42. 45. 57. 71-74. 80.

para no ofrecerles respuestas confeccionadas y ya preparadas<sup>44</sup>. Sin duda, son ellos quienes tienen en sus manos, de un modo especial, el presente y el futuro de la humanidad y de la Iglesia. Por eso, es preciso creer en su capacidad de dejarse fascinar por la persona de Cristo. Porque de su encuentro con El, pueden surgir aspiraciones profundas de autenticidad, de verdad, de libertad y de generosidad, para trabajar por el Reino *ad intra* y *ad extra* de nuestras comunidades eclesiales<sup>45</sup>. La misión - afirma el documento final del sínodo-, es una brújula segura para ellos, pues esta es un "donde sí mismo que conduce a una felicidad auténtica y duradera"<sup>46</sup>. Y un ejemplo de ello lo tenemos en el recién canonizado Nunzio Sulprizio. San Pablo VI que lo beatificó -y que, curiosamente, ha sido canonizado el mismo día que él-, así como el papa Francisco, lo ponen como modelo de valentía y fortaleza en la sociedad y en el encuentro con Cristo, a través del dolor y del sufrimiento<sup>47</sup>.

La opción por los pobres es para la Iglesia, desde sus inicios y en su tradición, una categoría teológica antes que cultural, sociológica, política o filosófica. Por eso, el laico debe estar presente en esta realidad. Además, debe estar ahí, porque esta preferencia de misericordia que ha tenido Dios hacia los pobres y marginados, tiene también consecuencias para la vida de fe de todos los cristianos, dado que estamos llamados a tener "*los mismos sentimientos de Jesucristo*" (Flp 2,5)<sup>48</sup>.

También, en esta realidad de la pobreza, nos encontramos hoy a san Oscar Romero como un gran modelo de santidad. En la homilía de su

canonización el papa Francisco nos decía que el Señor nos pide que dejemos todo lo que paraliza el corazón para dejar espacio al Señor. Porque, el tener y querer demasiado sofoca nuestro corazón y nos hace incapaces de amar a Dios y al hombre. Por eso monseñor Romero supo dejar la seguridad del mundo e incluso su propia seguridad, "para entregar su vida según el Evangelio, cercano a los pobres y a su gente, con el corazón magnetizado por Jesús y sus hermanos"<sup>49</sup>.

### 3.3. La exigencia del diálogo ecuménico e interreligioso en la misión del laico

*"Exclamó Benengeli... Yo, aunque moro, bien sé, por la comunicación que he tenido con cristianos, que la santidad consiste en la caridad, humildad, fe, obediencia y pobreza"*<sup>50</sup>.

La presencia y la cercanía hacia los miembros de otras religiones, como podemos observar, estaba también presente en el tiempo de Cervantes. En el mundo globalizado en que vivimos, es aún más imprescindible que el laico atienda a la persona humana, a través de un camino de diálogo y confianza con las religiones y las culturas, para poder encontrar en ellas las «semillas del Verbo» y presentarles la novedad del Evangelio. En el espíritu de cada una de las personas que forman parte de esas tradiciones religiosas, aseveraba el obispo Pedro Casaldáliga, está "lo más hondo de su propio ser: sus motivaciones últimas, su ideal, su utopía, su pasión, la mística por la que vive y lucha, y con la cual contagia a los demás. Su forma de ser y relacionarse con la totalidad de la realidad"<sup>51</sup>. Y este fue el espíritu con el que vivió y dio su vida Pedro Claverie, obispo de Oran y víctima del islamismo en Argelia. El afirmaba su fe en Dios y se consideraba creyente, pero, también entendía que Dios no es posesión de nadie.

Ser cristiano que vive y anuncia el Evangelio, por tanto, debe llevarnos a comunicar la propia experiencia de fe y caridad, tanto a los hermanos de otras confesiones cristianas, como a los creyentes de otras religiones, y a los que no creen o son indiferentes. Pues sólo a través de este encuentro se puede contribuir a la paz,

<sup>44</sup> FRANCISCO, *Homilía del Papa Francisco en la Misa de clausura del Sínodo de los Obispos*, Vaticano 28 de octubre de 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. MS. NE, n. 9. Prp.S. NE, nn. 20. 51. RMi, nn. 37. 72. 80. 82.

<sup>46</sup> ASAMBLEA GENERAL ORDINARIA DEL SÍNODO DE LOS OBISPOS, *Documento final de la XV Asamblea general ordinaria del Sínodo de los Obispos, sobre el tema "los jóvenes, la fe y el discernimiento vocacional"*, Vaticano, 27 de octubre de 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. PABLO VI, *homilía de beatificación de Nunzio Sulprizio*. 1 de diciembre de 1963. FRANCISCO, *Homilía en la canonización de Pablo VI, Óscar Romero, Nazaria Ignacia, Francesco Spinelli, P. Vincenzo Romano, María Caterina Kasper y Nunzio Sulprizio*, 14 de octubre de 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Homilía durante la Misa para la evangelización de los pueblos en Santo Domingo*, 11 de octubre de 1984, 5: AAS 77 (1985), 358. ID, Carta ene. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 30 de diciembre de 1987, 42: AAS 80 (1988), 572. BENEDICTO XVI, *Discurso en la Sesión inaugural de la V Conferencia general del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe*, 13 de mayo de 2007, 3: AAS 99 (2007), 450.

<sup>50</sup> FRANCISCO, *Homilía en la canonización de Pablo VI*.

<sup>51</sup> M. DE CERVANTES, o. c. cap. 43. Prt. II.

<sup>52</sup> P. CASALDÁLIGA Y J.M., VIGIL, *Espiritualidad de la liberación*, 23.

y al rechazo de todo fundamentalismo y de toda violencia que se produce contra los creyentes de cualquier religión y de los derechos humanos<sup>52</sup>.

#### **a) Caminar con las iglesias y comunidades hermanas**

Este año, estamos celebrando el setenta aniversario de la creación del Consejo Mundial de las Iglesias (CMI). Este Consejo, nació con un fuerte sentido misionero, pues tenía como objetivo la unidad de los cristianos, para poder ser aceptados y creídos en el anuncio de la Buena Nueva. Porque este es, en definitiva, el deseo profundo de Jesús y su oración Padre: "*que todos sean uno... para que el mundo crea*" (Jn 17,21)<sup>53</sup>.

El Vaticano II, en el decreto *Unitatis Redintegratio*, reflexionando sobre esta realidad recordaba que la división "contradice clara y abiertamente la voluntad de Cristo, es un escándalo para el mundo y perjudica a la causa santísima de predicar el Evangelio a toda criatura" <sup>54</sup>. El laico misionero, por consiguiente, debe sentirse llamado al ecumenismo. Este es un camino que se debe realizar en el Espíritu de Jesús y caminando junto a los otros cristianos; orando y trabajando juntos; así como superando la desconfianza mutua, motivada, muchas veces, por la falta de comprensión y conocimiento del otro<sup>55</sup>. Este camino, por tanto, debe de ser un camino de amor, porque como afirmaba San Gregorio de Nisa, "Si el amor logra expulsar completamente al temor y este, transformado, se convierte en amor, entonces veremos que la unidad es una consecuencia de la salvación"<sup>56</sup>.

En esta encrucijada, afirmaba también el papa Francisco, en su reciente viaje a los Países Bálticos, es preciso dejar de mirar las heridas del pasado o toda actitud autorreferencial, para buscar una unidad que nos ayude a hacer frente al individualismo y la secularización que lleva al creyente a pasar de "cristiano residente a

turista". Es preciso acoger la cruz del sufrimiento de tantos jóvenes, ancianos y niños expuestos a la explotación, al sin sentido, a la falta de oportunidades y a la soledad.

La misión, pues, exige al laico la búsqueda de la unidad y el reconocimiento de tantos hermanos en la fe que, por anunciar la Buena Nueva, sufren el destierro e incluso el martirio. Su testimonio debe ayudarlos a descubrir que el Señor pide radicalidad, gratitud y alegría; sabiendo que será Él quien nos dé la fuerza "para hacer de cada tiempo, de cada momento, de cada situación una oportunidad de comunión y reconciliación con el Padre y con nuestros hermanos, especialmente con aquellos que hoy son considerados inferiores o material de descarte"<sup>57</sup>.

#### **b) Encontrarse y orar con los hermanos de otras religiones**

En este mundo plural y globalizado, se necesita aprender a distinguir entre la pluralidad de los nuevos movimientos religiosos o sectas, y la pluralidad de las grandes religiones, dado que es fácil observar cómo se anula la frontera entre el mundo virtual y el real; y cómo se privilegia el mundo de los sentimientos frente a las normas y creencias. Esta forma de pensar, a su vez, fomenta el relativismo y el sincretismo, creando la idea de que algunas mediaciones religiosas (mitos, símbolos, doctrinas, técnicas mentales y ascéticas variadas) son simples objetos de consumo útiles para la experiencia espiritual y para la curación del alma y del cuerpo. Asimismo, en este mercado, se privilegia la doctrina y la moral de la experiencia subjetiva, y la búsqueda de una salvación de bienestar y de máxima plenitud. Es el mundo donde, como afirmaba la socióloga inglesa Grace Davie se está "creyendo sin pertenecer" (*believing without belonging*)<sup>58</sup>.

Frente a esta realidad sectaria y engañosa, el laico misionero debe buscar el diálogo con las religiones y, en comunión con ellas, llenar de sentido la vida de las personas, mostrándolas el camino de la oración, del misterio y de la

<sup>52</sup> Cf. MS. NE, n. 10. Prp.S. NE, nn. 5. 17. 48. 53. RMi, nn. 2. 17. 25. 29. 55-57.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. FRANCISCO, *Encuentro Ecuménico... Ginebra*.

<sup>54</sup> CONCILIO VATICANO II, Decreto *Unitatis redintegratio*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. FRANCISCO, *Discurso en la audiencia con participantes de la Asamblea Plenaria del Pontificio Consejo para la Promoción de la Unidad de los Cristianos*, 28 de septiembre de 2018.

<sup>56</sup> SAN GREGORIO DE NISA, *Homilía 15. Comentario sobre el libro del Cantar de los Cantares*.

<sup>57</sup> FRANCISCO, *Discurso en el encuentro ecuménico en Riga* (Letonia). 24 de septiembre de 2018.

<sup>58</sup> C. GEFFRÉ, "El futuro de la religión....", 99-105.

transcendencia<sup>59</sup>. Este diálogo, como decía Juan Pablo II en su exhortación a los laicos, "tiene una importancia preeminente, porque conduce al amor y al respeto recíprocos, elimina, o al menos disminuye, prejuicios entre los seguidores de las distintas religiones, y promueve la unidad y amistad entre los pueblos"<sup>60</sup>.

El diálogo interreligioso es, por consiguiente, un recorrido obligado de la misión del laico en el del camino hacia el autoconocimiento del hombre. Pues, empeña al sujeto humano en plenitud y, en modo particular, la subjetividad de cada una de las personas que forman esa comunidad<sup>61</sup>. Ahora bien, en este camino, san Pablo VI, nos ponía al tanto de algunos de los peligros y de las tentaciones a las que nos puede conducir el diálogo, si mantenemos una actitud que busque evitar todas las dificultades, y en especial, la doctrinal. Existe la tentación, argüía, de poner a parte los puntos contradictorios, esconderles, debilitarles, modificarles, relativizarles y negarles, para obtener más cómodamente la unión deseada. Esto, puntualizaba, no se puede hacer, ya que el cristianismo es una verdad divina que a nosotros no nos está permitido cambiar, sino sólo aceptarla para nuestra salvación. La fe religiosa, que posee cada tradición, y que le da el carácter específico a su identidad, no es negociable en el diálogo. La fe no es un bien que se pueda vender o cambiar; es un don recibido de Dios y, por ello, no se puede disponer de él a la ligera<sup>62</sup>.

Por otro lado, también es cierto que el diálogo interreligioso debe evitar, tanto la tentación del "integrismo" -que nace de un apego excesivo a la propia fe y lleva a cerrarse en sí mismo y rechazar todo lo demás-, como la del "sincretismo" -que mezcla y relativiza todo, hasta el punto de perder la propia identidad religiosa. De lo que se sigue, explicaba el misionero Manuel Zago, que el diálogo interreligioso -para ser auténtico y no olvidar su objetivo-, no puede buscar la vía fácil e ilusoria, queriendo disimular las eventuales

contradicciones entre la fe de las diversas religiones, sino que debe asumirlas con paciencia<sup>63</sup>. De este modo, se dará un verdadero diálogo de la vida, de las obras, de la experiencia religiosa y de estudio teológico entre los creyentes de todas las religiones. Sólo así, conseguiremos desafiar a las realidades del mundo globalizado y postmoderno que atenazan la vida del ser humano y su sentido de la transcendencia.

(Ref.: *Misiones extranjeras*, N° 287 Noviembre-Diciembre 2018, pp.543-557; An English translation can be found at SEDOS website. Pictures are taken from Comboni Lay Missionary website.)



## CATHOLICITY & EMERGING PERSONHOOD

*A Contemporary Theological Anthropology*

Foreword by Ilia Delio

(Gift from ORBIS BOOKS)

<sup>59</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, RMi, 55.

<sup>60</sup> ID., ChL, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. ID., Encíclica *Ut Unum Sint*, 28, Vaticano 25 de mayo de 1995.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. PABLO VI, EN, n. 53. ID., "Audienza générale del 20 gennaio di 1965": *Osservatore Romano*, (21 gennaio di 1965), 3.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. M. ZAGO, *Nostra Aetate: dialogo interreligioso a 20 anni dal Concilio*, o. c., 16. FRANCISCO, EG, n. 251. BENEDICTO XVI, *Discurso a la Curia Romana*, 21 dicembre 2012. JUAN PABLO II, *Visita "ad limina apostolorum" con los obispos de Tailandia*, Vaticano, 16 noviembre 2001. J. DUPUIS, *Gesù Cristo incontro alle religioni*, Cittadella, Assisi 1989, 63. 330-332.



## Twenty years with Catholics in Japan

### Reflections on the Development of the Catholic Church in the Land of the Rising Sun

*Speech delivered at the Belgian Embassy to the Holy See, on the occasion of the visit of Pope Francis to Japan, 8 November, 2019.*

The Catholic Church in Japan has about half a million believers, 0.4 percent of the population. There are 16 Dioceses, including three Archdioceses, with 1,329 priests and 777 parishes. It is small compared to the great religious Traditions of Shintoism and Buddhism. Whereas in the West we are used to the Catholic Church being present on all levels of society, the Church in Japan is used to being a minority. However, it does have an influence on society as we will see while describing the basic developments we perceived while living and working as a missionary in Japan between 1990 and 2010.



#### 1. Internationality

When my confreres went to Japan after World War II, there wished for more older people in the Church. Now, those Japanese Catholics are aging, as is Japanese society as a whole. When we look at the statistics concerning the Catholics, we notice a growing number of foreigners, among them the so-called “*Nikkeijin*” from Brasil (300.000), descendants of Japanese emigrants. The Filipinos and Vietnamese will play an important role in the future of the Church in Japan. Whereas previously the Church was oriented to helping and welcoming foreigners; now the foreigners are taking more and more care of the Church in Japan. As a CICM I may say we take great care of foreigners to help them integrate into the Church and society. Besides saying mass in their own language, we encourage them to also attend masses in Japanese. Japanese are not gifted at languages, and so the missionaries are those who can bridge the language and cultural gap.

The CICM also took great care of the Vietnamese ‘boatpeople’ who arrived around 1975, but were not directly welcomed by the Japanese Government. We did that work illegally until the Government started to recognize this work, gave subsidies, and eventually took over the “Himeji Resettlement Promotion Center”, that was set up in our compound in Nibbuno, in 1979. It was closed in 1996. The Christian Vietnamese now form a stronghold of Christianity in that area of Japan, between Osaka and Hiroshima. The Dutch confrere who took care of them from the beginning, Fr. Harrie Quaadvliet, CICM, passed away only recently.

It is now very different from Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Visit, 38 years ago. Thus, Pope

Francis will encounter an international Church. Indeed, the future of the Japanese Church lies with the foreigners. The Vatican seems to have acknowledged this development by appointing a missionary Archbishop for Tokyo Diocese, Kikuchi Tarcisio Isao, SVD, and a Spanish Auxiliary, Bishop Josep Maria Abella for Osaka Diocese. Some years ago, the American Father Wayne Berndt, OFM Cap, became Bishop of Okinawa. He was the first non-Japanese bishop since World War II.

## **2. Introduction to Vatican II**

There is a great difference between West Japan and East Japan what concerns how Christianity is lived. West Japan was been the cradle of Catholicism in Japan. It underwent 200 years of persecution and it colors their way of living the faith.

One cannot understand the Japanese Christians without knowledge of this specific past. At the beginning I went around to see these places of tortures and the places of “hidden Christians”, who are called “*Kakurekirishitan*”. They were able to survive 200 years without no priest among them. They are therefore much more traditional in the East of Japan. This is evident in the way liturgy is celebrated, but also in the prayers. In West Japan, the people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima pray fast as if to fulfill their duty as Christians. In East Japan, on the contrary, the people of Tokyo pray calmly and with great intensity.

But overall, the Japanese Church is still a bit pre-Vatican II. The Teaching of Vatican II was introduced to the people only 25 years ago! They call it “*Shinsei*” (*New Life*). The idea of *Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation* as a pastoral endeavor is still new to them. Bishop Matsuura Goro of Nagoya Diocese, with whom I spent a year in Osaka, works a lot for the poor, the downtrodden, the foreigners. However, not all parishioners appreciate this. Social engagement is not yet normal for them. When I was studying Japanese in Osaka, I stayed in the Seminar where Bishop Matsuura was responsible and I went with him in the streets at night to give food and blankets to the homeless. Women too, who were obliged to work as prostitutes, found shelter in the Seminary before they were able to return to

their country. When he was still young, one of our confreres, Fr. François Mouchet, a great animator of the Young Christian Workers movement, lived with his family while working in a garage for one year.

At the Church we gave Griffin courses to help people to talk about their problems, aspirations, future, and to become more active in society as Christians. The Griffin course teaches one to measure up to one’s own vocation as an individual, but these days I think we should teach them the value of working in a group, as individualism is becoming a problem in Japan too.

## **3. Discrimination**

Japanese society, as in every society, is not without discrimination. Discrimination towards their own people, the Burakumin, has a historical background. This is because the area where they come from was in olden times the area of the poor. The CICM explicitly build a church in such a Burakumin area to help to build bridges. Discrimination towards Koreans has improved a lot since a Korean student tried to save a drunk Japanese at the cost of his own life in the underground in Tokyo in 2001, and the joined World Cup 2002. Some of our Christians are now studying Korean and are enjoying the food. The Japanese do not really feel they are part of Asia. Our Indonesian and Filipino confreres experience that the most, and only when they wear their Roman collar as a priest do they feel they are respected. On the other hand, a form of positive discrimination and a minority complex exists towards White people, because they won the war. The same forms of discriminations can be seen at work within the Catholic Church in Japan, even when the religious leaders try to avoid it, but it is getting less now.

## **4. Catholic education is weakening**

The Catholic Church contributes a lot to Japanese society through education. There are many Catholic schools and universities in the country, most of them were started by missionaries, and they offer a very good education: e.g. Sofia University (SJ) and Nanzan University (SVD). It has a great influence on the whole society through this.

But now the missionaries going home, and with less educated clergy, it is not possible to maintain the same level. Also less children in the country forced for instance Eichi University of Osaka Diocese to close in 2014.

The CICM has a boys High School (with junior and senior sections) in Himeji, *Junshingakuin*. Every year five or six students graduate and enroll at the best university in Japan, Tokyo University. The present Empress graduated from a Catholic school and she has called her child “Aiko”, which means literally “child of love”. The character for love, “ai” was however never used before, because in the Buddhist sphere it has a negative connotation, an impure love (*katsu-ai*). In my opinion, this shows her love for Christian teaching. Many kindergartens are also conducted by priests and sisters.



## 5. Christian weddings go on but...

If I can believe my confreres, it was they who started blessing young non-Christian couples. Now 60 to 70 per cent of the young couples choose a Christian wedding (blessing). It became a big business outside the Church too and hotels are specializing in Christian weddings with lay “white” foreigners acting as ministers.

## 6. Church becomes more outspoken

The Japanese church has become more aware and more outspoken in its specific context. For instance, Archbishop Ikenaga Jun spoke at the Synod for Asia in 1998 about the female aspect of God. In the Document that the Japanese Church presented to the Synod of the Family in 2014 it said that “the Church is too western oriented” and “not realistic enough”.

The Church keeps opposing an amendment to Article 9 of the Constitutions that states that Japan may not have its own army.

## 7. Dialogue with other religions

Many Churches have a yearly encounter with nearby Protestants or an interreligious Prayer for Peace. In the Tokyo area of Shinjuku it was our *Oriens Institute of Religious Research* that took the initiative a long time ago. This peaceful coexistence is thanks to the Confucian concept of general respect for tradition, as I explained at the Meeting of Asian Ambassadors to the Holy See in June this year at the Pontifical Urban University, in Rome. In Japan it was Kobo Daishi, back in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, who started the idea of “*shinbutsu-shugo*”, “intermingling of gods and buddhas”. Of course, believers always tend to exclude, but thanks to this Teaching there is an attitude of openness. I might not have been able to have studied for the Buddhist priesthood had I been here in Rome. In Japan, the effort to understand the other is appreciated, not so much by the Church as by the believers themselves. Sometimes, they live two or three faiths at once. When the father of a Japanese friend of mine died, there was a problem because although he had converted to Protestantism, he had never informed his original temple. So after his death, the family and the Buddhist priest wanted a Buddhist funeral, whereas the Protestant parish wanted a Christian funeral. In the end, on the first day they held a Buddhist funeral for the family and the next day a Christian funeral for the parishioners. However, in the very traditional east of the country you can find Buddhist graves with a cross placed on top of it, or on the home altar, the *Butsudan*, with a cross or a statue of Mary beside the Buddhist statue. Believers will not show or tell about it to the Catholic priest as missionaries always taught that when you become a Christian you have to throw away all the “pagan” objects. Even some of the older confreres did that. We just had a similar example here in Rome during the Synod on the Amazon when people threw the religious objects from the Amazon into the River Tiber.

## 8. Dialogue with Shingon Esoteric Buddhism

I was graced to come to know the Shingon Esoteric Buddhist Tradition of Koyasan, a mountain near Nara in Japan, very early in my missionary life in Japan, in fact exactly two months after arrival. I went to study a few years later at the Buddhist Koyasan University there, and those were the most beautiful years of my missionary life so far. Being the only Catholic and foreigner among Japanese Buddhists was a nice experience. Koyasan is a “bessekai”, meaning “other-world”, because it is so different from the big towns. There are more than 120 Buddhist temples on a small plateau in the mountains, only open to men up to one hundred years ago. Now, it has been designated as a World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. The rituals that are performed in the temples have not changed since the start, over a thousand years ago. Every morning I went to the Buddhist temple Muryokoin to take part in the morning ritual. The priest there has been in touch with the Catholic Church for many years, and had met Pope John Paul II as many as 12 or 13 times. For almost 30 years he came to the Rimini Meeting to give a talk. He had a good contact with Don Guissani of the *Comunione e Liberazione* Movement. He learned the value of dialogue, and teaches it to his students and priests as he is responsible for more than 100 temples in the country. The *Risshokoseikai*, a Buddhist lay Movement of Japan, has been helping the Church greatly in the dialogue too. Many of the new religious movements in Japan have interreligious dialogue as one of their pillars.

In Japan, one can find Christians, priests, and religious who are from a Buddhist or Shinto background, who do not feel they have left that religion in becoming Christian. Here, the problem of “double-belonging” arises. When I said to my confrere, late Jan Swyngedouw, specialized in Shintoism, that he had also become a bit of a Shinto believer, he did not negate it. Carmelite philosopher and mystic Fr. Okumura Ichiro, from a Buddhist house, became Christian while studying at a Buddhist university. He wanted to show that Christianity was not a true religion, and he ended up

becoming a Christian. I asked him short shortly before his death the same question, and he too admitted it silently. In the same way, some Buddhist priests are very Catholic. There is a temple in Sakai, near Osaka, that is called Amen-temple. There is a cross there above the Buddhist statue, and it is said that a statue of Maria was placed under the place where the priest knelt in prayer. Shodo Habukawa, a Shingon priest, has seen Pope John-Paul II more than 13 times, and Shodo Harada, a Zen priest, always talks lovingly about his visit to Trappist monasteries in Belgium, and the beer he enjoyed there.

Through taking part in Buddhist rituals I came to understand better the importance of rituals for our religious life. By repeating the same actions, words, and thoughts over and over again, one enters more easily into a meditative mood. Maybe this is why the Japanese Christians are keen on the ritual aspect of the liturgy: silence, correctness, order, and so on. In fact, in the whole of Eastern religions, ritual is more important than knowledge. A Zen monk for instance has first to practice meditation for more than ten years before he is encouraged to study the sutras.

### To conclude:

The Catholic Church is a minority in Japan. However, it works like the Kingdom of God given by Jesus, as a mustard seed or as yeast. For instance, the CICM asked the Brothers of Charity from Ghent to go out to Japan to start to work for the handicapped people in the Tottori area. They were often hidden at the back of the house. Now, the institute is supported by the Japanese Government and Japanese society is taking more and more care of their weaker brothers and sisters. We can say therefore that the Japanese people has not become Christian, but that Japanese society as such did.

# SEDOS Annual Report 2019

## 1. Activities of SEDOS in 2019

We started the year 2019 with a **two-day Workshop**, February 12-13, on the theme of “Appreciative Inquiry” adapted to the context of religious Congregations. Fr. William Nordenbrock, Superior General of the CPPS, introduced us to his method of *Appreciative Discernment*. The workshop was open to leadership teams, and a total of 14 leadership teams joined. It answered a great need to find alternative ways to the problem-solving approach. The Marist Brothers were so kind as to open their place for this gathering free of charge.

The next great event was the Annual five-day **SEDOS Residential Seminar**. This year the theme of “Interreligious Dialogue” was chosen and the title was: *Mission in a Pluralistic World*. About 100 participants took part in the seminar. The speakers came from three religious traditions, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, as well as religious who are in dialogue with those religions. We had also five candidates with a full scholarship from MISSIO AACHEN, four with a full scholarship paid by SEDOS from the surplus of last year, and three with a half scholarship from the Franciscan Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception. A nice moment was the Interfaith Chanting on Wednesday evening in the Chapel.

The third important event of this year has been the two-day **SEDOS Autumn Seminar** on the theme of *Discovering Mission in a Lay context*, 8-9 November 2019. There were not many participants at this seminar, but those who joined were very happy with the content. We have placed Fr. Lazar Stanislaus’ talk online for those who would like to know more about the way to cooperate in mission with our lay brothers and sisters.

The six issues yearly of the **SEDOS Bulletin** are going on as usual. The presentation of the

Bulletin has much improved in the last years, and has now stabilized.

The **SEDOS Website** is being worked on further to make it a real tool for missionaries all over the world to find info on Studies and on Documentation concerning global mission. Sr. Celine was able to complete the long list of the SEDOS Bulletin articles over the last 50 years with their titles and authors: more than 2,500 entries. Our webmaster Fabio has since made this available online with all the files, so the articles can be read directly, and students and missionaries can quickly access a lot of valuable information. We have published these articles so there should be no problem of copyright. We have to be more attentive though concerning the copyright of pictures. A new development is that we offer interesting documents from different Congregations online for other Congregations as a kind of inter-Congregational support.

In preparation for the SEDOS Residential Seminar on interreligious dialogue a **special website “Fountain of Dialogue”** was created in cooperation with Sr. Monique Tarabeh, RGS, based on the results of one group from the workshop on Appreciative Inquiry of two years ago. It is an **online free workshop** of three months with subscription possibility for a daily reminder.



*online workshop,  
a three-month course  
in dialogue*



The director of SEDOS was asked to give several talks during the year: at the meeting of Asian Ambassadors to the Holy See about Interreligious Dialogue in Asia, at the weekly meeting of SCD in Malta about stimulating the missionary spirit, and at the Belgian Embassy about the Church in Japan, and a Webinar on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue at UISG. The talks can be found in the SEDOS Bulletins of this year and on the SEDOS Website.

## 2. Administration of SEDOS in 2020

As there was no longer enough work for two part-time helpers for the Director after the restructuration of SEDOS, we asked Sr. Celine Kokkat, CJMJ, to take over the work of Leila. Leila, the secretary, found a full-time job at the municipal, and so she stopped working for us before the summer holidays. Sr. Celine had done this work before while Leila was on maternity leave and she will be able little by little to do most of the former secretary's work. A better organization of the secretary work is needed to make it easier and more effective (less time consuming).

Sr. Christina Arokiya Mary M., CJMJ, has been helping us since a few months one a half day per week to update the website. Thanks to her, the communication with the webmaster is better and the result can be seen. She will give a presentation of the website later on.

Cooperation with Fr. Biju Thomas, SVD, concerning the finances is going well, and this is because we see each other regularly at table. As we will no longer have a lay person at SEDOS we do not need the legal support of a business consultant. The Congregations to which Sr. Celine, Sr. Christy and I belong are receiving a donation for our contribution. We now know with the help of a lawyer from USG that this is legally correct, but it has to be made clearer. The idea behind the donation is that the person who works at SEDOS, works for his or her own Congregation but at the same time for other Congregations. The agreement stipulates also that the person does it freely and gratuity in order to avoid possible future complications. Miss Philippa Wooldridge will go on helping us with the translation of articles.

## 3. Activities of SEDOS in 2020

We shall start with a new initiative: the SEDOS Spring Session. It is a one-day seminar with lectures on a specific theme. The **first Spring Session** will be on the theme of *Mission in China Today*. It will be held at the big aula of the Jesuit Generalate, on 6th of March 2020, with four specialists in the field. It is open to the public.

The **Residential Seminar** will be on the theme of *Living Green Mission*. It will take place at the Centro Ad Gentes, Nemi, from 4 to 8 May 2020. We were able to engage a very good speaker from America, Sr. Ilia Delio. All the speakers have agreed so far, except for Cardinal Peter Turkson.

For the **Autumn Seminar** a possible theme is *Mission in a Wounded World*, based on the world conference of missiologists, AIMS, that will take place in Sydney in July of next year. However, nothing has yet been decided. Also not the themes of the next Residential Seminar of 2021, or for possible workshops before the summer holidays. At the end of this Annual Report some time will be allowed to reflect in small group to come up with themes. Maybe an issue your Congregation is struggling with and for which it would be good if SEDOS could find a way to help.

## Conclusion

The effect of the reduction in personnel in the office will have to be evaluated in the coming year. What will it mean for the work load? What will it mean for the finances? But for the moment SEDOS is fulfilling its purpose by offering all kind of studies and documentations to its members through its activities and its website. The Members are contributing faithfully every year, and the surplus at the end of the year can be used to finance some of our projects (self-financing).

**Peter Baekelmans, CICM**  
**Director of SEDOS**

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## **Mission in China Today**

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**Friday 6 March 2020  
(9.30 – 17.00)**

**at Jesuit Generalate, Rome**

*Archbischof Claudio Celli (tentative)*  
(Propaganda Fide)

### **Introduction**

*Augustino Giovanioli*  
(San Egidio, Rome)

### **History of the Mission in China**

*Monica Romano*  
(Gregorian Univ., Rome)

### **Church in China Today**

MIDDAY BREAK

*Katharina Wenzel-Teuber*  
(China Zentrum e. V., Sankt Augustin)

### **China's Religious Policy**

*Jerome Heyndrickx*  
(China F. Verbiest Institute, Leuven)

### **Mission in China Today**





*Merry  
Christmas*

