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YES, WOMEN AGAIN! BUT MISSION TOO

When we came across this article on the "Theology of Woman" by Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., we felt we simply had to put it in the Bulletin. It is not a plea for woman's rights or a denunciation of male domination, but a calm statement of woman's place in God's self-revelation and the economy of salvation, based solidly on biblical scholarship. We thank Fr. Bano for translating it from the original Italian.

Then we have two statements on mission from very authoritative sources, Archbishop Gantin, Secretary to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and Dr. Emilio Castro, Director of the W.C.C. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

Sr. Barbara Hendrick's article on the place of community in evangelization is also a Scripture-based contribution to this particular topic. The extracts from the "Man in the Middle" concerning Rhodesia are as relevant as they are sombre.

And please note the date and place of the General Assembly.

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COMING EVENTS:

SIGNS OF THE TIMES STUDY GROUP (and anyone else interested) will be addressed by

Fr. A. McCormack, M.H.M. on Population "Signs"

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SEDOS SECRETARIAT

Fr. Land, S.J. on Economic "Signs"

11 JUNE 1975

4:00 p.m.

SEDOS SECRETARIAT

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 1975

4:00 p.m.

F.S.C. GENERALATE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

23 JUNE 1975

4:00 p.m.

F.S.C. GENERALATE
(476 Via Aurelia)

A THEOLOGY OF WOMAN by Fr. Jean Galot, S.J.I. Is there a theology of woman?

Not enough attention perhaps has been paid in the past to the words of the Bible: "God created them to his own image, male and female he created them". From this text one can develop a theology of woman, leading to her true emancipation.

"The first question is: is there, properly speaking, a theology of woman?" In a broader sense one can speak of the theology of numerous human and earthly realities, the expression being justified by the extension of the divine work of salvation to the whole universe and to the life of all men. As nothing can be outside the action of grace, so nothing is totally alien to theology. There are however several fields in which theological considerations cannot assume specific values, and where one cannot speak of a particular theology.

With regard to woman, one can immediately detect the specific value of a psychology or sociology of woman: from a psychological point of view there are in fact deep differences between man and woman, and one could not be satisfied with a psychological study of the characteristics common to both sexes; from a sociological point of view, differences are quite appreciable and need a scientific elaboration of social attitudes and of the social role of woman. As for theology, a science with its primary subject God, we reserve to woman a specific treatment? Undoubtedly one cannot speak of a theology of woman as one speaks of a theology of the Sacraments or of the Church. The Sacraments and the Church are integral parts of the economy of salvation, and exist as essential elements of Christianity. On the contrary, the existence of woman, her feminine personality, goes back to the origin of mankind. Her existence did not need Christian revelation to appear in its essential significance; woman is at the same time a subject of historical, psychological and sociological research.

A theology of woman is thus fully justified. As a matter of fact woman received a specific mission in the very development of the economy of salvation. This economy is not the exclusive work of God. Had theology, as its one and only topic, to investigate who God is and divine action in itself, there would be no place for a theology of woman. But God in his action required human collaboration, which reached its acme in the mystery of the Incarnation. In this human collaboration the tasks of man and woman appear distinct and complementary.

Woman as Image of God

The Bible, relating that God created mankind "to his own image", creating "male and female" (Gen. 1:27) wants to highlight the original unity of the human couple, at the same time proclaiming its dignity. God--it says-- found "very good" this last realisation of his creative power (Gen. 1:31).

What one is to gather above all from this representation of the two sexes is that woman is the image of God as much as man. Unlike the first biblical narrative of creation, in which man is created first and the woman is derived later from one of his ribs, the second and earlier biblical account shows that the two sexes were created together; one is not superior to the other.

At their origin, man and woman are equal.

The full significance of this approach needs to be placed in high relief. To create humanity to his own image, God had to create it as "male and female". Each one of the two sexes, then, has something of the image of God; had only "male" been created, by some chance, an essential element of the image would be lacking. Woman has her own way of being similar to God, which is not man's way. A principle of great importance derives as a consequence. Man and woman are an image of God, not simply for what they have in common (intelligence, will, personality), but also for what they have specifically as male and female. Woman, as woman, and in what she differs from man, is a reflection of divine perfection. As a consequence, in order to "realize" theologically her femininity, woman must needs develop as a woman; she would be betraying her destiny and her reality if she were to take man as her model. She must be woman in the most integral way; in such a way she responds to the divine plan of creation and achieves her greatest similarity to God. There is nothing feminine, as such, which does not carry the image of God. One touches here the very foundation of woman's value, resting not exclusively on typical female qualities, but in the transparency of the perfection of God, shining through these qualities.

Some feninistic movements nowadays look for the emancipation of woman in another direction: they aim at making woman, not only equal, but similar to man and claim for woman the right to do all that man does. This way of conceiving the development of woman implicitly implies that the model of womanly perfection is man. Thus the myth of male superiority reappears in the very women who are opposing it.

In the Biblical account of creation, therefore, we already find the true principle of the emancipation of woman: she must be herself, in the femininity which is her own. The only valid model for woman is simply "woman"; the female model of humanity is of the same dignity as the male one, but different; confusing or assimilating one with the other should be utterly avoided.

"Relationship" Personality: The True Complementarity

Alongside the tendency to make "man" the model of woman, there is also another of considering woman exclusively as relative to man.

The first account of creation gives a too unilateral line of complementarity when expressing the divine mind in these terms: "It is not good for man to be alone; I will give him an aid like him" (Gen. 2:18). The creation of woman is considered for the good of man: woman is destined to be the auxiliary and the complement of man. Paul echos this trend when writing: "Man is not created for the woman, but the woman for man" (I Cor. 11:9).

But the second and earlier account of creation, aims at correcting this unilateral concept, which places woman on an inferior plane: man and woman were created together, without priority of one or the other. In the couple thus formed, man is relative to woman as the woman is relative to man. Complementarity works both ways, with a reciprocity allowing for no discrimination. Man is as complementary to woman as she is to him. If the words of Paul were to be restated in this prospect, one should put it: "Man was created for woman, and woman for man."

This principle entails several practical consequences. Indisputably, woman has often been considered as purely relative to man, a help giving her services to man. In married life, for instance, the image of a "woman servant": man looked upon her as a servant more than a spouse. There is undoubtedly a very noble idea of service in anyone who, deliberately,

with the full pledge of a personality conscious of its own dignity, is willing to serve others in a humble spirit of love: Jesus gave us the example. But there is another idea of service, altogether alienating and similar to slavery: that of a person bound to another, who dominates her and makes her his servant. And it is exactly this last situation which has frequently taken place for woman in marriage and in society: a depersonalizing service.

An interesting indication of this point of view is furnished in the Bible account. The domination of man over woman is considered a consequence of sin: "He will dominate over thee", Yahweh says to the woman announcing her destiny after the fall (Gen. 3:16). Sin opposes one man to another and to woman, instead of uniting them, and the result is the oppression of woman on the part of man. It is here that Christ intervenes to offer us salvation.

Paul, who looked like deferring still to Jewish ideas about the inferiority of woman--ideas which found support in the first biblical account of creation--had notwithstanding understood that Jesus wishes to free woman from any alienating influence, and that with his redeeming sacrifice he had reconciled man and woman, establishing between them a unity excluding all inequality. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman, neither man nor woman: you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). In this declaration of principle, two ideas are manifest: in Christ there can no longer be inferiority due to race, social status or sex, and the basic condition of equality is implicit in the concept of unity. The new equality aims not at setting one category in opposition to the other, but instead favours their union.

The Saviour has therefore freed woman from her state of subjection. However he does not suppress her complementarity: This is reciprocal and leads to a unityⁱⁿ which the two interested persons maintain lawfully their autonomous differences.

But let us go back to the mystery of creation. By creating them "male and female" God made "similar to Him" not only man and woman, but their union as well. For humanity to reflect the divine image it was necessary to have a community of persons. As they are relative to each other, man and woman reflect the divine community, in which the three Divine Persons are characterized by their relationships.

The fact of being "relational" (the term "relational" being preferable to "relative" to better stress specifically interpersonal relationships) to man does not entail any inferiority to woman; first of all because this relationship is reciprocal and man is equally relational to woman; in the second place because relationship distinguishes the most Perfect persons, the Divine Persons.

When the psychological study of sex stresses the particular attitude of woman to interpersonal relationships, it does not thereby indicate any inferiority nor alienating outlook. In this relational capacity of woman, theology shows a reflection of divine perfection. The supreme example of the Divine Persons witnesses to the fact that the ideal of personal life does not consist in the utmost self-sufficiency. A sane emancipation of the person should not aim at this self-sufficiency. To behave as a relational being means to realise the true destiny of a person, as is apparent in God himself.

I. God Represented in Woman

From the basic similarity illustrated in the creation account, there arises another consequence of great theological value. In order to represent God according to analogies in the created world, it is necessary to take into consideration the unity of the human

couple, man and woman at the same time. Only woman can help us to understand certain aspects of the divine being. For instance, when psychology determines specifically the ways of thinking and feeling of woman, and the tendencies which are apparent in her, theologians must draw their own conclusions when considering God; there is in God a reality which corresponds, according to a fundamental analogy, to femininity and all that it entails.

Let us take one particular but significant example. When theology calls God "Father", following the terminology of revelation and in particular that of Jesus, it should complete or correct the meaning of this masculine term attributing to the One whom we call Father the equivalent of maternal feelings. A mother is, like the father, an image of the heavenly Father. If there is in woman a token of tenderness, of deeper sympathy typical of the relationship of a mother towards her son, one must acknowledge a tenderness of this kind in "the Father". From this point of view one should say that "the Father" is at the same time "father and mother". The term "Father" cannot be understood as a title justifying male prejudice. The Father is neither masculine nor feminine, and when we call God "Father", we mean that he possesses all the riches of fatherly and motherly love.

One can thus explain the use made by Jesus of the figure of a woman to bring out the behaviour and feelings of the Father. It is significant indeed that Jesus does not exclusively refer to man in order to describe the Father: the mystery of God is accurately indicated by both man and woman. He asks: "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God, and to what shall I compare it? It is like a little grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: it grew and became a large tree. . ." (Lk. 13:18-19). But the same question is repeated with another example: "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till the whole is fermented" (Lk. 13:20-21; cf. Mt. 13:33).

One can detect what is underlying this double image: the man who sows the mustard seed does not represent sufficiently the action of God in founding his kingdom and making it grow. Jesus completes it with the image of a woman.

It might seem at first that in the former parable the growth of the kingdom is given greater significance: a little seed grows into a tree. Under the influence of leaven, the flour does not increase in similar proportion, the more so, as has been observed, that among eastern people the common bread, after fermentation, does not acquire much more volume. One might get the impression that in the two parallel images, the activity of woman appears less efficacious. On the contrary, the efficiency is not less, but different. "The action of leaven", Lagrange points out, "is entirely inward" and brings a difference in taste (*Evangelium selon St. Luc*, Paris 1921, p.386). There is no question of a growth in quantity, but of a transformation in quality.

The image of woman invites us, therefore, to recognise in God the one Who transforms the quality of human life and thus develops his kingdom. There is in it a complementary aspect to exterior growth brought about by the action of man. Moreover, while bringing out this aspect of the divine action, the parable conveys the idea of the future outlook of woman's contribution to the development of the Kingdom, a contribution especially ordained at favouring intimate maturity, a growth in quality.

On another occasion Jesus appealed, in an equally explicit way, to a feminine comparison to better probe into the mystery of divine love. When he wants to justify his attitude towards sinners, he employs several examples to describe the mercy of God. The most

impressive one is the parable of the prodigal son, but before relating it, Luke quotes two other parables. The first is the example of the shepherd who starts out looking for the lost sheep, finds it, carries it on his shoulders and returns home, inviting his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him (Lk. 15:3-7). The second of a woman: "What woman, if she owns ten drachmas, and loses one, does not light the lamp, sweep the house and look carefully for it until she finds it? And once she finds it, calls in her friends and neighbours, saying 'Rejoice with me, because I found again the drachma which I had lost'. So, I tell you, will the angels of God feast in heaven for a repentant sinner" (Lk. 15:8-10).

One might have thought that the former example was quite sufficient to describe the divine desire to find again a sinner and the joy of his pardon; besides, it was particularly fitting, as it drew the picture of a shepherd, and already in the Old Testament Yahweh had been represented as a shepherd looking for a lost sheep (Ez. 34:16). One could imagine that the example used by Jesus was a perfect one. All the more, therefore, does the second example stand out: a man does not suffice, the figure of a woman brings in an indispensable element.

We can point out the feminine characteristics which enrich this representation. Unlike the shepherd, the woman remains at home and the loss of the drachma is a domestic mishap: the sinner should have been in the father's house, and his disappearance is in some way a family tragedy. One drachma is less valuable than a sheep, but the anxious search for the lost coin leads one to imagine a divine feeling: the importance attributed to those who seem to have less value, the least important ones. By introducing the loss of one drachma out of ten, while the shepherd had lost one sheep out of a hundred, Jesus seems to suggest that for the woman the loss was more deeply felt and consequently her joy was the deeper in finding the coin.

The joy for the welcome of the returned sinner is the most sublime feeling of the Father: woman is therefore well fitted to express, with her feelings, what is the very highest of divine dispositions. Jesus has shown to us the capacity for revelation which can be found in the female personality; and this highlights the significance of a theology of woman.

III. The Mother of Jesus in the Plan of Salvation

The Old Covenant had already pointed out the remarkable influence of some women in the destiny of the chosen people. But the importance of woman is above all brought to light in the New Covenant. Christ is at the centre of this Covenant; God, however, required the cooperation of a woman to accomplish the Incarnation, for the work of Redemption and the development of the Church.

The part taken by Mary has not always received in theology the place it deserves. A great step forward was taken with the introduction of "Mariology" as a distinct theological treatise. Previously, theologians only studied Mary in the context of other themes: her virginal maternity in the treatises on the Incarnation; her collaboration in salvation in the treatise on Redemption; her Immaculate Conception in the treatise on Original Sin; her universal spiritual maternity in the treatise on the Church. These were but fragmentary studies, which did not allow for an elaboration of a doctrinal synthesis concerning the mission of Mary. This synthesis is now contained in the treatise on Mariology.

Several motives explain the delay in developing this treatise; one of them is no doubt the too masculine character of theology, and the lack of interest in a thorough study of the mission of woman. In some theologians one could detect a kind of aversion or reluctance, both to face Mariology and also to undertake a systematic consideration of femininity in the work of salvation.

Maritology, of course, does not purely and simply identify with the theology of woman: it is not an end in itself, but an essential and central one. It allows us to determine some fundamental elements concerning the relationship of woman with God and the task generally assigned to woman in religion. It helps us to demonstrate the necessity of a theology of woman; indeed we must speak of "necessity", if theology wants to remain faithful to its goal of studying the divine plan of salvation in its human realisation.

The Mother of Jesus. Revelation of the Father

What has been said about man and woman being complementary and on the capacity of woman to reveal certain aspects of the divine essence, enables us to better appreciate the value of woman's part in the mystery of the Incarnation.

In this mystery the Son of God becomes man. Yet the exclusive choice of the male sex would have set a limitation to the mission entrusted to the Saviour of revealing the Father. We have seen, in accordance with a principle fixed from the time of creation, how the likeness to God, the Creator, is not wholly concentrated in man; it belongs to the human couple and woman cannot be left out. The presence of woman in the economy of salvation is therefore inevitable, if divine action is to develop to the full through human activity, and if God wants to reveal himself fully in human form. Theological tradition recognized the meaning of this for the new Eve associated with the new Adam. By describing thus the position of Mary with regard to Jesus, it refers back to the union of man and woman as it appears from the creation of mankind. If man and woman, in the work of creation, are indissolubly bound together as an image of God, it would be inconceivable that in the work of redemption this union should not have an essential place. More could be said on the mission of Mary, on her cooperation typically feminine in the work of Christ, which would bring to its peak the theology of woman. We shall limit ourselves to indicating briefly how what we said of the "divine femininity" of woman finds in Mary perfect fulfilment.

One may wonder at the importance traditionally attributed to the privilege of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, since one might be tempted to consider this point of faith as a very secondary one. However, if Catholic faith attaches to it a singular importance, it means that this privilege enables us to recognize in a woman the image, without spot, of divine perfection. In her fulness of grace, Mary appears like the creature through whom the light of God comes to us, without a shadow of restriction. All that is to be found in this woman is a pure reflection of the holiness of God.

Apparently one cannot forget that Jesus is a man entirely holy, a man in whom the perfection of God is manifested in a faultless manner, as his person is no other than the Person of the Son of God. But he is a man; and a woman is needed to carry, in the wholeness of her human being, the divine reflection. In Mary, holiness takes on a female feature, without which the holiness of God could not reveal itself under human form in all its aspects.

It would be a mistake to imagine the holiness of Mary as heavenly or hieratic. The fulness of grace means that this woman has lived the whole of her concrete daily life imbued with the secret life of God, while remaining at the same time integrally human and feminine. Mary gives witness that in woman everything can be utterly close to God. In the motherhood of Mary we should point out three aspects which illustrate the dignity of woman, image of God.

First of all, through maternity brings in a divine reflection in an exceptional manner. All maternity is conformed to the image of the Father, and--as previously stated--this includes distinctive features of paternity and maternity. With the virgin maternity, which was a title to the human generation of the Son of God, Mary gets closer, in an unique way, to the divine fatherhood, which is of a purely spiritual order.

Among the meagre pieces of information supplied by the Gospels about Mary, one deserves special mention, because of its value: her maternal solicitude manifested at Cana. This is really an initiative typical of feminine feeling, in order to assure the continuation of a wedding feast. But it also looks like a singular human expression of the solicitude of the Father. Symbolically, the miracle, requested by Mary and performed by Jesus announces the Eucharistic wine abundantly supplied for the banquet of the Kingdom. At the origin of the announcement of the Eucharist there was the initiative of a woman. In the divine plan, one woman was to perform a decisive function by requiring that the time of revelation should be accelerated. In this solicitude of Mary, so desirous to provoke the revelation of Jesus and to supply some poor people with the wine for their wedding feast, we see the eagerness of the Father anxious to make known the miraculous power of his Son and to prepare the Eucharistic banquet. The first gospel miracle witnesses, more than any other, the importance of the action of the woman: Jesus, who had a tender feeling for all, could have kept an eye open to assure that the feast ended well for all concerned. But it was reserved to a woman to show first this solicitude, so that the miracle might be, in a certain way, due to a new Eve.

Lastly, the motherly compassion of Mary appears like a touching manifestation of the compassionate feelings of the Father. In the Old Testament, to express divine mercy the Jews used the term "maternal viscera", a word which literally means "bowels": a mother's feelings of sympathy and tenderness looked like the image best suited to express the compassion of God. One can understand why Christian artists, when trying to make visible the invisible participation of the Father in the drama of the passion of Christ, represented the tenderness (pietà) of the Father on the model of the Pietà of Mary. They had discovered in Mary, as it were spontaneously, the most moving reflection of the compassion of the Father, and they took the maternal attitude of Mary, holding in her arms her dead son, as the most suitable image for revealing the most intimate feelings of the Father.

Christians moreover understood that the motherly compassion of Mary extends to all men by reason of her universal motherhood, which was entrusted to her by the Saviour and which she performs in the Church. Christian devotion has always appealed to Mary, feeling certain of her sensibility and sympathy: in moral weaknesses and trials one's eyes turn to her. Some have even set the tenderness of Mary in opposition to the justice of God the judge; the final judgement of Michaelangelo depicts a weeping mother close to Christ, who looks like a fearsome vindicator. Properly speaking, the whole of the tenderness of Mary derives from the love of the Father; it is always the image of the Father that Mary portrays in her compassion for mankind, in her benevolent mercy towards human misery. There is no opposition between her and God; one cannot imagine a divine rigour to which the motherly presence of Mary might be corrective. Nevertheless, if the love of the Father is the first source of all Mary's feelings, it is certain that these feelings are definitely those of a woman, and that in the work of salvation a woman is needed to give expression to them. Woman is irreplaceable.

Such is the theological dimension of woman, as portrayed in the personality of Mary. Woman is necessary to reveal, with her very being as a woman, what is deepest in God.

(Taken from: LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA, May 3, 1975, no. 2997, pp. 231-241)

THE YOUNG AFRICAN CHURCHES by Archbishop Gantin

Archbishop B. Gantin, Secretary of Propaganda Fide, addressed a meeting at Bologna, Italy, on 3 February 1975, as part of a Holy Year programme called "Walking towards Easter in a missionary spirit". As his words are a competent summing up of current thinking on Africa, we give here the main points.

The speaker took for granted knowledge of the events of the 1974 Synod of Bishops, and Fr. BÜhlmann's book on the "Third Church at the door".

Never before in its history had the Church witnessed a growth comparable to the recent one in Africa. In 1900 there were only 3 million Catholics; there were 15 millions in 1950 and 45 millions in 1975. They might even reach 175 millions in 2000. Counting Catholics and Protestants together, sub-Saharan Africa may then be 57% Christian. In 1972 there were 356 dioceses, over half of them with African Bishops, with national, regional and continental Episcopal Conferences.

This is only the exterior face of the Church and therefore we should try to discover its inner life and reality, which is successively undergoing what we may call joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries.

1. THE JOYFUL MYSTERY

It started in the last century, with the missionaries of the old Orders and of the new missionary Societies. No praise can do full justice to their courage, endurance and sacrificeⁱⁿ face of disease, hardship and death, equally and heroically shared by an increasing number of Sisters. They are rightly called "fathers" and "mothers" by many Africans; they not only planted the African Church, but also initiated the social development of the continent, with their schools, hospitals, etc. and provided the Africans with the first written documents in their own languages and cultures.

Prompted by political decolonization and Vatican II, the S.C. de Propaganda Fide gradually increased the number of African Bishops: 170 have so far been consecrated, averaging between 35 and 45 years of age, and they gave quite a dynamic contribution to the 1974 Synod of Bishops. This is but a sign of the inner life of young African Churches, as many visitors to Africa have already witnessed on the spot; many more can do so in Rome in the course of welcoming African pilgrims for the Holy Year.

2. The SORROWFUL MYSTERY

The anti-colonial spirit is still rampant; nay, colonialism is made the scapegoat for all post-colonial evils. The Church finds herself placed in the same boat: missionaries arrived at the same time as the colonizers; they were of the same colour, and spoke the same language. The white man who, thirty years ago, was considered rich, intelligent, high-handed, today is rejected; so is the missionary. Missionaries are blamed for having taken decisions "for the Africans, without the Africans, often against the Africans" (cf. Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent, Paris 1956, 16). In some countries missionaries were expelled, in others the threat is always there. The African Bishops, on the contrary, in a collegial statement made during the last Synod, urgently appealed for more missionaries, provided they are prepared to collaborate with the local Churches. I admire the missionaries who continue to work under changed circumstances, entailing less

physical hardship than fifty years ago, but requiring greater disinterestedness and adaptability, and a greater spirit of sacrifice at a psychological level.

Even with the missionaries taking second place in the local Churches, in a spirit of service to African Bishops and clergy, Christianity in Africa still bears a "western face". The missionaries were children of their own time, with the mentality of their own age, and implanted in Africa a European Christianity, often without taking into due consideration the African culture into which Christianity was to be inserted. Nowadays, after the political revolution, a cultural revolution is also taking place seeking its own identity... In some African states traditional Christian names have been forbidden, and traditional initiation rites prescribed.

In such a context, also the African Bishops at the Synod underlined the necessity of establishing a genuine native church, a church capable of expressing Christianity according to the rich African cultures.

This kind of language was so often repeated that at the end Archbishop Zoa of Yaoundé, Cameroon, was almost compelled to give western Bishops the motive for such a stand, explaining how the request for greater indigenization of African and Asian Churches should not at all be taken for a movement aiming at independence from Roman authority: "Culturally and historically speaking", said Mgr. Zoa, "there appear to be three moments in the reception of the evangelical message by a human group belonging to a socio-cultural area different from the messenger's: delivery, assimilation and re-expression of the message". In this later stage, he states; "the group tries to re-state and formulate the message according to his own understanding, genius, categories, symbols, culture and temperament. This we call "indigenization" of the Church. African Churches do not speak any more of adaptation. Today African Christians have the duty, in communion with the Pope and in solidarity with other Churches, to express, to celebrate, to live their faith as Africans... We ask the older churches to understand us and to help to accomplish this our difficult but unavoidable task".

There are of course a number of so-called "Independent Churches" in Africa, unfortunately not in communion with older Christian communities, but which, in the opinion of some, might contribute to giving an African expression to the Gospel.

Besides a problem of rejection, there is also one of insecurity. The African in the past considered himself harmoniously framed in his world. Life might be hard, hunger and disease ever recurring; but he believed in God, the creator, a living force, which, through his ancestors ruled the world and his local community. For him there was neither doubt nor the terrible "why?" without an answer. Nowadays everything is changed. The modern world has brought to Africa a lot of goods, but also the end of security, and consequently disorder, doubt, secularization, alienation, and as a consequence egoism, careerism, irresponsibility and violence.

In opposition to this disintegrating process in some countries dictatorial governments were installed, which cannot receive on approval. Evil cannot be defeated by violence, but through a process of inner maturity. History takes its times. Rome was not built in a day, nor Europe in a century. And even Europe has not yet reached the acme of perfection!

This transitional phase is to be accepted with patience, modesty and silence, but also with hope and serenity. There is no cause for discouragement: the Mission was never easy; it entails a permanent conversion on the part of the whole people of God, also of its leaders. It is both a human and a divine work, a mystery in its three aspects already hinted above. The sorrowful mystery will be followed by the glorious one, which, by the way, is already at work and heartens all true believers.

3. The Glorious Mystery

This is not yet revealed, but through hope we are coming closer to it. This hope is like an appeal (not a complaint) that we should work and collaborate ever more for the coming of the Kingdom. In this hope we believe that the tree of the Church in Africa, is growing, though tossed by the tempest, and dropping some of its raw fruits; we believe that the Lord is present and watchful, even though seemingly asleep in the boat; we believe that the God of history, in the present world-stage, will wisely put into effect His prearranged plans.

We lack the evidence of science, but the "little ones" of the Gospel can detect what others cannot see, such as the wonders of God in the history of Salvation. We neither know how or when, but we believe that God will make all things new (Ap. 21, 5). We are at the dawn of the new day, so we cannot yet imagine the brightness of the full noon. He who sows in tears will reap in joy!

This hope resting on faith is enough to pledge ourselves confidently in building up the new African Churches, rather than indulging in sterile criticism. It implies us to seek the collaboration called for by the Vatican II.

The old European Churches can no longer claim a preponderant role as in the past. Their role as mother Churches is giving place to a service of Brotherhood in "koinonia", the communion of Churches between themselves and with the successor of Peter, the Supreme Pastor.

The brotherly service between Churches is not a one way traffic. The African Churches still need your prayers, your missionaries, your money, your inspiration. But they also can offer something in return for the contributions of every kind so far received: a little of their spontaneity, their confidence, their pastoral experiences and initiatives. No Church is altogether independent. Mutual need will create true communion, lead to a common destiny, to a mountaineering spirit of being firmly roped together. The missionary effort of the Church, we think, has not yet reached its limits; indeed, the contemporary world is a challenge to engage to the full in missionary activity. "The grace of renewal cannot flourish in communities unless each of them extends the range of its charity to the ends of the earth, and devotes to those far off a concern similar to that it bestows on those who are its own members" (Ad Gentes, 37).

This implies that the old churches of Europe need to engage in missionary activity in order to bring about their own renewal, at the risk of stifling in their own pastoral problems; rather should they solve them in a renewed missionary effort.

The young African Churches on the contrary still need the help of the Churches of Europe to develop their own mission to the full.

THE MORATORIUM DEBATE: THE ISSUES BECOME CLEARER by Emilio Castro, Director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches

After a time in which emotions have run high, we have finally entered a period when rational discourse on this theme is possible. To suggest even the temporary withdrawal of missionaries and funds from particular countries was bound to provoke a strong emotional reaction, for the work of mission is an expression of the Christian churches' evangelistic passion and their readiness to serve. It is no mere appendage, a luxury to be indulged or not at will, but a natural and normal expression of their life in Christ. One must admit, however, at the same time, that mission work has often gone hand in hand with the imperialistic activities of our respective countries. But this fact, which must be analysed and its effects judged in order to purify the contemporary missionary experience, cannot negate the spirit of sacrifice and love in which men and women have dedicated their lives to the service of Jesus Christ among peoples who live beyond their own frontiers.

Whenever we debate issues which touch our basic convictions, our emotions are aroused. But when our emotions make us react to the mere sound of a word and lead us to caricature our neighbour, accusing him of being an "enemy of mission" or a "neo-colonialist", then we must admit the injustice we have done and repent these emotions. One cannot possibly judge a person's convictions on the missionary calling of the Christian Church solely by his attitude toward the question of moratorium. Both the Bangkok Conference on Salvation Today (January 1973) and the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (July 1974) discussed moratorium, whether the actual word was used or not. Both of these Christian conferences have raised the possibility that in particular places and under certain circumstances a withdrawal of funds and missionary personnel may well be necessary to carry out more effectively the missionary task.

Among many aspects of the moratorium debate, there are several that have become clear:

1. Moratorium is no new idea. But the use of this particular word is new--and many would argue, unfortunate. That question aside for the moment, we should note that the practice of withdrawing a foreign missionary from a given country or church has its antecedents in the New Testament itself. The Apostle Paul does not want to impose his presence on the churches which he founded. After a short time he goes on his way leaving them to express in their own way their obedience to the faith which he has made known to them. At a recent consultation on moratorium, Dr. Philip Potter, General Secretary of the WCC, reminded us that as early as 1910, at the Edinburgh Conference, there was evidence of awareness of the fundamental concerns of this debate: the problem of missionary paternalism, the identity of the new churches, and the need for them to be self-governing and self-propagating. The theme therefore is far from new; perhaps it has had the misfortune to reappear in the missiological discussion at a time of intense mistrust and great polarization. But the more we move away from our caricatures and our stereotyped responses to them, the more we discover that the word moratorium is an attempt to describe, in terms which make sense in our time, a style of action aimed at recreating the very relationships which have long been the goal of mission and which stand firmly in the tradition of the Church.

2. Moratorium does not mean isolationism. Sometimes a complete break in relations occurs because of political decisions taken by governments. Sometimes situations arise in which the rupture of relations takes place as a result of human sin, of a power struggle in a partnership. The idea of moratorium does not justify ruptures which occur because of distrust or rejection. Moratorium does not, in fact, in any way, aim at a loss of relations but rather the suspension of one particular type of relation in order to allow other possible relationships to emerge. Thus the Apostle Paul, who did not want to make the congregations he founded dependent by imposing his physical presence upon them, maintained constant contact with them through his letters, developing a relationship of great richness and honesty. It may be that after giving up a relationship of dependency, real spiritual relations can be established through which we can at last give and receive with greater authenticity. Prayers of intercession, mutual visits, personal encounters and the sharing of experiences--all these can and must be maintained while a moratorium on funds and personnel is being applied. Moratorium is not advocated in order to bring about an isolation in the Christian faith but a recovery of respective identities in order to achieve more effective missionary action at the local level and a richer and more mature relationship among partners in mission.

3. Moratorium seeks to affirm an area of freedom, not only for the churches which receive missionary assistance but also for the sending churches and organizations. In Bangkok it was suggested that such funds and personnel as could no longer be sent outside the boundaries of the Western world might be used in the re-education of Christians in the churches of the West and of the citizens of those countries. In the Lausanne Covenant it was noted that this freeing of funds and personnel might make it possible to "release resources for unevangelized areas". The subject of how these resources should be used must be seriously discussed. Moratorium does not mean the elimination of the missionary vocation nor the duty to provide resources for missionary work. It does mean freedom to reconsider present engagements and to see whether a continuation of what we have been doing for so long is the right style of mission in our day. Some early reactions in Western missionary circles to the very mention of the word moratorium indicated a certain reluctance to grasp the possibilities it offers us to exercise freedom and imagination.

We seem to have organized ourselves in mission in such a way that we cannot stop. It is almost as if we were a great business enterprise with its own rhythm of production which cannot be interrupted without causing great calamity. The moratorium obliges us to reflect seriously on how to regain a freedom that will allow us, in obedience, to reconsider our goals, taking into consideration the present world missionary situation. Moratorium may also mean recovery of freedom for the churches which have been receiving help, freedom to ask fundamental questions such as: Do we really want foreign personnel? What sacrifices are we willing to make in our own finances in order to maintain this personnel? Do we need foreign money? To what extent is our style of pastoral work, our church administration a copy of foreign patterns, making us forever dependent financially on foreign sources? Does our way of being the church tie us in a natural way to our own people?

4. Moratorium has to be understood within something we call, for lack of a better name, "world mission". It is only when we begin to accept the missionary responsibility of each local church that we can speak of a moratorium on our present relationship of assistance and dependence. Only if I am committed to the accomplishment of the mission of the church in my own country have I the right to think of assisting other countries and other regions. It is the faithfulness of my commitment to Christ in my own national situation which makes

my missionary concern in other parts of the world authentic. We have often said that the way in which the North American churches face the racial problem in their own country is the best missionary service they can render in foreign lands. Only as a church is committed to justice in its home country does it have the credentials for preaching a liberating Gospel in other parts of the world. At the same time, the church which chooses moratorium for the sake of its own authenticity must do so certain that in this way it is searching for a more adequate expression of its missionary responsibility and is contributing to the total service rendered by the Church to the world.

Whenever motives unrelated to our concern for announcing the Kingdom of God lie behind our call for a moratorium, we falsify the issue and use the word moratorium as a cover-up for other motivations and other purposes. To repeat what has been said so many times: there can never be a moratorium of mission; there can be--and perhaps in various places must be--a moratorium on missionary service both for the sake of those who receive and for the sake of agencies and churches which send funds and personnel.

5. The whole debate on moratorium is already accomplishing an important missionary function: It obliges us to re-think our motivations and our relations and forces us to make use of our imaginations. The challenge of the moratorium shakes our previous assumptions. We cannot go on doing business as usual. It urges us to seize the freedom to think through our mission again without the weight of our traditional, usually bilateral, relationships, so that we may then discover the real values within those relationships and go about finding ways of preserving those values without creating dependency. In short, taking up the subject of moratorium may mean the recovery of the critical freedom and the freedom of imagination so necessary for intelligent obedience to God. It may be worthwhile to note that the recent ecumenical discussion on moratorium was initiated in the course of the struggle to formulate a set of guidelines or criteria by which the churches, moving beyond the state of mere mutual recognition, might engage themselves in a pact of mutual responsibility for engagement in six continent mission. It is not surprising that the moratorium issue had to be faced by this group of people, the Interim Committee on the Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel, all of whom had been struggling to experiment with new ways of sharing ecumenically the churches' resources, human as well as financial. Once faced, the issue of moratorium was seen to raise, with greater than ever urgency, the whole gamut of ecumenical issues from ecclesiology to the unity and universality of the Church, cultural identity, the use of power, the relationship between God's people and God's mission, and not just the question of structures for mission.

Certainly, though moratorium is not a new idea, it is a new way to raise old questions, and to raise them perhaps more sharply for our day. Moratorium poses a penultimate question. The real question is not whether or not there should be a moratorium but how to be the Church of Jesus Christ, how to live up to our calling to be God's messengers.

COMMUNITY AND EVANGELIZATION: WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES US

(from a talk given by Sr. Barbara Hendricks, M.M.)

I. THE EVANGELISING MISSION IN THE EARLY CHURCH COMMUNITIES

The New Testament gives us a clear picture of the life, work and Word witness of the early Christian Communities. There are several different models described which provide us with the essential elements of a truly apostolic community gathered by the Lord Jesus for mission. The contemporary Italian theologian, Father Enzo Gatti, in his recent book, *RICH CHURCH-POOR CHURCH*, (Orbis Publications, Maryknoll, New York, 1974) presents a picture of the Communities of Jerusalem, Antioch and Corinth and he analyzes their basic characteristics. He says that although they were three quite different communities sociologically, ethnically, culturally and religiously, they all had one over-all essential and basic dimension--they were all missionary.

The Jerusalem Community (Acts 1-15) gave priority to brotherly communion as is evidenced in the Acts account by the instruction of the Apostles, participation in common prayer, and the breaking of the bread and the sharing of their material possessions. The characteristics of this mother community of Jerusalem were: 1) unity centered on the Eucharist and the Apostles. 2) acknowledgement of the active and evident presence of eschatological salvation in the community. 3) a strong focus on the community of possessions, and 4) evidence of the missionary growth of the community. It was the first community, made up of Jewish converts but which also, contained converts from the diaspora and from paganism. There was a conservative and somewhat legalistic trend in the Jerusalem Church, e.g. some felt strongly the need to perpetuate the observance of the Mosaic Law, especially ritual. Paul had to proclaim loudly and vigorously the definite break between Christianity and Jewish ritualism. Earlier, Peter had initiated the preaching of the Gospel outside the community and had dared to enter the house of Cornelius, finally baptizing him. The attitude on the part of the Jerusalem Community generated opposition to mission and yet, Peter continued to foster the missionary spirit. This Community was an authentically Christian community, one that found salvation because of its obvious dimensions of internal communion, service and missionary thrust of preaching the Gospel to the pagans.

The Antioch Community gives a particularly clear model of a missionary community. It was characterized from the beginning by a spontaneous openness to the Gentiles. Its leader, Barnabas, had been born in the diaspora; he and Paul did not live there as heads of an administrative structure. Instead, Barnabas and Paul were missionaries sent by the community to preach the Gospel outside the faith community. What seems to stand out in the Antioch Community is that the whole community is greatly concerned for the preaching of the Gospel in a rather dynamic way. All the Faithful felt a direct responsibility for this mission outreach. "Here (Antioch) unlike the Jerusalem Community, any ministerial arrangement seems to be in function of the preaching of the Word rather than of the government of the faithful." (*RICH CHURCH-POOR CHURCH*, Page 86). The Antioch Community, however, is not exclusively focused on the Kerygma; the dimension of the Diakonia (brotherly service) is obviously present. "While Jerusalem experienced problems in achieving an equitable distribution of goods within the community (Acts 6) Antioch was sending financial help to all the brethren in Judea (Acts 11:28-30) a gesture which was, above all, the expression of universal awareness and its spirit of communion with all the local churches." (*Ibid.*, Pages 86-87). It was at Antioch that the early church was first called "Christian Church" and it was here in the milieu of the Antioch Community that there developed a maturity of missionary expansiveness and of the awareness of communion among all the other Churches.

the Corinth Community as we find it described in Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians was made up of a variety of people and characterized by an abundance and diversity of charisms. Paul tells them of their "fleshly wisdom" their egoism as well as their strengths. He speaks to them of the Spirit in each member of Christ's body, giving everyone the ability to live for others and to be creative instruments of harmony and peace. The picture of a community knit closely together comes to us through the texts which speak of "belonging to Christ" "in communion with Christ". (1 Cor. 15:22-23, 45-47). And yet, it too, reflects brotherly service as well as the preaching of the word beyond the faith community to its neighbors.

Reflecting on the descriptions of these primitive Church Communities, we conclude that an authentically Christian Community, the Community of those who believe in Jesus and who are gathered in His Name, always manifest a three dimensional witness; COMMUNION (Koinonia) among its own members, some form of SERVICE OR MINISTRY (Diakonia) which is fully inserted into the temporal reality of the times and a PREACHING OF THE WORD (Kerygma) which is clear, prophetic, challenging to conversion and almost shocking to the listener. These three elements constitute an authentic Christian Community and must be present in a Community in order for it to become a truly missionary community--one that dynamically and effectively diffuses the Good News of Salvation and is sent into the world as a prolongation of the mission of Jesus.

5. THE PERSONAL CALL TO MISSION AND THE MISSION OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

The apostolic life as we have seen it in the New Testament, in the history and tradition of the Christian Church and in our own personal history begins with a personal call to follow the Lord; it is a gift for others. It is always in some form an ecclesial call, a call to gather in Christian community. God's Word is directed immediately to the heart, calling a person to make a radical and wholly revolutionary decision. The vocation to mission is God's free and mysterious initiative; the beginning of a life-long dialogue made possible by the discovery of God in the depths of one's own inner being, and sealed in covenant by the loving, free and whole hearted response of the chosen one who is possessed by God and empowered by the Spirit who sends forth in mission.

Those who are called by God's penetrating Word and who leave all are first of all called into a community (ekklesia) and, as a member of the "ekklesia" are nourished by the love, hope and faith of the community, and sent to share this experience of Christ's healing and saving love with their brothers and sisters outside the faith community. The call to be a messenger of salvation cannot be realized in a purely individual way. It is a way of life that can be presented in a concrete, visible way only in the context of community. This is of great importance in the religious community, but it is also applicable to any form of Christian commitment. Where there is no concrete realization of the Community in service and in the preaching the word (e.g. no ecclesial event) there can be no authentic experience of Church nor of apostolic religious life.

For the Christian, and in our case the religious, to seek personal fulfillment in an individualistic "mission" apart from a personal relationship to the "ekklesia" is impossible and frustrating. Mission is never a private or individual affair. To achieve maximum fulfillment in relation to Christ whom I receive and communicate to others as the highest form of sharing, I must courageously launch out, leaving behind secondary matters, and as an integral member of the Apostolic Community be sent in mission.

The Apostolic Community does not stand apart with its own private "mission". It, too, is sent by the "ekklesia" it exists in the Church for a special need of the Church--in-mission-to-the-world. It is a charismatic response to some deep and critical need of the world in which the Church is inserted. The personal call to mission, the call of the Community to Mission and the Pastoral Mission of the Local Church are intimately related and cannot be conceived of as separate responses to the call of the Lord to mission.

The source, the sustaining power and the end of all mission is the Word of God, present in each heart, in each apostolic group and in the whole Church. This sense of the "ekklesia" must be kept alive and vibrant in the members of the apostolic group, as individuals and as community. Once a religious loses the sense of being sent in mission by the apostolic group or the group loses its sense of being sent in mission by the Church there begins a process of decay and stagnation. This is particularly important for Formation Directors who have the first obligation of instilling a sense of being sent in mission with a message of salvation.

III. THE PREACHING OF THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION

I believe that the primary source book for all Formation Directors is the Acts of the Apostles. It is the first fruit of the reflection and contemplation of the early Christians. In a certain sense, it is the first attempt of the Christian Community to articulate a Theology of Evangelization. Throughout the Acts, we sense a continuous movement of Christian witness, always highlighted by certain significant recurring themes. Perhaps we could summarize this movement by saying that those who received the Spirit of Jesus, the Risen Saviour gathered to celebrate His love for them and went out to proclaim His saving acts to others. Reflecting on the Book of Acts we can see clearly the essential elements of that gathering and being sent in the Lord's name to proclaim His message:

First, there is the gathering. The disciples of Jesus, having encountered the Risen Lord and experienced His healing and saving love, come together to build a faith communion of mutual love, nourished by the Spirit present in the group. This community of faith is bound together by prayer, by brotherly service to one another, by shared possessions, by the instructions of the Apostles and by the Eucharist which is the culminating point of its unity.

Secondly, there is the sending. The disciples are filled with the Spirit who urges them to go outside the faith community and boldly preach the Good News of Salvation, challenging men to repent their evil ways and be converted. Peter's first faith-proclamations focus on the core of the Kerygma--the fullness of time has come, the Kingdom is at hand, repent and live a life of love with God and with your neighbor. Jesus, by His life, ministry, death and resurrection has brought salvation and will continue His saving Acts until the end of time. God has raised Him from the dead and constituted Him Kyrios, head of the New Israel; the proof of the Good News is the presence of the Spirit in the Community.

Thirdly, there is the healing and reconciling ministry. Ministry, a self-gift in service, always accompanies the oral preaching of the Word. In Acts 3, the cure of the cripple stands out as the response of Peter and John to the crying need of the poor beggar at the Beautiful Gate. This ministry of healing clearly flows from the saving Word of God which has transformed the disciples into a Community of Salvation--a salvation which can be felt, seen and heard by the broken man, and by those who witness the miracle.

Fourthly, there is the inevitable suffering which is part of all evangelization; truth, healing and radical brotherly love always brings opposition. The Sanhedrin apprehend Peter and John. They are interrogated and harassed, told to be quiet and not to speak of Jesus and His Message.

Fifthly, there is the return of the disciples to the Community. They recount their experiences, the suffering they endured and there is rejoicing in the community. The members reflect together on the Scripture and they offer common prayer, trying to interpret these events to discover God's plan and purpose. They receive courage from the Spirit and from each other. Their prayer is very beautiful—"And now, Lord, take note of their threats and help your servants to proclaim your message with boldness by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus." (Acts 4:30)

There is a description in Acts 4:32-35 of the early communal life which seems to sum up the life-witness of this early apostolic group. It is so familiar to us that we are tempted to overlook the rich quality of its content and the poetry of its meaning:

"The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common. The Apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need."

The very first word which a religious community speaks is not an oral articulation of God's Word, but it is the sign which it lifts up for all to see and touch--the witness of a closely knit interpersonal community of those who come together for the sole reason that they have been gathered by the Lord Jesus to incarnate His presence among men and women.

The second word which a religious community speaks to the world is the healing and reconciling ministry which its members perform, once having recognized the most critical and festering wounds of its neighbors. If today, we have at last realized that we have woven evil into the very fabric of our structures and institutions there is a grave obligation on the part of the religious community to evaluate its presence and works to see if we are indeed attending to the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the alienated groups of our society--both nationally and globally.

It should be clear to all who look at a Congregation, especially to our newest members, that there is a corporate response to preach the Gospel in the human areas that are the poorest in every way; it must be obvious to everyone what we are all about, and that we have a message which is new and different, one that brings new life and creates human communities of love and care.

I am struck very much by Father Philip Murnion's talk in November of last year at South Bend, Indiana to the Committee on Urban Ministry. He says: "The objective of social ministry is the formation of community. The disintegration of traditional communities in this society has opened serious gaps. These gaps cannot be filled simply by legal and technical changes in systems, changes that by themselves cannot overcome isolation within society." He says that during the past decade, American Catholicism has witnessed heroic efforts on the part of many priests, religious and laity to serve the most needy, to be

identified in life and action with the communities of the poor and disenfranchised. He goes on to suggest that much of this work of social ministry needs to be questioned in regard to its form and objectives.

I agree with Father Murnion. We religious, must examine our social ministries to see if in fact we are organizing coalitions of power, groups of pressure, in which people may be responsible to one another but not for one another. For me, this is precisely the critique which we need to make on our social ministries today. Legal responses to social problems are needed. This cannot be minimized. But I make a plea for the religious communities to apply a communitarian criterion to social ministries. The purpose of evangelization is communion; it begins with communion and ends with communion. God's Word is spoken in history so that men may become one: "We must ourselves be characterized by the qualities necessary for community commitment. These include a vision of the communal society, a deep faith that reveals the transcendent dimensions and meaning of our activity, . . . fidelity to the group, preparedness for personal sacrifice, ability to celebrate the beliefs and values that give meaning to any enterprise." (Rev. Philip Murnion, South Bend, Indiana, 1974)

The third word which the Religious Community speaks to the world is the Word of Faith in the Lord Jesus. It is the explicit preaching of the Name which gives salvation. This Word must be spoken as a Word which has relevance and intelligibility in our contemporary society. The one who speaks this Word and the Community who proclaims it must be continually questioned by the Word in contemplation, and must search together in communal discernment and prayer for the guidance of the Spirit. We are at a critical moment in history. It is said quite accurately that our western world is a small island of affluence in the midst of a sea of misery—a sea which grows more turbulent as each day passes. It is urgent for us in our religious communities to allow ourselves to be questioned by the Word of God and courageously respond by being more faithful to the evangelizing mission of Jesus.

What Good News are we religious announcing to those on the island of affluence? What Good News are we bringing to the people drowning in the sea of misery? What kind of life-style, ministry and faith proclamation is necessary for us to be messengers of salvation in our world?

I would like to close with these words from the Message of the "Evangelization" Synod. "Prompted by the love of Christ and illumined by the light of the Gospel, let us nurture the hope that the Church, in more faithfully fulfilling the work of evangelization, will announce the total salvation of man or rather his complete liberation, and from now on will start to bring this about. The Church, in fact, as a community totally involved in evangelization, must conform to Christ, who explained His own mission in these words--'THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME FOR THIS HE CONSECRATED ME WITH ANOINTING AND SENT ME TO ANNOUNCE GLAD TIDINGS TO THE POOR, TO GIVE PRISONERS THEIR FREEDOM, THE BLIND THEIR SIGHT, TO SET THE OPPRESSED FREE'. (Lk 4:18) Faithful to her evangelizing mission, the Church as a truly poor, praying and fraternal community can do much to bring about the integral salvation or the full liberation of men." (Message of the Bishops Synod to the Whole Church, 1974 -- No. 12)

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD - NEWS AND NOTES FROM ALL PARTS

The following extracts are taken from "The Man in the Middle," a report compiled by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia, and published with the full knowledge and approval of the Roman Catholic bishops.

"Since circulation of 'An Appeal to Conscience' (A duplicated letter issued by Catholic, Anglican and Methodist Church Leaders) complaints of prolonged torture and brutal assaults by members of the security forces continue to be brought with frightening regularity to the notice of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace... The Commission also received and investigated allegations of the deliberate bombing by the Rhodesian Air Force of civilian villages after the inhabitants had been removed to safety and of the destruction of their houses, property and crops. These facts have been clearly established and cannot be denied. Moreover, the commission has been approached time and time again by people in the protected villages to come and inspect their living conditions so that something may be done to relieve the appalling distress which they are forced to endure.

"Do Rhodesians really understand the plight of these people? To try to appreciate it one might ask: 'How would the residents of any of our towns feel if they were one day summarily ordered to leave their homes and be transported into the veldt taking whatever they could carry and were placed into fenced compounds, told to build whatever accommodation they could with whatever was lying around and then commanded to remain inside such compounds from six o'clock in the evening until six o'clock the following morning?' Yet this is what has happened to 70,000 inhabitants of Tribal Thrust land areas in Rhodesia during the last rainy season and preparations for inflicting similar conditions on thousands more are said to be well in hand.

"... An end to the present struggle will not be achieved through intensifying coercion, but by political way and making manifest their concern for the basic qualities of morality and even-handed justice. The loyalty of the man in the middle will not be won by beating, torturing and maiming him, by shattering his home with bombs from the air, by destroying his crops and driving off his cattle, but by restoring and respecting his dignity as a human being and by jealously guarding the rule of law based on those Christian principles which Rhodesia publicly claims to respect and professes to maintain.

"... The only workable remedy in human terms is reconciliation and dialogue between people who are free in mind and body and who acknowledge and guard those same freedoms for each other. Only then can a real community and a real nation come into being and only then will form and substance be given to the aspirations of all people in Rhodesia.

"... Given the traditional pattern of life, well known to the government (indeed African Customary Law is a compulsory examination subject for promotion within the Ministry of Internal Affairs), it is necessary and important to question the reasons behind the establishment of protected villages. One must also question whether this is regarded as a regrettable but necessary and temporary expedient or whether this is an attempt to change permanently a whole way of life. It is also necessary to enquire whether such a change is acceptable or indeed tolerable to rural African society.

"The principal justification of the concept of the protected village has been that it is essential to safeguard the local population from attacks and intimidation from insurgents... These views, however, do not constitute the whole picture because it is the declared aim of the government that the protected villages are to be regarded as 'a tremendous potential for development' and 'growth points for the future'.

"... The reaction to this concept by the people affected by it seems on the whole to be unfavourable and comments made indicate that at best there is indifference or apathy or more frequently, considerable hostility. The fact that the authorities found it necessary at the beginning of the last rainy season to issue strong warnings that people who did not till their fields should not expect to be fed by the government is evidence of this.

"For most tribes people, and the more progressive and prosperous people in particular, moving into the protected villages constituted a substantial financial loss. In many instances it entailed abandoning well-built homes, or even shops, in which they had invested a life-time of savings, without any compensation. It is a declared policy of the government that no compensation is payable for buildings which have had to be abandoned.

"... Health conditions continue to provide cause for concern. During the last rainy season there were widespread fears of outbreaks of typhoid, and a mission doctor confirmed that there was an increase in diseases related to contaminated water supplies. An attempt has been made to situate villages close to rivers to make water more easily available to man and beast, but this creates acute problems during a good rainy season such as the one just past. The water collects in low-lying areas, homes are plagued by dampness and mosquitos proliferate.

"... Socially, resettlement entails being wrenched from the familiar and intimate environment of the more autonomous kinship group and being placed in the regimented, anonymous and threatening environment of a large and densely populated settlement-even if this resettlement is with the same group.

"... The suffering already experienced by the people in the protected villages can be seen to have affected every facet of their lives. It has been a declared aim of the government to win 'the battle for hearts and minds of the people'. The effectiveness or otherwise of the 'protected village' programme in this battle will no doubt be judged by historians but at this moment of involvement in the actual suffering it is difficult to see where success has been achieved. One questions whether the movement of people on such a vast scale, for whatever reason, can ever be justified except for a temporary military emergency.

"... Despite knowledge of these events by so many people there is an amazing silence. In Rhodesia we find very little evidence of the stirring of public opinion such as manifests itself in other countries. Scarcely anything is heard on radio or television and in the newspaper the correspondence columns contain very few letters on the subject. The significance of the timing of this publication therefore is the response to this silence at a time of great stress in this country of ours. It is as if people know but do not want to see what we are doing to each other in our society.

"... We condemn violence as being contrary to the whole ethic of Christianity and we draw attention to the fact that violence is not simply defined, nor is it necessarily merely a matter of physical injury. Violence and counter-violence leave no room for reconciliation and it is Christian reconciliation, true justice and true peace which we seek for Rhodesia.

There are no victors, nor vanquished in a conflict such as ours but the whole body of our society is infected with a sickness of which the reports published in this booklet are merely symptoms. All of us in Rhodesia are 'the men in the middle'."

ANNOUNCEMENTBACKGROUND TO 3 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES IN NAIROBI IN 1975

Three different religious groups have decided to hold international assemblies in the same year, on the same continent, in the same country and in the same conference hall. None of them has ever held an international assembly in Africa before, yet all three have independently decided to hold one in the Kenyatta Conference Centre, in Nairobi, Kenya, during 1975:

1. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND ITS NAIROBI GENERAL ASSEMBLY 23 November - 10 December 1975

The fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which is scheduled to convene in the Kenyatta Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, 23rd November to 10th December 1975, will bring together 2,500 delegates of 271 Churches in 90 countries to discuss a variety of subjects under the general theme of "Jesus Christ frees and unites". At present, Protestant, Orthodox, Old Catholics and Independent Churches in 90 countries belong to the WCC.

2. THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (ICCC) 16 - 27 July 1975

Fundamentalism has been the traditional keynote to the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). The ICCC is one of the most extreme right of any Christian Council and is distinct from other groups of conservative evangelical Christians, such as those that held the International Conference on World Evangelism in July 1974 at Lausanne, Switzerland. It opposes:

- 1) Church involvement in any social teaching
- 2) Communism
- 3) The ecumenical doctrine and liberal policy of the WCC
- 4) The Catholic Church
- 5) Non-literal interpretation of Scripture.

3. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR RENEWAL 12 - 16 August 1975

No Church has organised the International Conference for Renewal yet members of many Churches, including the Catholic Church, will be present. All are involved in charismatic renewal. The aim of the Nairobi Conference is for the participants to gather together for a prayerful and scriptural basis that can fit into a Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox context. Such a shared experience is orientated towards bringing all present into a closer relationship with Christ and this is envisaged as a positive step towards "Unity in Christ".