

29 November 1974

74 n. 39

Our first few articles this week concern reactions to the Synod and a very interesting follow-up to it by the AMECEA Bishops. We then go on to give an account of two very significant ecumenical conferences, one held in Louvain and the other in Cordova.

This Week:

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ANNOUNCEMENT:

The General Chapter of the School Sisters of Notre Dame have elected their new councils: Superior General: Mother Georgianne Segner

Assistantss: Sr. Enrica Schmidter (V.G.) (re-elected)

Sr. Augusta Perkan "

Sr. Luke Baldwin "

Sr. Henriette Hoene "

Sr. Wonda Potts

Sr. Helena Arns

Sr. Helena is the first representative from Latin America (Brazil) to be elected to the Council.

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COMING EVENTS:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	2 DECEMBER 1974	4:15 pm	SEDOS SECRETARIAT
COMMUNICATIONS GROUP	10 DECEMBER 1974	4:00 pm	SEDOS SECRETARIAT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY	16 DECEMBER 1974	4:00 pm	

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Sincerely yours,

Fr. Leonzio Bano, FSCJ.

THE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP:-

The Group met at 4 p.m. 14 November 1974 at Sedos Secretariat.

Present: Fr. S. McCarthy SMA, Fr. J. Daly CSSP, Fr. Tonna and Fr. Skelly SMA.

Chairman: Sr. Annemarie Oosschot SCMM-M

1. The meeting first discussed the matter of Joint Venture. They consulted the minutes of the Executive Committee of 28 Oct. (See Sedos- 74/771) and agreed with the line of approach to the next issue of Joint Venture laid down in them i.e. stress on Sedos reporting of the Synod and on the General Assemblies and preparatory meetings held before the Synod. Fr. Skelly agreed to edit the issue along these lines, though he expressed reservations about the present form of the magazine.
2. Fr. Daly raised the very basic communications question as to how we could pass on new ideas on theology, liturgy etc. to the men and women working in the field. There were, of course, many experts churning out material in these fields in pastoral centres like Gaba and Ibadan but there was a communications gap between them and those they thought they were writing for. Could Sedos help in some way to close this gap? Most felt that it could. There was also need to get the reactions of the people in the field to new thinking and trends. The following steps were therefore suggested.
 - A. To pass on our thinking (here) to the people in the field and to listen into their thinking, it would be useful to work out ways to exchange information about the visitations planned and completed by our Generalates. This is another way of developing a two-way communication system and it could lead to solid, consensus building both within individual Institutes and among a group of them (like SE - BOS). Perhaps it would be useful for a group to draft a note about this topic in the weekly bulletin.
 - B. Fr. Daly then suggested that the Group consider the possibility of the Generalates offering English speaking missionaries in Africa just to begin with an information service on main trends in evangelization today. It could take the form of a simple, short, common bulletin. The Group reacted by referring to previous proposals on this line. It was well aware of the reasons why they were not pushed through. It was sensitive to the fact, however, that the situation could have changed. It agreed, therefore, to ask Fr. Daly to write a note about the proposal which the Secretariat could circulate among Generalates, with a request for comments.
 - C. The Group also took note of the different patterns of evangelization situations in Africa and elsewhere: what was valid for one place could be inadequate for another. One way to become more sensitive to this fact was to listen harder to sociologists and anthropologists.
 - D. The Group agreed to meet again on December 10, 1974.

BISHOP WORLOCK OF PORTSMOUTH RESPONDS TO "TABLET" CRITICISM OF THE SYNOD.

Pope Paul's response: It is in this connection that your editorial most seriously distorts the facts. You write: "If the function of the Synod is to advise the Pope, it is not a little disturbing to find that, already by the final morning of the Synod, the Pope appears to have digested the advice overnight and, for the most part, to have rejected it." The marvellous thing about the conclusion of the Synod was the exact reverse of what you have written. Pope Paul could have remained silent and then dismissed the delegates with a blessing. In fact, in the true spirit of consultation he showed how keenly he had been listening to what had been said and then made his own contribution. He offered most valuable pastoral advice and comments and in no sense closed the door to further consideration. Here was Peter amongst the Apostles.

Language groups: Those of us who were Relatores of the Circuli Minores were all too conscious that our reports to the Plenary Assembly needed further refining. The detailed discussions in the groups left little time for making our recommendations precise or complete. Apart from having to beat the clock in their preparation, we were confined to 10 minutes each in their presentation in Latin the following day. But Pope Paul picked out three key matters which had been raised and about which clarification was explicitly sought. On these he offered guidance:

- a) Particular Churches: In recognising the vitality of a particular or local Church, the Pope emphasised the need to take "proportionate care" in preserving ecclesial unity. The need for this balance was often mentioned in the language group reports.
- b) Small communities: These vary in character but Pope Paul noted the "hope they furnish and the reminder they give of the work of the Holy Spirit". But, as was again emphasised in the Circuli Minores, if such groups are to develop healthily and share in the work of evangelisation; they must preserve ecclesial unity.
- c) Integral liberation: This was a matter of great concern to the Latin Americans, emphasising that evangelisation was for the whole man. Pope Paul said: "Human advancement, social progress, and so on are not to be excessively emphasised on a temporal level to the detriment of the essential meaning which evangelisation has for the Church of Christ: the announcement of the Good News."

I am confident that most of the delegates would wish to share the Pope's own evaluation of the Synod: "We cannot help but be filled with a sense of sincere satisfaction and realistic optimism."

FR. T. CORBISHLEY, S.J. ALSO REPLIES:

The decision to meet every three years (instead of two) does not necessarily indicate a lack of self-confidence. It was based largely on a desire to ensure adequate preparation. Since the council charged with this preparation includes Asia, Africa and the Americas (North and South), it cannot meet very often. It is also necessary to leave time for consultation of bishops' conferences.

As to "freedom", if the subject was chosen by the Holy Father, there was certainly

no lack of freedom in what was said. It was universally agreed that a fruitful and practical discussion had resulted. Nor is it true to say that the "prepared text were thrown out on 22 October" partly because the Synod was not allowed to choose its drafting committee. The real reason was that most fathers felt that the document was too vague and imprecise and did not reflect the tone of the meeting. Most people thought that the job of summing up their findings was almost impossible in the time. (The group responsible had worked through the night until 5:30 a.m.). Moreover, the final "message", all but unanimously welcomed by the fathers, was drawn up by someone not chosen by them.

Finally, to say that the Pope had "for the most part...flatly rejected" the advice tendered is a great exaggeration. A reading of the complete text of his address reveals a different situation. He was indeed concerned to reaffirm the role of the papacy in the life of the Church. This does not mean that he had been deaf to what had been said. Speaking for example, of "the need to find a better expression of the faith to correspond to the racial, social and cultural milieux" of the different local churches, he went on to say that this was a "necessary requirement of an authentic and effective evangelisation." The warning about the danger of "diversified theologies" has to be seen in the context of these words and of the subsequent ones about "the truth of its single message presented in a diversity of languages."

Of course the Synod has not yet realised its full potential. But, as the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid said, the engine has now been run in and is in good order. It may not yet have got into top gear; but an experienced driver knows that these things take time.

INTERVENTIONS ON THE SYNOD by FR. J. KRUPE, SJ.1. BENEFITS OF THE SYNOD

- a. The principal benefit is the help given to the Holy Father. He himself looks forward to this meeting with Pastors: "so that the help or their presence will not be lacking, as well as the help of their prudence and experience, the security of their counsel, the weight of their authority" (Apostolic Letter, "Apostolica Sollicitudo", introduction).
- b. There are other secondary, but not less important benefits:
 - 1. The exercise of collegiality, with all its consequences for the benefit of the Universal Church.
 - 2. The work of preparation for the Synod. It affects the whole Church and the entire hierarchy of the Church, thus offering many opportunities for the study of books and articles dealing with the synodal theme and related topics.
 - 3. The tremendous work of the Synod itself: this includes many reciprocal contacts among persons. It also offers the Holy Father special and beneficial experience: presentation in the room of the various opinions and development of arguments under diverse aspects; deep reflection coming from the "Circuli Minores"; the accurate preparation of conclusions; the hopes and interest excited in the course of an entire month in public opinion and in the world at large. It can accordingly be affirmed that the benefits of this Synod are really very many and positive.

2. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MAKE THE SYNOD MORE EFFECTIVE?

This calls for serious reflection so that we may present more practical counsel to the Holy Father. This should be done in such wise that the celebration of the Synod becomes each day more useful and much more efficient in the service and for the benefit of the Church. Much help can be had from the experience and work done in this Synod. Yet speaking in the concrete, and drawing on some examples in the Synod, I would affirm, for example,

- a. the existence of copious documentation in the position papers presented by every Episcopal Conference on Decentralization, coming from the world over. This represents a tremendous volume of very valuable work that could not be repeated again for many years. Have we made sufficient use of it? And could we not benefit much more by it?
- b. the fact of the many interventions given in the Aula and in the "Circuli Minores". Does not the danger exist that all this material will be consigned to the archives, whereas were it made available, could serve for further profitable study and research? One could, for example, examine the reasons why a particular topic was discussed and another passed over in silence. Further consideration could be given to the common agreement reached on some points and to the plurality of opinion on others, or a study of the principal lines of thought according to existing diversity in various continents of the world. It might also be possible to discover, with all due care, why, when speaking of decentralization, one should still maintain perfect and filial fidelity and respect for the person of the Holy Father -- etc.

What is it possible to do? This is not the time to go into particulars. It would be a work for the permanent secretariat of the Synod. That body could draw much profit and help from a serious evaluation of the recently concluded Synod undertaken by the Synodal Fathers themselves. This is ^a problem of very grave importance for the Church. It should have our undivided attention.

The Apostolic Letter "Apostolica Sollicitudo" (XI) states that "when the assembly has adjourned, by that very fact the personnel and offices of the Synod likewise cease". Even so, the impression remains in all of us, that this Synod has been a commonly accepted valid experience that each will undoubtedly consider a very special grace from God.

THE EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN BISHOPS BRING THE SYNOD MESSAGE TO THEIR PEOPLESMessage to Rulers

Fully aware of Christ's directive "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's", we proclaim publicly: We honour your authority and your sovereignty, we respect your office, we recognise your just laws, especially those regarding the freedom of worship and personal ownership, we esteem those who make these laws and those who apply them. But above all, we love you, we love our peoples.

Because of this dedicated love we speak a most holy word to you, and it is this: Only God is great. God alone is the beginning and the end. God alone is the Source of your authority and the Foundation of your laws. We constantly pray to Him that you may fulfil wisely and patiently your arduous task of building our nations, of promoting order, peace and prosperity among our peoples. We would not like you to forget this: It is God, the living and Supreme Being, who is the Father of men, the Lord of both the greatest and the least among us.

In our deliberations during the Assembly we spoke feelingly about the family, which is the cornerstone of our society and nation; we spoke about the youth, which is the future of our society and nation; we spoke about employment and we spoke about the many kinds of liberation and above all, spiritual liberation, which is the Church's proper mission and deals primarily with the eternal and the inexhaustible aspirations of the human heart and the eternal destiny of men created male and female, in the image of God.

2. Message to the Laity

The indispensable role of the Laity in the work of evangelization came back again and again throughout the deliberations of the Synod, like a melodious refrain. It was stressed, as one of the Synod Fathers put it, that the hierarchy evangelizing without the laity was like trying to walk without feet, to work without hands, to hear without ears, and to see without eyes. Conscious that 99% of the Church's membership is the laity, it is obvious that up to now, in so far as the work of evangelization is concerned, the potential of the laity was like a huge reservoir waiting to be tapped.

The Synod came up against a gigantic work which now lay before the Church - bringing the Gospel to the remaining two-thirds of the world who have not yet heard the good news nor quenched their thirst at the fresh Fountainhead. "Come to me and drink", Christ is calling all. One was made to feel that there is no way of facing up to this task squarely without a planned involvement of each and all the People of God. The opportune moment has arrived to tap the reservoir; and the streams must run towards all directions to quench the thirst of our separated Brethren of non-Christian believers, of the indifferent to religion, and of those who deny the existence of God. For in the human aspirations of different peoples, the Synod recognised the underlying thirst for true freedom, authenticity, justice, love community, and even for transcendence.

While awaiting the definitive directions from the Holy Father, we might hasten to reveal the ardent desire of the Synod Fathers that if the laity were to be well mobilized, if they gave themselves up in prayer and docility to the action of the Holy Spirit, and were oriented towards encountering men in all walks of life, this new thrust in the work of evangelization could go a long way to restore all things in Christ. The future would then be seen not just with optimism, but with real enthusiasm.

A whole new horizon for our action has well come into view. Many fields awaiting the devotedness of the laity were touched on by the Synod Fathers. Just to mention a few:

More powers and formation are being sought to enable the Catechists to do their work efficiently as ministers to their fellow Christians, as presiders at Liturgical functions, and especially as animators of local small communities.

The responsibility to organize pastoral work, to raise the standard of financial self-support, and to co-ordinate the efforts of different groups such as lay-apostolate movements, Christian professionals and businessmen, government employees, educators, and especially to co-ordinate small Christian communities at the grassroots, lie on the shoulders of lay councillors in co-operation with the clergy. . . .

One of the main resolutions of the Synod, and one which was arrived at after the most debated issue ending with a wonderful synthesis, is that the Church must aim at evangelizing THE WHOLE MAN AND ALL MEN. Evangelize the whole man, body and soul, in the sense that man must be liberated not only from sin but also from the consequence of sin such as oppression, poverty, hunger and disease. To evangelize all men in the sense that it is not only consciences of individual persons which must be restored to right order but also the conscience of society as a whole must be restored to right order. The Kingdom of God, reigning in the hearts of men (if man lets God reign there at all) must of necessity manifest itself also in the concrete reality of justice, reconciliation, peace and love. Not only individual lives are to be reformed but also social, economic and political structures must be reformed to conform to the dignity of men as individuals and as society. What has come to the fore is that the endeavour to bring salvation to man on one hand and to bring human development to him on the other, are not two incompatible endeavours; on the contrary, they are so connected that neither of these two will alone achieve man's wholeness without the other. . . .

Every Christian therefore, is invited to pose and consider seriously the meaning of that daily occupation which he has. He must consider whether this job, in which he is engaged for six days a week, serves his own true genuine needs, those of his neighbor and of his society. For it must be through this his daily work (and not just through his occasional prayer services or Sunday Mass) that a Christian ought to glorify God. What occupies him morning till evening, Monday till Saturday, that is what counts. It is through this daily work, if performed genuinely and conscientiously, that a Christian ought to make his contribution in shaping not only his own eternal destiny but also that of society in one and the same effort. This means understanding in the first place, what is God's plan for all men, for the particular society in which you live, for the profession which you chose, and for your own particular place in that profession or occupation.

- - For example, if you are a Christian nurse or doctor, do you take delight in the fact that your work identifies you with Christ the healer? The truth is that a doctor does, indeed, lend his skill and hands to Christ. The doctor is Christ to the patients. Your profession, therefore demands fidelity to Christ.

--If you are a Christian farmer, do you recognise your privilege to share in the work of God to create and provide for your brothers?

--If you are a Christian teacher, are you aware of your responsibility to prepare your students for a fruitful participation in the Kingdom of God, the living community of God's children here on earth?

--If you are a Christian road constructor, do you take pride in safeguarding the lives of those who use the road?

--If you are a Christian member of Parliament, do you strive to make laws that are an application of God's own law?

--If you are a Christian Magistrate, do you make it your duty in conscience to protect the rights of the claimants?

--If you are a Christian running a co-operative shop, do you rejoice in making a devoted and fair distribution of God-given goods to your brothers?

--If you are a Christian administrator, do you strive to imitate the tenderness of the Heavenly Father?

Finally, do social, economic and political structures always permit that duties be performed effectively in the manner described above?

How do Christians co-operate with other men of good will in order to improve these structures? . . .

3. Message to Parents

During the recent Synod on "Evangelization in the Modern World," it was stressed that the first place where evangelization takes place is in the family because:

--The purpose or mission of evangelization is the building up of the People of God.

--But the first building block of the People of God is the family. Therefore, the family is and must be the primary place of evangelization in the modern world.

As all of us Africans know, there is no stronger tie between and among peoples than the family tie.

We also know the saying that "As you educate a child, so will he grow."

We are also very conscious of how in the African mentality and culture the family plays a dynamic role in the communal framework of African society. Due to this context, evangelization in Africa can flourish better if it is directed toward the family. Preparations for evangelization must begin in the sanctuary of the family.

It is then clear that the importance of the family in the question of evangelization cannot be overemphasized, and we hope you who are parents fully appreciate the sublime role which you were given by God.

With God you are "co-parents" in bringing life to your children; but man is body and soul! You must therefore envisage the whole extent of your responsibility, that is, not only being co-parents with God as far as the body is concerned, but you must also cooperate with God spiritually in sowing good seed in your children's souls to help the saving grace of God to grow and flourish in them. Doing this is indeed a good preparation for deeper evangelization.

We therefore exhort Christian families to keep such high moral values incorporated in African culture as:

- The strong family sense which reaches out to the extended family.
- African family values such as the sense of authority, solidarity, and mutual help.
- The woman's fertility considered as her great honour.
- The sense of being oneself and not just insensibly following dangerous Western propaganda, such as artificial birth control through the use of unlawful and harmful contraceptives. These contraceptives are contrary to our traditional concepts of the dignity and role of woman and the family. You parents must be the first ones to resist being victims of such harmful propaganda. You must be on the watch for structures and systems which tend to destroy the sanctuary of family life.

There are, however, modern means of Natural Family Planning. In studying this means we must remember that:

- The family is the central influence of all Christian life.
- The family must be defended against modern moral permissiveness.
- The Christian family should be a place of mutual love and common prayer.
- The Christian family must always be aware of the vivifying presence of Christ Who is in their midst for He Himself has promised that where two or three are gathered in His Name, He will be in their midst.
- We should also be convinced that the family that prays together will stay together.

The Church needs good leaders: good priests, good religious, good laymen. We all know that these will hardly come from bad and broken families, for the family is like a tree which can bear good or bad fruit. What Christ told us is eternally true: "No good tree can bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." . . .

3. Message to Youth

The Bishops delegates gathered in Rome from all over the world have been discussing, among many other important matters, the concern the Church has for youth. In other words, we have been thinking about you.

We have a message for you. The message is the one you already know, but the point is to ask you what we can do about it. It is a fact that youth make up more than half the total population of the world. In our dioceses you are more numerous than adults, yet many of you of the younger generation are beset with numerous problems. These vary from place to place. As soon as you leave school, some of you suffer from isolation, loneliness and boredom. Some of you have unsolved doubts about religious truths and are tormented by frustration because your dreams have not been realized. Many of you seem to find no attraction in your religion because it does not

seem to change your lives. It seems to you to be the domain only of priests and religious people; and seems so removed from your daily life that you think it is incapable of helping you to solve your problems. In this context of isolation, nervous tensions can grow to the point of despair and some resort to lawlessness and crime.

This is a sad situation. Neither you nor we can ignore it. When we look into the situation we see there are good grounds for hope. In searching for truth and communion some of the youth among you consider belonging to the Church as something which offers a sense of fellowship, and rightly so. Many of you consider the Church to be where you find cordial friendship and a brotherly atmosphere and this rightly attracts you. In the Church you expect to have opportunities to discuss and solve problems in concrete life. You expect the Church to give clear and exact instruction about Christ our Saviour. We agree with you entirely. The Church is really a loving fellowship if men and women in union with Christ. The Bishops assembled in Rome during the 1974 Synod, have unanimously agreed that we should open all windows to the world and see what is going on among the youth and open a dialogue with you. In speaking about youth, the Bishops stated. "The youth are looking for a Church that cares for them, understands them, trusts them and is with them. The youth want to see a Church as a power that makes all things new, a Church that speaks against injustice and lives what it preaches."

As you realize, the Church is not only priests, religious and bishops. You are part of the Church. You are the greater part of the Church, since you are more than half of the population of your diocese. You are the power, the energy and the hope of the Church today and tomorrow. We have youth movements such as the Y.C.S., the Y.C.W., the Little Way Association, the Young Christian Farmers, and so on. You want to have a feeling of belonging, a loving fellowship and a brotherly atmosphere. Come, join any of these movements. It will give you and us a chance to talk things over. It will establish links between all the youth of the diocese. Together we can make the Church relevant to your life because Christ wanted to be relevant to all people of all ages. He said: "Let the young ones come to Me." He will give you courage and joy, but you must learn to go to him.

4. Message to Catechists

Since "Evangelization in the Modern World" must take into consideration the spirit of solidarity, it will be necessary to establish small Christian communities. These small communities cannot be created without local leaders. You are leaders living with the People of God. You share their problems and their aspirations. You must animate these small communities by helping them to communicate with each other and listen to the Word of God. By your good example you promote good family life. You are not just assistants of the priests--you are co-ministers with them in announcing the Good News.

At your centres you are the agent of unity and the bond of love because you are the source of reconciliation when there are disputes among the People of God. You promote solidarity with the suffering Church when you visit the sick. You help the poor and the aged and you console those suffering from isolation.

Evangelization in the modern world requires a spirit of dialogue with Christians of other denominations and all people of good will. You have unique opportunities to be promoters of ecumenism especially when you conduct funeral services. On such occasions people of different denominations come to show sympathy to the bereaved family. On this occasion don't you read the word of God? Don't you make a short homily addressed to all those present?

When the priest is not present, you announce the Lord's day and preside over the worship. Some of you have started distributing Holy Communion. You have many duties and need the help of others. With the advice of the People of God, select volunteer Catechists. Train them little by little. Help them to read the word of God and to prepare easy catechism lessons.

Remember that our primary duty is to announce the Good News; we have to bring Christ to others. But we must first of all be possessed by Christ ourselves before we dare to take upon ourselves this tremendous responsibility. . . .

5. Message to Priests

The bishops realized that there are many difficulties for priests in the modern world, but they emphasized that only a Christ-like life will change man in the world of today. The work of evangelization has many aspects:

- The Gospel must be proclaimed to the two-thirds of mankind who have never fully heard the message of Christ.
- It must be proclaimed again to those who have known Christ, but have abandoned Him.
- It must be proclaimed more fully to those who follow Christ, so that their Christian way of life be constantly improved and perfected.

The most effective way of evangelizing is to have Christ incarnated in us, both as individuals and as a group. We, who have accepted Christ and adhere to His Gospel, exercise a direct missionary role by being the leaven in the society in which we live. But to be penetrating leaven, as far as the priest is concerned, requires that the priest be a man of prayer and contemplation. These are the ingredients that stimulate his day to day priestly life and give it success. To be fully effective, though, they first require renewal and reconciliation in all of us, so that we will be proper instruments of grace to those we wish to evangelize.

6. Message to Religious

The important role of the Religious in this work of evangelization was often stressed in the Synod. The Bishops made it a point to express their admiration and gratitude for the tremendous participation of the Religious, male and female, in all sorts of services that Christ renders through His Church: in education, health, human social and spiritual development, attention to needs and problems of all kinds affecting man's life, especially the service to the less privileged categories of mankind: the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the marginal people, and so on. The active concern of Religious in these fields represents a true incarnation of that Love of God and neighbour which is the Lord's one Commandment and which fulfills the whole Law and the Prophets, and is therefore real evangelization in its deepest sense.

The Bishops encourage you to continue working in all these fields with the same zeal and dedication. Even if today the growing shortage of personnel and scarcity of resources create problems in your work, and even if new fields of activities open up to your initiative, the Bishops wish to assure those among you who are called upon to serve in those "traditional fields" that they are offering an excellent and genuine service of evangelization. They need not therefore feel that they are being sacrificed to a work of second-rate importance.

The Synod noted with pleasure that in many places today the Religious are being asked to take a more active part in direct pastoral activity like catechesis, spiritual animation of Christian communities, even the running of parishes, and the sharing in parochial and diocesan pastoral planning and executive responsibilities. This ever-growing involvement of Religious should not be seen just as an expedient to meet the problem of shortage of priests. It is simply a welcome sign of the times. It is a proof that very many of the multiple services needed in the Church have ceased to be seen as exclusively reserved to the clerical order. More and more they are understood as the common responsibility of all members of the Church to whom the Spirit has confided a variety of charisms that go towards equipping the Body of Christ for every good service.

We hope that newer and more varied opportunities of such involvement will open up to the Religious. We, Bishops, shall surely welcome and encourage them. We shall not let ourselves be led astray by suspecting that the Religious, especially the female Religious, are attempting to usurp the specific responsibilities of the ordained clergy. There would, in fact, be no point in such an attempt, since we all received our different gifts and opportunities for service (cf. I Cor. 12: 29-30). Within the range of our varied charisms, we all have ample room to serve the Lord. . . .

It will be encouraging for you to know that the Bishops accepted with joy the intervention made in the Synod by the spokesman of the Union of Superiors General of Women Religious. The message was this: "Is the true value of the evangelizing force that Religious women represent truly recognized in the Church today? . . . Essentially, the religious life is a personal consecration to Christ. . . Religious women desire a factual recognition of this specific dimension of their consecration - a recognition shown by respect for the religious woman as a person, for the exigencies of her way of living, for her spiritual and relational needs, above and beyond her ability and efficiency in her field of activity." . . .

The Religious charism is a gift of the Church, whereby through a living witness it can preach about the supremacy of the Supernatural, demonstrate the reality of the coming Kingdom of God, and prove in action that this Kingdom is already at work in the world. . . . You can therefore understand why for us, Bishops, Religious Life in Africa is a source of the highest hope for the Church. . . .

7. Message to Missionaries

Greetings to all of you - priests, religious, laymen and women - engaged in evangelization. The scope of your divine mission is the total liberation of man from spiritual and material misery. All men, rich or poor, powerful or voiceless, are terribly in need of divine liberation from sin and its consequences of pride, egoism and greed, which lead to exploitation and terrorism. . . .

The Synod Fathers are convinced that in order to evangelize the modern world which is facing serious moral and social problems, the following points should be kept in mind:

1. Those engaged in evangelization must be convinced that the work of evangelization is to be done with the help of the Holy Spirit.
2. The life of the one delivering the message must be exemplary so that the people will be led by his example to become disciples of Jesus Christ.
3. The evangelical counsel of Christian poverty and simplicity of life needs to be stressed in a special way today.

In the same way the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in its message of last March exhorts the faithful saying:

"Pray that the example of missionaries offering the Gospel and commandments of love to mankind may inspire all Christians towards a sense of reconciliation with God so much desired by the Holy Father during this Holy Year."

The Synod expressed a great desire of solidarity between well established Churches and those which have been just started.

Missionaries should not pay any attention to those misleading voices that proclaim "the missionary era is over", nor to those speakers who state that missionaries should be treated as foreigners. Wherever missionaries are sent, let them present themselves as messengers of God. God has sent His Church to all peoples and has decided to call his messengers from all peoples. Indeed, the presence of so-called "foreign" missionaries in the various local Churches throughout the world is a living sign of the universal character of the Church. The love of Christ is capable of uniting people of different cultures and mentalities to form this one big family which we call the Church, the People of God.

The missionary activity of the Church is still necessary today. Two-thirds of mankind have not heard the Good News about Jesus Christ.

A new missionary era has begun: a new missionary spirit has been initiated between the older and younger Churches. It consists in a fraternal give and take. So let our local Churches in Africa learn to give just as the missionaries offered themselves for the Gospel. Also let the older Churches be ready to accept from the younger Churches their sincere but fraternal contribution to the evangelization of the modern world.

THE SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND PEACE.

This conference took place from 28 August to 3 September in Louvain and was attended by 150 delegates representing all religions and coming from every corner of the globe. We reproduce here extracts from the Declaration issued by the Conference.

THE LOUVAIN DECLARATION

The Second World Conference on Religion and Peace, meeting at the University of Leuven/Louvain in the Summer of 1974, longs to speak directly to all the religious communities of our troubled planet.

Buddhists, Christians, Confucianists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and still others, we have sought here to listen to the spirit within our varied and venerable religious traditions. Whatever our religion, we know that we are one with the whole of humanity and that all of its problems ^{are our problems}. Our faith compels us to search for effective, viable solutions. We have faced together the enormity of the perils presently threatening the human species and its home. We have looked hard at the massive evidence of the political, economic, social and cultural offenses against humanity that are inherent in the growing world disorder. We have grappled with the towering issues that our societies must resolve in order to bring about peace, justice and ennobling quality of life for every person and every people. Drawing upon the inexhaustible resources of our several spiritual heritages, we have experienced together the truth expressed by one of the poets in our midst: "I walk on thorns, but firmly, as among flowers."...

We rejoice that through the profound experiences of conferences like these, and multi-lateral dialogues undertaken by official religious institutions, the long era of prideful, and even prejudiced, isolation of the religions of humanity is, we hope, now gone forever. We are resolved henceforth to serve humanity together each in the way most in keeping with the convictions of his spiritual family and local circumstances.

War cannot be avoided: it can only be overcome.

We plead with all people of faith and good will to recognize that there is no future for humanity if worldwide nuclear war is simply postponed or temporarily avoided....

We urge that the religions of the world mount every possible pressure on the nuclear weapon governments to halt the proliferation of destructive nuclear armament and to roll back all existing nuclear weaponry until the stockpiles of nuclear devices have been safely dismantled and destroyed. We also ask religious bodies to press other governments now capable of initiating nuclear weapons programs to renounce any such undertaking....

Whatever conscientious religious people decide in respect to the use of violence, we urge religious leaders everywhere to work ceaselessly for the reduction of the level of violence in all social struggles, in the first instance, with final elimination, in favor of peaceful solutions as their firm objective. To respond to violence with violence without first seeking to eliminate its cause is to embark upon the course of unending escalation.

Conscientious objectors to all killing and all wars have lately arisen in increasing numbers in most of our religious traditions. We ask the official organizations of all religions to respect their witness as a prophetic sign that ultimately mankind must indeed end war, or war will end mankind. Religion should so interpret conscientious objectors to government, insisting on the recognition of their rights.

Liberation plus Development = Peace

We have to see human liberation, economic liberation, economic development and world peace as a dynamic triangular process. People liberating themselves become capable of helping others become free. A truly free people constitutes a productive and cooperative society rather than an exploitative and domineering overload among their neighborhood. All the inhabitants of the globe today need to progress toward such basic liberation, such genuine self-development, such a harmonious and peaceful world-order.

Tyrannical systems, elitist ruling groups and some transnational economic enterprises - whether private or governmental - prevent multitudes of people from participating in the shaping of their own future. We encourage every religion to arouse its people to seek resolutely their own integrated liberation and development, and that of their fellow human beings; near and far. With special insistence we turn to those religious communities that are numerous among the affluent and powerful nations, requesting that they act boldly to end every form of domination among the African, Asian and Latin American peoples whether by their governments or their economic and cultural institutions. We press religious people to condemn profiteering by the affluent world from the weakness of the developing countries, or the racist oppression of the black majority by the wealthy white minority as in Southern Africa, working for such fair policies in economic and technical aid, trade and investment as will help all such peoples pursue their own development way.

The rights of man and the independence of religion.

Fundamental independence from all earthly powers and total dependence on the truth that has called them into being is essential for all religious that would offer a fully authentic ministry to society.

We therefore ask all religious bodies to strive for their own freedom from entangling alliances, covert or overt, that could limit their freedom to work for the general freedom of man. Vigilantly maintaining the integrity of their own social organizations, religious communities should freely cooperate with all who sincerely seek to advance the cause of justice, peace and human rights in their own lands and beyond.

Humble enough to survive?

The religious insight that there is an essential interdependency of all beings and all things is age-old. Now we are still more aware that there must be not war but profound harmony between the human species and the natural world.

We plead with our religious communities to evoke among their peoples a fresh sense of awe before the mystery of existence and a recovery of the value of humble self restraint in the conduct of personal and social life. Men and women motivated by religion should provide mankind with a shining example of simplicity of life-style, getting along with minimal dependence on material things and deriving their happiness from the quality of their spiritual, aesthetic and cultural pursuits.

§ § §

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee will meet at 4:15 p.m., 2 December 1974 at SEDOS Secretariat.

Agenda

1. Minutes of the previous meeting.
2. Preparations for the General Assembly of December 16.
 - a) Executive Secretary's report on his post-Synod visits to Generalates.
 - b) Executive Secretary's Report for 1974.
 - c) Proposed programme for 1975.
 - d) Budget for 1975.
3. Relations between USG Commission VI and SEDOS.
4. Any other business.

ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN CONGRESS AT CORDOVA, SPAIN, 10-15 SEPTEMBER, 1974.

The first Islamic-Christian Congress was held at Cordova, Spain, on September 10-15, 1974. Though the number of participants was relatively small (about one hundred from 23 different countries), the event was given a prominent place in the local press at the end of summer, both on account of the qualifications of participants and above all because it was the occasion of the reopening to Islamic cult of the Cordova mosque, one of the wonders of Moslem art in the West, which had been turned into a Catholic Cathedral in 1236.

For a proper evaluation of the Congress and its consequences, one should look at it from a wide historic viewpoint. Evidently it must be considered as an event in Islamic-Christian relationships; it is the first general meeting, on equal footing, between Moslems and Christians, on the invitation of a tiny organization, the "Islamic-Christian Friendship of Spain". From an Islamic point of view this represents a step forward of ^{the} greatest interest on a scale parallel, for Christians, to the action of John XXIII and the II Vatican Council in timidly paving the way for the solutions of all conflicts between the two religions....

The reports to the Congress

Lecturers-- about twenty, half of them Christians and the other half Moslems-- had been invited according to their specialization in the five general topics of the congress: (1) how to put forward Islam to Christians in such a way that Moslems may recognize themselves and approve of it (by Christian lecturers); (2) how to put forward Christianity in a Moslem environment (by Moslem lecturers); (3) relationships between religion and political influence; (4) educating to the faith in each of the two religions; (5) fields of practical collaboration between Moslems and Christians.

From a doctrinal point of view, the points raised were varied and on different levels, but all were equally imbued with mutual esteem. Moslems base their evaluation of Christianity on Koran texts and they wonder why Christians cannot see the message of Mahomet in the different passages of their holy books (the best known is the one on Paradise, in which Christ announces his coming to guide all men after his death).

Christians, on their part, base their evaluation of Islam and Moslems on some theological arguments derived from Christian dogmas: through his work God created all human beings and their civilizations, and through his Incarnation he saved them, raising them to divine dignity. Christians also wonder why Moslems do not evaluate Christianity for what it is, but only on the basis of the virtues which the Koran attributes to Islam, goodness, simplicity, piety. A whole series of misunderstandings may arise therefrom; as well as a lack of mutual esteem, traces of which could be detected in the lectures and discussions of the congress, though these were most cordial and friendly.

As a matter of fact one could say that the two theological attitudes, facing one another in a happy atmosphere during the congress (thanks to the two basic topics)

and also a value of their own in provoking, by different means, the esteem of one community for the doctrine of the other. The basic contents of the topics - how to propose in a favourable light the religion of the other party in one's own community and within one's own true faith - gave rise to two parallel series of theological problems which would require deeper study.

Historical discussions proved quite different, as showing a double-trend even within the members of the two religions. Some were for a selection of historical facts which might help to unity, keeping silent on the "painful moments" of their common history. This was the approach of Prof. Cruz Fernandez, of Salamanca University, in his lecture on religious tolerance in Andalusia, and also of the greater part of the theologians and responsible eastern politicians.

Numerous historians and sociologists though would have preferred a more thorough study of the past, even in its most unpleasant aspects, in order to analyze their structure and thus avoid repeating the same mistakes, or simply to place those events in their historic context and so deprive them of such mythical value as they might have acquired in the course of time.

But actually the Congress, though giving its due to doctrinal and historical aspects, turned quickly to the concrete field of collaboration, as desired by the Madrid organizers and especially the present managers of the Islamic-Moslem Friendship of the Pontifical Comillas-Madrid University and the Egyptian director of the Madrid Institute of Islamic Studies. The very fact of opening of the Mosque-Cathedral to Islamic cult - kindly granted by the Bishop of Cordova - was an invitation to both parties to open also a new era in Islamic-Christian relations.

Prominent in this field was the intelligent and efficient activity of Dr. Abdelaziz Kamel, Vice-Prime minister and UAR minister for Religious Affairs. He was the soul and guide of the Congress since ^{his} lecture on the second day, not merely on account of the political weight of his country and his public responsibilities, or the particular Egyptian experience in the field of Islamic-Christian relations (Egypt counts a few million of arabic speaking Christians), but above all on account of his personal value and his determined decision to end once for all, as early as possible and by the best means, all opposition between the two communities, in our time. To a man with heavy responsibilities in public life such opposition is considered altogether outmoded.

The fact that participants followed his lead almost unanimously shows the realism of his attitude. This enlightened university professor and now also Minister for Religious Affairs was well supported by colleagues, the Jordan Minister Khayat and Algerian Mawlud Kassem: two typical examples of the responsible religious Moslem, as Islam has neither hierarchy nor clergy or ecclesiastical organization; religious men are responsible for their religion and, at the same time, for public and social life.

A new cordiality between Christians and Moslems

Right from the start one breathed an atmosphere of freedom and friendliness, even when tackling most delicate arguments; no surprise this to those familiar with this

of ecumenical encounter. There were discussions, especially after some lectures, but never tension. Now this freedom and the determination not to wound one's neighbour were not the outcome of political motives, but rather the fruit of genuine and deeply felt conviction, as stated in a press conference by Mgr. Sanmarti, director of the Secretariat of the Spanish Episcopal Conference for non-Christians.

What are the reasons for this common attitude of tolerance and understanding? First, in order of time and of considerable importance was the generous welcome of the Cordova people and authorities. One circumstance in particular made this meeting different from all others of its kind, i. e. the simplicity of the Spanish hosts; as they were few both in numbers and standing, they did not, and could not guide the trends of the Congress, as they were busy enough in the management and in the preparation of their own lectures and interventions - always followed with great interest - as well as by their deliberate wish to attend every event. This and their cordial welcome made evidently a good impression on their guests and helped to dispel any aggressive spirit such as often makes meetings of this kind difficult or even unpleasant.

But there was something more too. The position of Christianity with regard to non-Christians, and in particular to Moslems, has changed in the last ten years. After Vatican II the very attitude of the Catholic Hierarchy towards non-Christians has changed. The Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967 also contributed, it helped the strengthening of the political Palestinian organizations, the collaboration of Christians with Moslems, and the ever increasing support of international Christian bodies for the rights of the Palestinians and of the Arabs in general. As a consequence, the WCC and several Christian institutions took an interest in Arabic problems and got in touch with outstanding Moslem people. All this helped Christians to open wider their gates, which in the '50's had remained rather tightly closed.

These factors also induced in Islamic circles - or at least among Arabic speaking Moslems - a certain moderation in their vehement accusations against Christians as allies of colonial oppressors, even to the point of silencing them at least in the most extreme forms. There has been an increasing exchange of personal contact between Christians and Moslems, even at the highest levels of responsibility and between government representatives. One might now look forward to the beginning of a decisive and massive movement towards a sincere dialogue and efficient collaboration to eliminate friction at every level. Cordova was an excellent opportunity towards initiating this hope for the future and for new possibilities of realistic dialogue, resting on true convictions. Everything points towards such a reality.

The presence at the Congress of "normal Christians" (good, common faithful) taking part in the discussions of experts and honestly expressing their religious feelings and declaring how much the meeting had helped them to come closer to God, made a great impression on Muslims. The Congress was attended also by representatives of the Mozarabic Knights of Toledo, descendants of Christian families resident in Islamic Toledo before 1085. They arrived with their chaplain and a

delegation of about 200 Mozarabic families: were they not a witness to Islamic-Christian tolerance in the old Visigoth capital? The address of Card. Duval and of several Spanish priests and lay people, who perhaps had never before attended a Moslem meeting also helped to create an atmosphere of loyalty and piety, banning any kind of worldliness, politics (in their worst meaning) and false intellectualism.

One could see the result of so much cordiality at the drafting of the final declaration. During this difficult and delicate work, if any awkward topic came to the fore, there was in the whole general unanimity; remarks were generally in accordance with the prepared text and accepted from whatever quarter they might come, as they met general consensus. No time was lost in discussions; had there been more time available, the text might have been improved polishing up blemishes of style which were mostly due to linguistic difficulties.

Prayer in the Mosque

Perhaps the result of the Congress can be better expressed in two events: the Hajat (Moslem prayer) on Friday and the Pontifical High Mass on Saturday in the Cordova Mosque-Cathedral. Rarely the liturgy was at the heart of a religious congress at Cordova.

The opening of the temple to Islamic cult was quite significant in itself as a token of Christian brotherhood and as such rightly appreciated by Moslems: to be allowed to pray in a place where they were allowed only as visitors - up to 9,30 in the morning - or as tourists paying for their entrance ticket. The Mosque is indeed one of the most perfect wonders of Islamic religious art, religious symbol of the gorgeous Andalusian civilization, which Moslems consider the source of the European civilization of the Middle Ages and therefore of world civilization.

On the other hand, in a Spanish context, this did not appear as a concession of an administrative character, but coming as it did from the church hierarchy, it looked like a symbol, for Moslems and Christians alike, of a general and ecumenical pardon, at the end of a centuries-old fight between the two religions. It was no doubt one of the most outstanding events in Islamic-Christian history, a practical admission of "forgetting the past... and all dissensions which during the centuries broke out between Muslims and Christians" (Nostra aetate, 3).

Those were moments of grandeur in simplicity: the arrival of faithful Moslems, women and children among them, carrying their prayer carpets under their arms (two charter flights had been arranged from Morocco, and the small Cordova airport saw for the first time the landing of a turbo-jet); the welcome given them by the chapter of canons at the Cathedral gate; the entry into the forest of columns of the temple; the sight of Christian prelates mixing with distinguished Muslim visitors, of simple folks of either religion, under the floodlights of the Spanish and Algerian TV, all welcomed by the Koranic singing of a first-class Moroccan "chanter" filling the barrel-vaults and the arcades of the temple with sacred musical texts.

This was followed by the Moslem celebration all Christians respectfully attending with their Bishops (Catholic, Copt, Anglican); on the following day Moslems

attended the Christian-liturgy, in which the sacred texts were read successively in Spanish and Arabic, Latin and Greek, the languages of the East and of the West.

The Moslem salat was all in Arabic, as a matter of course, though this prevented some from appreciating the excellent sermon of the Jordan Minister for Religious Affairs urging Moslems to reverence all messages previous to Mohammed and to work jointly with Christians, especially with those who had made possible the return of the Mosque and the celebration of the Congress itself.

Most of the Christians present had never attended an Islamic service: what did they think about it? One could detect first of all a mixed feeling of respect and curiosity, and rather a lack of piety. On the contrary the following day, during the solemn high Mass, with readings and rites suited to an Islamic-Christian meeting, many Christians felt deeply moved.

As a consequence Cordova, which had been for the Spaniards, in particular, and for Muslims the capital of a deceased though glorious empire, was now becoming also a shining symbol of Islamic-Christian friendship, where under the arcades of the same Mosque-Cathedral one could listen together to the chanting of the Koran and the melody of the organ and Christian songs.

The "Cordova Declaration"

The climax of the Congress, and most important, was the final declaration; though it might appear like a statement of principles, it is in reality a programme of work. We have already hinted at some faulty expressions and to the lack of some topics - though the text may be improved and checked in the following congress - but it contains a whole series of guidelines for common action.

The 12 propositions, with their introductory notes, can be reduced to three major headings: (1) doctrinal relationships between the two religions and appropriate means for divulging them (studies, publications, text-books); (2) mutual relations (congresses, meetings avoidance of crude proselytism); (3) fields of cooperation in politics (peace and protection of religious minorities, Palestinian problem under its different aspects, human and national rights, political representation, Arabic character of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, etc.). The last proposal concerns the protection of Islamic and Christian works of art.

The "religious" nature of the Cordova document is given prominence in the very first lines: "In the name of God the merciful; the compassionate": this is the very title of the declaration, which goes on to state the common faith in God, in which is rooted the work we want to carry out; from this source and by adhesion to religious and moral values common to both Islam and Christianity, the declaration expresses a wish and a hope: the wish to start a collaboration

for all common activities in order to deepen our faith in God to the benefit of Christians and all mankind; the hope to free Christian-Moslem relationships from any misunderstanding and ambiguity that prevailed in the past.

The importance of such declaration depends on the future. The purpose of Christians and Moslems assembled at Cordova are clear enough: the establishment of a common platform wide enough to allow for a point of reference for the solution of their problems, not only in mutual relations between Muslim and Christian authorities, but at all levels. A hopeful sign that these ecumenical suggestions may be implemented derives from the presence at Cordova of distinguished members of several Christian Churches and of Moslem States, such as representatives of the League of the Arab States and of the World Council of Churches.

It had been previously proposed that future congresses should meet alternatively in a Christian and a Moslem country, but the Spanish Islamic-Christian Association suggested that they should meet every two years at Cordova. It was easily agreed to hold the next congress at Cordova in two years time, when a decision will be taken about the future. The goodwill displayed by the Spanish Association might not possibly cope with the increasing amount of work entailed in progress of time, though their efforts and the symbolic atmosphere of the city of Cordova and the province of Andalusia might prove favourable incentives.

(M. de Palza)

(Translated and summarized from LA CIVILTA' CATTOLICA, Rome No. 2986 of 16 Nov. 1974, by L. Bano).

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A PUBLICATION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

"Arab Culture and Society in Change"

This is a bibliography of books and articles in English, French, German and Italian compiled by the Centre for the Study of the Modern Arab World, St. Joseph's University, Beirut (Dar El-Mashreq Publishers, Box 1986 Beirut, Lebanon).

There are references (and cross-references) to nearly 5,000 books and articles on various aspects of culture and change in the Arab world. Price 20 dollars: 324 pages.

The Centre also publishes reports on various themes connected with Arabic studies. These also may be obtained from the address given above.