2 February 1976

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ISSUES IN MINISTRY

What are the forms ministry takes in our particular situation? The vitality of this
question seems to lie in the continual change that confronts us. The source of the
change (a political situation, the configuration within our institutes, an altering
social structure, etc.) is not perhaps so relevant as the commonness of response.

From many perspectives this week, people are looking to new forms and uses of
community. If we can bridge the gap from the question "What do you mean by community?"
to "What catalyzes authentic community?", we might discover that the basic require-
ments for effective community are somewhat universal. There may exist a crystal seed
that only extensive prayer, research and experimentation will reveal. As we have
continued our search through SEDOS documentation, we particularly appreciated this
week the reflections of Fr. Joinet and Sr. Agnetta's work in pulling together a
brief compendium of information available on basic communities.

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COMING EVENTS:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE   Monday, 16 February   4:00 p.m.   I.C.M. Generalate
                                                         Via di Villa Troili, 30
HEALTH GROUP MEETING Friday, 5 March   9:00 a.m.   S.S.N.D. Generalate
                                                         Via della Stazione Aurelia, 95
GENERAL ASSEMBLY   Tuesday, 8 June   Full-day

N.B. Fr. Brekelmans will be making a retreat from Sunday evening 8 February until
      Saturday morning 14 February. The Secretariat will be open as usual.

CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AND COMMUNITY LIFE

As White Fathers we have <u>freely</u> chosen to live in apostolic communities. But at the same time we are called to the freedom of the children of God. How can our life in community help us to live out and develop this Christian freedom? That is the question we propose to tackle without envisaging the other aspects of community life, however important they may be.

THE PRESENT SITUATION: WORK FORCE, BOARDING-HOUSE AND APOSTOLIC HOTELS

a) For many decades, in actual fact from the beginning of the Society up till Vatican II our communities were first and foremost <u>job-centred</u>. All their members were harnessed to a joint apostolic task such as running a parish, staffing a college or training priests. All their time and money was given over to this job, which fed their conversations, filled their thoughts and was the object of their criticisms. Tensions arising from differences in character were borne with for the joint venture. Real tensions and internal crises came mainly from differences in ideas about apostolic work, based on different theologies. Endless discussions followed about infant baptism, confession, concentrating work on the parish or the outstation etc.

In certain aspects these communities, united for better or for worse by a joint task, were not unlike certain farming or business couples whose bonds of affection had been reinforced by their joint efforts to run the joint business. In time, affective bonds can become a bit blurred but the shared job still allows them to carry on together in relative peace and happiness.

Still today many a W.F. community has preserved this physiognomy. They keep going at this tempo and have been welded together by the joint apostolic job. Some of their members perhaps do not find therein the affective and fraternal warmth that their formation in teams in the hostels and official documents had given them the right to expect. But after a more or less long period of expectation, they also have thrown themselves into action.

These parish communities centred on a joint apostolic job exhibit in addition one peculiarity. <u>The leader or superior is at the same time the pastor</u>, i.e., <u>the head-man and person ultimately responsible to the bishop who appointed him for all the apostolic work</u>. Confreres in the same station may well claim that the whole team is jointly responsible for the parish. For most bishops, Canon Law in hand, the pastor will always remain the person responsible for the parish and his confreres will be his <u>assistants</u>. Similarly, parishioners insist on seeing the pastor for serious matters and do not content themselves with the last wee curate. This twofold function of the leader contributes to reinforcing the primordial importance of "apostolic output" in our communities, since the head of the community is at the same time the person responsible for the job to be done.

b)   The on-going intensity of this apostolic work often provokes a rapid physical exhaustion which requires periods of relaxation.   Some dioceses have made it compulsory to have one day's rest a week.   In towns we are witnessing the appearance of "hostels" or "guest-houses", real modern "apostolic motels", which allow "veterans" to let their hair down in comfortable conditions.   They are not just centres for recreation and transit, they are also meeting places which allow for exchanges which are often out of the question at the level of the local community. Those centres play an important role in both the physical and psychological health of the dioceses.

c)   In 1975, following the diversifying of apostolic jobs and the specializing of confreres, lots of communities have no common task.   Each confrere has his own particular job without any direct relation to the activities of other confreres with whom he is living and of whose work he is often ignorant.

In Europe and in America the journalist rubs shoulders with the worker priest who has not yet found lodgings;   the wandering student greets in passing the guest-master;   the priest on sick-leave finds himself surrounded by missionaries who are officials in some national service like the Holy Childhood.

In Africa the assistant bursar finds himself next to the chaplain to the students, the priest in charge of contemplative sisters, the hospital chaplain, the manager of the joiner's shop, the sick man attending hospital, not to mention the archivist, the ecumenist, the Islamologist and the man back from furlough who has been waiting a next assignment for a month while his bishop is on an economic-apostolic tour in Europe or America.

To be sure, more than a third of our confreres are living in such communities. Some have already found a certain equilibrium and style of life.   Others are still seeking.   These communities often resemble boarding-houses, whose inmates strive to live in peaceful co-existence and form wee groups among themselves with various interests, bridge players, walkers, T.V. addicts or prayer-meeting people.   But beyond these wee groups each one preserves his personal independence.   These boarding-house communities challenge us and lead us to reflect on the meaning of our life which means to be or claims to be community life.

It is our conviction that an apostolic community is more than a work-centred community, more than a fraternal community and more than a centre for relaxation and peaceful co-existence.   All these items are necessary and form part of it.   However, it seems to us that every community whether for work or welcome, for training or retirement should also be:

1)   a place of mutual liberation, i.e., every community is a liberating community;

2)   a place where each one is made aware of the gifts received from the Holy Spirit, and develops them, i.e. a community of growth in the Holy Spirit.

A. AN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY IS A LIBERATING COMMUNITY

I. WE ARE PRISONERS OF THE OBSTACLES TO LOVE PRESENT IN US

As Christians we want to direct our lives to Christ. As missionaries we want to place ourselves wholly at the service of the communities which have invited us, or else be witnesses to the Gospel among those people who have never heard it. As expatriates we want to open ourselves up to the richness of other cultures. As White Fathers who have chosen to live in community, we want to be attentive to the needs of those with whom we are living. In a word, we want to love God and our neighbour as ourselves.

But all the time we encounter obstacles which come and break our way towards God and block our availability to other people. We discover, as we also underlined in the first part, that we are "prisoners of the forces of Evil, which are an obstacle to love in us". One man wants to help the local people to fight against drought, but he loses his temper with men who refuse to dig wells for the simple reason that according to local custom it is their wives who go to fetch water. Another one wants to introduce modern farming to local farmers with the help of tractors but he gets angry with those who come to interrupt him when he is driving his tractor or who begin to contest the area he has ploughed up for them. During their years of formation many swore to study local languages thoroughly, but at the end of two years when they manage to "get by", some stop all systematic effort in linguistic study. We can say the same about customs, especially in areas of a high Christian density where missionaries are so taken up with ministering the sacraments that they hardly notice local culture. We want to be community men, but when a confrere asks someone, "Did you sleep well?", he is likely to be met with, "None of your business!" We all want to be witnesses to the Gospel, but some make no effort to keep up with trends in biblical studies, and label as "intellectuals" confreres who try to keep up their reading. Others don't read the Gospel very much and feel that in any event they "know enough already". Should a confrere or a Regional be bold enough to suggest that it would be good to follow a refresher course or even a short seminar, they will soon make him understand in no uncertain terms that they have no time to waste and besides they cannot leave the parish since the people need them - all the more categorical a statement, since they have not consulted the people involved, whose untimely attachment they presume. These examples may seem to be caricatures but they do exist. Are we different? Undoubtedly, yes! We are not prisoners of the same obstacles to love. These vary from one person to another. But if we examine ourselves honestly, we shall discover certain of these obstacles to be our obstacles and we shall see that we are prisoners of them.

In this way we make the painful discovery of St. Paul who cried out in the Epistle to the Romans, "I am a mortal man, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate .... If I do what I don't want to do, this means that no longer am I the one who does it; instead, it is the sin that lives in me". (Rom. 7, 14-20). Paul goes on, "so I find that this law is at work: when I want to do what is good, what is evil is the only choice I have. My inner being delights in the law of God. But I see a different law at work in my body - a law that fights against the law that my mind

approves of.   It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is at work in my body".
(Rom. 7, 21-23).

What we have called "the whole set of obstacles to love which is in us" is quite
simply what S. Paul calls Sin with a capital S, "amartia" in Greek.   When we recognize
ourselves as sinners, we recognize above all the presence in us of these forces of evil.
It is not a question of our being ashamed of them, nor of feeling guilty   We must
quite simply recognize and accept ourselves as we are, i.e., prisoners of Sin, of
"amartia" in us and active in us as in every man.   From this point of view we can
define an apostolic community as a community of Sinners, in whose hearts forces are at
work which form an obstacle to love.   We could unashamedly engrave over the porch of
our communities, "Here lives a community of Sinners", prisoners despite themselves of
forces of evil which prevent them from loving.

There in this primordial sin you have the enemy from which we must constantly free
ourselves, since it is the source of personal faults which are often accompanied by a
feeling of shame and guilt.   This feeling inculcated from earliest years is ambiguous.
It hinders us from recognizing ourselves as prisoners of forces of evil, from acknow-
ledging ourselves as sinners, from speaking quietly among ourselves of sin, of our pro-
pensities opposed to love, of our struggles whereas they are everyone's lot and are an
integral part of our personality.

In the perspective of a spirituality of combat, our efforts should unquestionably
bear on personal faults, but they should bear above all on the root of these transgres-
sions.   Primordial Sin, Sin living in us, the forces of evil which prevent us from
loving.

II.   LIBERATING COMMUNITIES

A liberating community is one where the members, without shame or guilt, are
conscious of the presence in them of forces of evil which form an obstacle to love and
which we shall call Primitive Sin.   Together they strive to free themselves from it by
a collective effort.   Such seems to me to be the primary aim of an apostolic community,
since it is quite simply the aim of every Christian community.   A Christian and apos-
tolic community is above all a liberating community.   Even then the practical means of
forming such communities must be sought out.

a)   Being aware of the forces of evil in us

It is quite obvious that if we imagine ourselves to be perfect, we shall never ask
our neighbour to help us in our struggle against sin.   An awareness in depth of what we
are and our limitations is an absolutely necessary condition for an effort at liberation.
It seems to us this awareness can be brought about at three levels:

1)   The level of personal temperament:

No matter what the heredity or environment, each of us has his own personality
with its advantages and disadvantages.   We have our qualities and our defects, neither
of which we have chosen.   They are given to us on the same grounds as our size, the
colour of our hair and shape of our ears.   We have nothing to do with it.   Hence a

twofold struggle on the personal plane: a struggle to develop my gifts, and a struggle to curtail whatever forms an obstacle to my free choice of apostolic service. A struggle at this level is obviously necessary but the combat must equally be waged on other less familiar terrain.

2) The level of the apostolate:

We all experience our own difficulties in apostolic work. One will find it hard to give religious instruction in primary school Another will panic in marriage cases he doesn't understand. These difficulties have nothing "sinful" about them, but are none the less an obstacle to our plan of service to the community. They form an obstacle to love and to our participation in God's plan.

3) The cultural level:

Language difficulties and difficulty in understanding the local culture. I have always admired the patience of the Christians for whom we are working. In certain missionaries they tolerate an ignorance of local customs and a superficial grasp of the language even after a long stay.

Consequently it is a question of an awareness and a struggle in every direction: personal, apostolic and cultural

b) Let's be realistic:

Our apostolic communities are not all liberating communities, far from it. Some have attained that ideal. Others tend towards it and will attain it. For others a question mark remains. Certain communities bring together confreres who would like to live this liberation in common. But such an openness to others calls for trust. You cannot say everything to any Tom, Dick or Harry. Generally speaking, we are not living in communities where it is possible to be equally open to everyone in every domain. It could even happen that isolation be the "portion of inheritance", and that it is psychologically and practically impossible to open up to anyone.

The personnel in communities changes relatively often on account of turns in furlough and of the round of appointments. Now real trust does not always spring up spontaneously. It often needs time to spring up and ripen. It could prove to be impossible between certain people without their in any way being responsible.

So it is not possible to find in each community the friend and confidant to whom we could open up in all confidence about our difficulties and our struggles. The revision of life recommended by the 1967 and 1974 Chapters still remains an ideal in which people hardly believe and which people accuse at times of being French in origin and of demanding a Latin temperament

For personal, deep-seated, inner struggles it is even rare to find the necessary help on the spot. A certain geographical distance even favours openness. We must at least have the courage to seek outside the help of which we feel the need. In this inner struggle in depth, a sure friend worthy of total trust and able to receive all kinds of confidences is necessary. Without such help which is a prop for talking, silence is established and seals people off hermetically. Inner difficulty increases, and gets deeper till it becomes unbearable and provokes a state of crisis.

Between the ideal liberating community where all members are open to one another, and hermetically sealed silence and desert loneliness in community, there can be, it seems to us, intermediary states, and paths of progress. But one condition is absolutely indispensable in order that a community gradually become liberating: we must have the desire to be helped and be ready to open up to other people, since without this basic desire and without effort at openness, no liberation is possible.

c) Mutual openness:

A White Father on his own, left to himself - and that is a general rule for every apostle - cannot become aware of the forces of evil which are in him. He needs other people like a mirror to see himself as he is. Other people help us to get to know ourselves. Their understanding helps us to accept our limitations, just as the all-embracing goodness of Jesus gave back confidence to the sinful woman, helped her to accept herself and set her on the path of transformation.

In fact, a judicious confrere will reflect twice and run his tongue seven times round his mouth before making a remark, no matter how charitable it be. He assumes reaction will be good, but who can tell? This fear of a "fall-out" often gives rise to a conspiracy of silence in our communities.

It is up to each one to break this circle of silence and show others our desire to be helped in our efforts at knowing ourselves and being liberated. Each one must take the initiative in going to find the other person and saying to him, "Listen here. I've such a difficulty; can you help me to free myself from it?" "I make mistakes in the local language. Could you point them out to me?" "If I put my foot in it in my apostolate without being aware of it, could you tell me?" "I've a habit of criticizing readily during meals, sound the alarm-bell by a harmless phrase like, Did you get any mail?"

Ideally in a liberating community, all members should have this openness towards one another. They live in community since they want precisely to be helped in their struggle and they are ready to help other people. This effort at mutual liberation lies at the very heart of community life. Above the entrance could be engraved. "Here lives a community of Sinners who are trying to help each other to free themselves from sin". They know that this liberation is a long and exacting task. The essential thing is to take up one's courage in both hands and begin with an easy and precise point and cross the threshold. This liberating dialogue will vary with each community.

d) Proceeding by stages with the Christian community:

Breaking the silence is no easy thing. But the level at which dialogue can be most easily initiated would seem to be the cultural level. The efforts to master the local language and understand the culture of the African people can help us almost systematically to cover the road of true community life. The Christian community itself can be a precious aid. A catechist, a teacher, the members of the outstation council are generally excellent teachers in preparing a sermon. Bit by bit, if they see our good will and our desire to correct ourselves, they will pluck up courage and take the initiative of making remarks to us, indirectly of course, in keeping with the African character, and prudently, observing our reactions.

In this roundabout way, the whole Christian community could become a liberating community, whose members will help one another in various degrees to fight against the forces of evil present in them. In time these Christian communities could even become aware of sociological pressures opposed to love, such as injustice, exploitation in certain sectors and the oppression of certain categories of people. They will become a source of liberation not only for their members but for the whole human community.

We are perhaps too inclined to live in isolation in our W.F. communities. There is nothing to prevent us going to consult a diocesan priest in order to put before him our cultural difficulties, our ignorance of certain facts and our inability to understand the meaning of certain customs. It is in this way that solid bonds of friendship can be established. You seek some information and you reap a real friendship into the bargain!

Is it necessary to recall that the Bishop is the Father of the Diocese?. He feels this responsibility according to his culture. Why do we content ourselves often with mere relations of politeness or business visits? Our first duty as sons and co-workers is to ask him to initiate us into his culture. In Africa, in general, it is up to the Father to initiate his sons into the customs of the clan. In this effort at cultural liberation, let us treat our Father as a Father. Our relations with the head of the diocese will thereby be transformed.

At the apostolic level: How do we characterize our apostolic attitudes? We must be aware that they are often tainted with paternalism, authoritarianism and a subtle attachment to the power and prestige which the priesthood gives. A certain more or less out-of-date theology of salvation and of the sacraments can confine us in an ideological circle. The declaration of the African Bishops at the 1974 Synod and during the SECAM meeting during the Holy Year in Rome are sufficiently clear and they question us to know if we are not prisoners of a western theology and a western view of the world. Thus in our catechesis and our liturgy, what part do we assign to ancestors, whereas they form an integral part of the local view of the world? The African expression of the unique faith in Jesus Christ can only come from Africans. But like all theology it will emerge from the practice of the People of God, which will provoke qualified theologians, especially African ones, to reflection. It is no good waiting for the publication of technical articles in theological reviews to set us listening to Christian communities and reflecting among ourselves and especially with these communities on how faith should be expressed in the cultural context of our apostolate. This joint reflection with Christian communities, the presbyterium and the local hierarchy will be both liberating and creative of bonds.

African society is in full evolution. Which apostle is not aware of this? Now some people are liable to be a bit nostalgic for the past where everything was clear to them and was well organized in a closed rural society. Besides, a strange psychological reaction is observed in this respect. A big number of White Fathers come from an urban background. Yet most of them prefer to work in rural areas. Rare indeed are the White Fathers who feel at ease in an urban area, particularly in the working-class areas or townships. A complicated problem certainly, yet I risk an explanatory hypothesis. Most White Fathers on arrival in Africa go to a language centre and are then appointed to a rural parish to improve their linguistic knowledge

and familiarize themselves with local culture. They get attached to their first field
of apostolate, all credit to them, but they soon find themselves unable to face the
complexities of urban life with its academics and its unemployed, its wealthy quarters
and its shanty-towns. True enough urban parishes are taken over in priority by the
diocesan clergy. But urbanization is one of the most spectacular phenomena of
evolution in today's Africa. It would not perhaps be out of place to free ourselves
from a certain "rural complex" which could well be the expression of a superiority com-
plex. Rural populations are more easily impressed by the knowledge of the priest or
the Brother technicians. Certain "veterans" don't feel very much at ease with stu-
dents and professional people who come to the village for feasts. These latter
possess at times a human culture superior to that of the clergy and are less pliable
than the average farmer. If a missionary were to experience such feelings towards
educated people, it would be normal that he examine himself as to the origin of these
sentiments.

B. COMMUNITIES OF GROWTH IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

A liberating struggle has two aims: it tends to break the bonds which form an
obstacle to openness to others. It also tends to develop the gifts which God has en-
trusted to us for the service of the community. That is to say that each one must
strive to discover the qualities God has given him and the qualities of other people.
He must work at developing them in himself and encourage others to cultivate the gifts
they have received. A judicious word of praise and a sincere compliment at the right
moment are one of the important aspects of the life of a liberating community. In
this way this community becomes a community of growth and development in the Holy
Spirit, since He is the artisan and inspirer of real progress. What manifold gifts
God has given each one of us. In fact, very few of them have been developed. If we
were to agree to help each other become aware of our gifts and develop them, then there
would rise up from our communities not merely a prayer of petition for help in the
struggle which we are waging, but also and especially a prayer of praise for the won-
ders God has worked in us, in each one of us, in the example of Mary praising the Lord
for all that he has done in her. These liberating communities would be the tangible
proof that God is continuing to work through His Spirit in the world. They would be a
living and authentic preaching of the Good News, the spreading of which remains the
only valid explanation of our missionary apostolate.

Bernard Joinet, W.F.

Paris, 24th November 1975.

Extrait d'une lettre de Thailande publiée dans la revue n. 10, 15 décembre 1975,
des Fratelli di San Gabriele, Via Trionfale, 12.840, 00135 Roma.

AUJOUR'HUI en THAILANDE...

Politique.

En ce moment, le Premier Ministre est l'homme le plus indiqué pour tenir le pos-
te. Il a réussi à empêcher la lutte entre groupes rivaux de devenir ser... utes.
Après 16 ans de gouvernement militaire, il semble qu'il soit difficile de découvrir les
hommes aptes aux responsabilités: ils ont été tenus dans la passivité tellement long-
temps! ...ême parmi les officiers, il est bien probable qu'il n'y ait personne qui soit
assez efficace pour organiser un coup d'état. Ce qui n'empêche pas que les étudiants
et de nombreux professeurs ont peur d'une reprise en main par l'armée. Mais les gens
ordinaires sont fatigués des étudiants! Ils veulent la loi et l'ordre, et désirent
même le retour au pouvoir militaire. J'ai bien peur qu'ils ne l'obtiennent si les
désordres continuent. Nous avons été au bord de la guerre civile le mois dernier (en
août), lorsque les élèves des institutions techniques, par milliers, se sont attaqués
à l'Université de Thammasart, qui est le centre du mouvement gauchiste, et qu'ils ont
commencé à l'incendier. Au même moment, 20,000 policiers se sont déchaînés et ont mis
la maison du Premier Ministre à feu et à sang. La Loi d'urgence a failli être pro-
clamée, mais les choses se sont calmées assez vite. Et maintenant il y a beaucoup de
divisions chez les étudiants. De même, ils ont perdu le soutien du peuple qui est
fatigué de leurs actions. Dans beaucoup de Provinces on n'en veut plus.

Pendant ce temps également, les communistes sont très actifs dans tous les do-
maines. Bien sûr, il serait dangereux de mettre sur leur compte tout ce qui se passe;
mais il serait tout aussi dangereux de s'aveugler et de ne pas voir leur présence.
Les étudiants en général n'y croient pas, et déclarent que c'est une fable inventée par
les riches.

Economie.

Les prix augmentent. Les grèves sont devenues un évènement banal. Avec
l'augmentation des grèves, augmentation du chômage. De moins en moins d'investis-
sements: personne ne veut plus investir chez nous, pas plus les thais que les étran-
gers. Nous sommes pris dans un cercle vicieux.

Nous savons pourtant bien que le pays n'est pas pauvre. Malgré toutes ses défi-
ciences, il est en meilleure posture que beaucoup de ses voisins. Mais il y a encore
beaucoup de gens qui essaient de répandre la théorie de la lutte entre opprimés et
Oppresseurs. Si on s'en réfère aux standards asiatiques, notre peuple ne souffre pas
du manque de confort matériel. Mais il faut travailler dur pour pouvoir vivre
honorablement.

Social.

Les bourgeois, les nobles, les puissants, et surtout des gens de la campagne,
viennent de se grouper pour organiser un groupe de pression contre les gauchistes. Je
pense qu'il ne sera pas facile aux communistes de s'infiltrer avec succès. Bien que

quelques missionnaires aient pour de travailler dans certaines régions dites "sensibles", le nord-est en particulier, la plupart continuent leur oeuvre. Quatre ou cinq évêques étrangers ont donné leur démission: il faudra que Rome trouve leurs remplaçants dans le clergé autochtone. A la conférence des Supérieurs Majeurs et des Evêques, a été accepté le concept d'une Eglise "socialistique". L'Eglise a offert de vendre toutes ses terres, et les journaux l'ont annoncé, mais les Catholiques sont réticents à se porter acquéreurs: ils voudraient avoir les terres gratuitement. Le Roi, lui, a mis 50,000 rai de terrains à la disposition du gouvernement, pour être distribués gratuitement aux paysans pauvres. Un certain nombre de propriétaires suivent cet exemple. La Loi de Réforme agraire vient d'être promulguée, mais ne touche pas aux terres appartenant à l'Eglise.

Par ailleurs, les étudiants catholiques ont publié des tracts attaquant les évêques, les prêtres, les frères et les soeurs; attaquant plus spécialement les écoles catholiques sous prétexte que ce sont des écoles de riches. Mais ils oublient que, sur 170 écoles catholiques, plus de 150 sont pauvres et vivent des revenus de l'Eglise. Les écoles riches sont surtout celles de Bangkok et de Chiengmai, et ce sont elles que l'on voit. La critique ouverte des prêtres et des religieux est devenue très commun chez les catholiques progressistes. Même la Monarchie est attaquée par une minorité d'étudiants; c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles le peuple ne les suit pas. Mais pour le moment ce sont des droitistes qui dominent la scène. Et nous désirons garder notre identité nationale: la Patrie, la Religion, le Roi.

Ecoles.

Le Frère Provincial a été nommé par le Premier Ministre membre de la Commission des écoles privées au Ministère de l'Education (cette nomination étant en fait une affaire simplement légale). Son travail consiste à préparer les lois et règlements concernant les écoles, à régler les différends entre les professeurs et les autorités scolaires, à faire redresser les torts, etc. Depuis qu'il travaille ainsi au Ministère (un jour par semaine), il a son mot à dire dans les questions de politique éducative et disciplinaire. Il a aussi été nommé au Conseil National de l'Education, comme membre de la Commission pour la Réforme scolaire. Il s'y rend de temps en temps pour participer à la planification à tous niveaux.

Cette Commission pour la Réforme scolaire désire enlever les écoles primaires au secteur privé. Une loi est prévue dans ce sens pour 1978-79. Mais le Ministère est d'avis contraire, tout en faisant effort lui-même pour construire davantage d'écoles dans tout le pays. Il y a donc confrontation entre les deux tendances. Ce sera au Conseil des Ministres de décider, mais bien des facteurs l'empêcheront sans doute de prendre une décision quelconque! En réalité, tout le monde a le même objectif, il n'y a que l'échéance qui soit différente: tout mettre sous contrôle du gouvernement un jour ou l'autre. Il y a encore le Parlement, qui, lui, n'est pas favorable à de telles mesures. C'est évidemment une question extrêmement importante pour nous, parce que la plupart des écoles paroissiales sont des écoles primaires. Les évêques craignent que nous ne soyons plus capables de former les enfants en dehors du milieu chrétien. Mais il y a toujours beaucoup de travail à faire dans les écoles secondaires et les collèges universitaires.

NEW MINISTRIES   (Nairobi Pastoral Department, Kenya)

A great discussion takes place on ministries.
Last year, each Bishops' Conference was asked to submit to the Vatican which new mini-stries had been introduced in their Conferences and the question was asked: which new ministries are thought to be desirable.

Many have asked the Pastoral Department what is understood by new Ministries (ordained and non-ordained) and why we should foster them.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH ASKING FOR FURTHER NEW MINISTRIES:

In discussing the terms of reference given in the text of the Resolution, it was concluded that it seems insufficient to approach the question of the diversification of the ministries in the Church merely with a view to finding practical answers to the growing crisis affecting the priesthood and the religious life.
While this crisis is very real, it should be looked upon as the <u>occasion</u> for turning the searchlight on the need to broaden the field of the ministry rather than the main reason for doing so. The main reason for a broader view of the ministerial service should be seen as a deepening of the Church's mission itself.
While recognising the diversity of gifts, it is important to realise that all the members of the Church have received charisms of the Holy Spirit by virtue of their baptism and confirmation and so have been given the right and responsibility to share in the guidance of the life of the Church.

It is for this reason that the ministry of Christ, hitherto appearing in, as it were, 'concentrated' form in the traditional degrees of the clergy, should of its very nature be extended, taking diverse forms of service and responsibility, and embracing many more members of the Christian community. In this perspective, the process will not be understood merely as a temporary 'palliative' to meet the shortage of priests by multiplying the 'clergy' but rather as an enriching of the Church by a more widely shared participation in the ministry and its responsibilities. In other words, it is taken for granted that the Church enhances her own life and improves the standard of the community through diversification of her ministry and service.

Revision of Attitudes:

In view of the above-mentioned developments, it is thought that a broader view of the ministry will demand a fundamental change of outlook and attitude on the part of the Church leaders as well as of all others in the Church. They will on the one hand

have to review their own role in the Church and on the other hand reconsider critically some present structures...

If we accept the view that involvement in the service of the Church should be extended to the community at large, we must accept a measure of declericalisation...

A further example of fundamental change in attitude could be called the need to 'de-paternalise' the <u>position of the priest</u>. The Christian community with the priest at the centre and surrounded by a largely passive flock must give way to a dynamic group where stress is laid on the sharing of the Spirit and communal initiative...

Briefly one can foresee the pastoral activity of the Church in the future as being less 'priest-centred' and more 'people-of-God-orientated'.

Here follows a list of possible new ministries most of which have been officially introduced in one diocese or the other.

1. Deacons and acolytes

2. Lectors

3. Distributors of Communion

4. Catechists for the instruction of Children

5. Leaders of funerals

6. Trainer catechists

7. Local voluntary workers

8. The teaching of catechism

9. Leaders of Sunday services

10. Ministry of the sick

11. Literacy teachers.

(Taken from PRO MUNDI VITA, Ministries and Communities Newsletter, No. 5, June 1975
--passim)

This article, an excerpt from reports on the Second Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA II), is a high light of the theological reflections made daily on the theme "The Social Dimensions of the Gospel". BISA II held in Tokyo, Japan: April 7-19, 1975.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

by

Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen, OCD.

Bishop Hamao and Father Ohara both spoke of the system which conditions and determines the mode of thinking and acting of people who are caught within it. They spoke of the dehumanizing effect of the system on the youth of today, particularly young workers.

The system is described by Father Ohara as something that goes beyond "personal values and individual morality". It appears to be machinery that has its own identity beyond the dimension of persons, and functions on its own steam. Moreover, it has the power to form or deform, humanize or dehumanize the people who are situated within it.

The system transcends the personal (private) dimension of human existence: the intra-personal (within the person), and the inter-personal (between persons). For this reason, it is referred to as the meta-personal (beyond the personal), the third dimension of human existence. It is also called the structural, institutional, societal, public dimension. The third dimension is the product of human processes in an effort to organize man's environment to serve his purposes.

The Gospel is a message of man's salvation which is addressed to man himself. It proclaims the salvation of the whole man. The Gospel must, therefore, address itself to man as he is situated in the total dimension of his existence, to include the meta-personal dimension. The Gospel is not only a private message addressed to persons. It is a public message addressed to society.

Grace - Sin

The process of human salvation is a process that dramatizes the struggle between grace (the element of salvation) and sin (the element of damnation) for the possession of the trophy: MAN.

The story of Christ's saving work is the portrayal of the eventual triump of light over darkness, of truth over falsehood, of life over death. "Where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more." (Rome 5:20).

Grace and sin are two correlative elements in the drama of human salvation.

Societal Embodiment

Thanks to the theology of liberation we have an insight into the embodiment of sin in structures and institutions of society. We have an eloquent example of this fact in the oppressive and dehumanizing structures that both Bishop Hamao and Father Ohara spoke about. Theologians refer to this phenomenon as structural (institutional), societal sin. Such sin seems to suggest the reality that Scripture writes of "principalities and powers".

If grace is the correlative of sin, what can we say of societal grace?

Theology of Symbol

Karl Rahner has integrated the theology of grace and the theology of revelation through the theology of symbol. All reality – human and divine – is self-imaging. Grace and revelation are two aspects of the ONE reality: GOD. God as self- giving (grace) and God as self-manifesting (revelation). The fullness of God's self-gift is realized in the fullness of God's self-revelation: JESUS CHRIST (the symbol). God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, "And the Word was made flesh". (John 1:1 4).

Father Nicolas stated the basic principle: "God's style is incarnational". God's loving action (self-giving) among men is a continuing incarnation in men and their history, in human processes, structures and institutions, in human society. "I shall be with you all days till the end of time."

Theological Reflection On The Third Dimension Of Human Existence

The Living God

Our God is the living and life-giving (saving) God. He gives life by His grace. How does grace embody itself in human processes, structures and institutions, in human society? How is God present (incarnated) in the third dimension of human existence?

What is the role of people like Mr. Nagadomi and Miss Furukawa (both Buddhists) in their work of bringing men together to form communities and of promoting humanizing structures?

What is the role of the Church as a sign and sacrament of salvation to human society? How does she foster and promote the continuing incarnation of grace in society?

Within the Church as a society what is there that is yet the incarnation of sin? What can she do towards the triumph of the incarnation of grace over that of sin?

Signs Of The Times

We may distinguish two: 1. secularization;
2. the struggle for justice and community.

1. Secularization is a process by which people liberate themselves from the forces of nature by means of science and technology and consequently gain mastery over nature in order to become artisans of their own destiny. The Christian world view backs secularization – biblical tradition is secular, steeped in faith in the God of time and history. The question is: will man organize a world apart from or open to God?

2. Struggle for justice and community. Man struggles to liberate himself from dehumanizing structures, systems and ideologies toward a more just and human community. His biblical understanding assures him that the structures are not fixed ends in themselves and of his duty to transform them into a shared life.

The repercussions are many and felt alike by technologists, youth, theological and ecclesiastical structures of thought and life and by ideological systems themselves which sense their inadequacy to build a new man. Secular man must understand what it means to be fully human.

The challenge facing the Church is not that modern man is unconcerned about the Gospel but whether the Gospel has so transformed the Church that she is the Good News to man, living witness to the integrity of the Gospel. EVANGELIZATION today demands a radical change of heart, of attitude, thinking, speaking and living. It demands a transformation of our very form of existence into a dialogue with people ... in other words, dialogue.

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A meeting of the planning committee for the Health Working Group met on January 21st, 1976 at the SCMM-M Generalate at 4:00 pm.

PRESENT: Sr. Annie Desyn, icm, Sr. Margaret Nugent, sbs, Sr. Marie Jose Tresch, cand, and Sr. Francis Webster, scmm-m (chairman).

1.   After reviewing the committe minutes of May 16, 1975 (SEDOS 75 n. 19) it was agreed that the next Health Group meeting would be on the subject proposed in May e.g. Death and Dying. Because the topic is one of personal and universal interest and has much relevance to our apostolic activity where ever we are, we plan to study some of the recent thinking on this subject and to reflect on how man faces death in different cultures, his various modes of behaviour, etc.

2.   It was thought that, while the suggestion to have a full day of meeting was not practical, the usual late afternoon time was too short and led to feelings of frustration. It was decided, therefore, to hold the meeting in the morning.

3.   In order to give adequate time for group discussion and questions, input will be limited to one or possibly two speakers. If interest in the subject warrants it, further discussions and other speakers can be scheduled for future meetings.

4.   The meeting will be held on Friday, March 5th at the Generalate of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), Via della Stazione Aurelia 95, from 9 am to 1:30 pm.

5.   It was felt there should be sufficient opportunity for the participants to get to know one another better. For this the usual coffee break is too short. Therefore, it is proposed that there be a picnic lunch over which more personal contacts can be made. Tea and coffee will be provided.

6.   For organizational purposes, those who will attend are asked to inform the Secretary, SCMM-M Generalate—tel: 62 28 098 – before March 2nd.

7.   The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.

It is not often that we find our incoming mail overlapping from so many directions on
one issue. When it does happen, we find our attention is demanded, so here we present
excerpts from both the AMECEA Documentation Service and the Information Service of the
National Pastoral Centre—Accra on the issue of Christian communities in Africa. The
first a report of a diocesan questionnaire and reflections on it, the second a report on
the follow-up already underway.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA

Africa is undergoing a transition from the kinship society based upon blood
ties, to a functional society, based upon interdependence of men according to their
various functions in the community. The main obstacles to development have been the
lack of awareness of the people to their own collective needs and the lack of trust in
one another in matters involving economic interests.

By establishing personal and permanent relationships between members of the
society on the basis of Christian brotherhood, by teaching them to work together for
the common good, by developing local leadership and awareness of the role of the Chris-
tian Community, the Church can remove some of these obstacles. By creating Community
on a religious basis, the Church could give the people a reference group, a more stable
organisation in the complex and changing world of today, especially where the natural
community is weak or breaking under the pressure of geographical, ethnic, social or
economic conditions. Therefore, creating Communities in the Church would root Chris-
tianity in a local social structure.

Owing to this new vision emerging, great effort is being made to study the
means and ways of promoting natural communities to become truly living Christian Com-
munities.

AMECEA BISHOPS SAY: "Building Christian Communities is the first pastoral Priority."

A progress report was made on a questionnaire sent to the AMECEA Ordinaries on
priorities for the Church in Eastern Africa. Each Bishop was presented with five ob-
jectives from which to select pastoral priorities for his own diocese.

41 dioceses out of 67 responded. 31 dioceses chose as their first priority
this objective: "To have a Church that is composed of truly self-ministering, self-
propagating, and self-supporting Christian Communities." Fifteen dioceses chose this
as their second objective. This indicates that "Building Christian Communities" has
been recognized today as the highest pastoral priority in the AMECEA countries.

What is a Christian Community?

A basic Christian Community is a small group of people who feel related through
an awareness of brotherhood, and wherever possible rooted in a human and natural commu-
nity. A group of Christians who have one faith, one baptism, one Father in Heaven, go
to the same Church and have the same common Christian features, are not yet a living
community unless they know and feel that they are united by the same faith and share
acts of mercy and love as the necessary basis for building a true Christian Community
and developing a true spirit of unity in charity.

A Christian Community is a community of ideal Christians brought together by sharing the same vision. They are united to build such a society and brotherhood here and now, in the hope of the perfect brotherhood at the end of time.

Up to now the basic Christian Community has been the parish which is a geographical unit based on neighbourhood community. The trend should be to strive to build more and smaller Christian Communities based on natural communities of any type; for instance: based on profession, kinship, neighbourhood relationship, common interest, common ideals, etc. In that way the meaningful structure of the traditional society would be renewed by the universality of Christian Spirit and open to progress through the doctrine of salvation.

A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY GROWS FROM A NATURAL COMMUNITY

Some of the guidelines and suggestions that have been given on building the community are: decentralizing the parish into smaller units and letting the people find their own meaningful structures.

The meaningful structures of the traditional society would be renewed by the universality of the Christian spirit and open to progress through the doctrine of salvation. But it is essential to proceed from the known to the unknown, and from the satisfaction of felt needs to the satisfaction of real needs. The community ought to be built first, using the natural dynamism and tendencies of the social context, and the community will be the means through which innovation and change can be introduced.

PLANNING FOR BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN EASTERN AFRICA

This will be the theme for the 1976 Plenary of the Association of the Bishops' Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA). In the Plenary of 1973 on "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980's", one aspect that emerged was that of christian communities. It forms part of a new level of consciousness which is beginning to express itself in the growth to maturity in a great part of the Church in Africa. An awareness is growing of the need of deeper involvement and commitment of the members of the christian local communities, for it is there that the Church's real life has its roots.

"These local Churches are real living and workable communities consisting of a number of adherents of a size to render possible a regular face-to-face relationship and a veritable feeling of oneness in living and christian witness. . . .Our parishes are too big, and at best they are useful administrative units. However, we often plan Church life and work more on these wider levels of diocese and parish, whereas people live, act and interact on the level of smaller communities: villages, town compounds, work communities, etc. . . .The conviction should dawn on all of us that it is really at this grass-root level that the Church can hope to be part and parcel of everyday life. It is no question of total overhauling of our structures, but it certainly is a question of new emphasis on basic christian communities" (Record of the 1973 AMECEA Plenary, Part 1, Chapter 2).

The most urgent question for today is what it means to be a Christian. Not only calling oneself a Christian, or claiming to be one, and then disappearing in a collective passivity, but being one authentically. Too often christian groups are

scarcely 'christian communities'. This lack of true communities can make 'charisms' and 'vocations' incomprehensible and is perhaps one of the reasons for the dearth of vocations to the various ministries. Merely engaging the laity in sporadic and periodic programmes will not do. Only an all-out involvement of the total congregation for the transformation of their whole community will mean anything for the future of the Church. Planning will have to be geared to this.

The 1976 AMECEA Plenary will now go into this key aspect in full detail. A brain trust was held by the AMECEA Documentation Service in Nairobi on the 8th and 9th July 1975, as a preliminary exploration on the subject matter and to prepare guidelines for the position papers for the 1976 Plenary Study Conference of the Bishops. A progress report had already been made on the answers to the questionnaire which was sent to the dioceses of the five AMECEA countries on priorities. Though no absolute majority has yet emerged, the answers clearly indicated that 'Building Christian Communities' is recognized to date as the highest priority in the five AMECEA countries.

Objectives of the Preliminary meeting

1) To identify the real meaning of 'christian communities' in all its important aspects and implications.
   a) Types of communities:
      —Natural communities (geographical or environmental communities; ethnic groups; professional links; communities of common ideal).
      —Christian communities (meaning, scope).
   b) Unifying factors for these types of communities:
      —sharing a common life situation,
      —a desire for intensified inter-personal relationships,
      —a desire for belonging,
      —common involvement.
      A real christian community has these marks too, inspired by christian principles, focused on Jesus' kingdom, and thus transforming the natural community.
   c) Characteristics of the christian communities for their day to day life:
      —self-ministering communities (local ministries),
      —self-supporting (for local financial needs),
      —self-propagating (directed toward mission),
      —within the larger unity of the parish and the diocese.
   d) Christian communities
      —in a rural area
      —in an urban situation
   e) Obstacles in a christian community.

2) To determine the aspects for position papers at the 1976 Plenary. These were grouped as subject matter for four position papers:
   —The christian community today and tomorrow.
   —Objectives of a christian community.
   —Christian community in life situations.
   —Worship, the source and the fullest expression of the christian community. Authentic worship.

3) To suggest follow-up action to the plenary.

* * *

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DEPARTMENT SELECTED BY SISTER AGNETTA SSpS.

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