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Justice
and
Evangelization

Sedos Seminar Report

19-23 March 1985

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A REPORT FROM THE SEDOS SEMINAR - JUSTICE AND EVANGELISATION

Willie Jenkinson, CSSp.

(90 personnes ont pris part au Séminaire de SEDOS sur "Justice et Evangélisation". Elle venaient de 45 Congrégations; parmi elles: 14 Supérieurs généraux; 34 Assistants généraux et 25 secrétaires généraux.

Le Séminaire a suivi la méthode de "réflexion créative", basée sur une approche expérimentale. On y parla en anglais, en français en italien et en espagnol. Le travail du Séminaire s'est déroulé en petits groupes et en assemblées générales. Quatre présentateurs firent part de leurs expériences sur le thème "Justice et Evangélisation". Trois autres leur répondirent en partant des points de vue de l'économie, de la communication et de la théologie.

Le Séminaire identifia ainsi les problèmes qui se posaient aux missionnaires pour promouvoir la justice dans l'évangélisation d'aujourd'hui et indiqua les implications de ces problèmes sur la mission. Ils furent exprimés sommairement dans les rapports finals des dix petits groupes. Ce compte rendu essaye d'en faire la synthèse. N.D.L.R.).

INTRODUCTION

90 persons attended the SEDOS Seminar on Justice and Evangelisation, from March 19 to 23, 1985, at Villa Cavalletti, Rome.

They came from 45 mission Congregations and Societies and included 14 Superiors General, 34 General Assistants and 25 General or Mission Secretaries.

The Seminar followed a methodology based on an experiential approach known as "creative reflection", a biblical form of reflection illustrated by the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. The method is called 'creative' as it is not just a critical reflection but includes analysis and evaluation. It attempts to discern the working of the Spirit, to answer the question: "What is God saying to us in this experience?"

Italian, English, Spanish and French were the languages of the Seminar.

There was a team of seven Resource Persons, four of whom shared their experiences of working for justice in evangelisation - Julienne De Wolf in USA, Heloisa da Cunha in Brazil, Henry Volken in India, and Mgr. Bakole Wa Ilunga in Zaire. Three others, Michael Schultheis, Dominick Coyle and Jacques Van Nieuwenhove reflected on these experiences from an economics, communications and theology view point.

The work of the Seminar was carried out in small group discussions and general assembly meetings. An opportunity was provided also for groups to consider topics of special interest.

Following on the experiences and reflection shared by the Resource Persons, the Seminar identified challenges which face missionary institutes in their commitment to justice and evangelisation and spelled out the implications of these to-day. They were expressed in summary form in the final reports of the ten small groups. The present Report attempts to bring these together.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR

The Seminar moved quickly to identify an option for the poor as being of crucial importance, to promoting justice in the work of evangelisation. Justice the building up of right relationships with others, makes special demands when it comes to relationships with the poor.

All members of mission institutes are called to work for justice as an essential part of evangelisation. This is not a marginal issue. Clearly it challenges the whole community - but it is not at all clear how the whole community can be involved. There were differing viewpoints about the extent to which the community could become involved with, or identified, with the poor.

The terminology used is important. "Preferential option for the poor", has acquired such overtones of implied exclusiveness that it effectively marginalises many in the community. "Solidarity with the poor", both affective and effective more accurately describes the commitment called for in an entire community.

Who are the poor? The expected debate occurred around this question.

What was new, was the widespread realisation that the poor are not only the object of evangelisation or the promotion of justice.

They are above all, the subject of their own liberation; in them we meet God; He expresses a predilection for them; they are a 'locus theologicus', they have a profound human dignity; they evangelise.

Mission institutes cannot stand outside "the poor", judging them from the perspective of their own institutional structures, uninvolved in action for and with them. Solidarity with the poor dictates another perspective entirely.

DEGREES OF SOLIDARITY

All are called to solidarity. Some are called to express this in a deeper commitment by working with the poor. Still others are called to share the life of the poor. This latter is a special calling. Not all are able to respond to it, neither is it to be undertaken lightly.

It is not a strategy but a way of life for some. Their experience should touch the decision making process of the whole community which is called to support them, to be in solidarity with them, communicate with them and learn from them.

Remaining Neutral Situations occur more and more frequently in which mission institutes find it difficult to remain neutral. Not opting for the poor and oppressed will mean in effect, opting for the oppressor. The credibility of institutes may well depend on their taking the side of the poor.

Discerning what to do in these situations leads to tension and even conflict within communities. But mutual support and love does not exclude the possibility of tension and conflict in the religious community any more than it does in family life. The implications for mission institutes are many.

Political Involvement Solidarity with the poor and commitment to justice inevitably means more involvement in "political situations" which, in turn, touches the local, provincial and central authorities of institutes. The need to "take sides" will arise more often.

There is the vexed question of what is political action or involvement. 'Political' for some is 'solidarity with the oppressed' for others. Even assisting someone in a court of law may be seen as 'political', assuming, which is not always the case, that there is the possibility of recourse to law. And it is necessary to calculate the possibility and extent of reprisals which may be taken against those with whom we wish to stand.

Power Mission societies too, need to evaluate continually their institutional wealth and organs of administration which involve them in the exercise of power and control.

Collaboration Mission institutes have no monopoly in regard to justice. Here arises the question of participation by lay people and collaboration with them. The presence of just one layman among the Resource Team led to a deep questioning of many of our pre-suppositions.

SOME CONSEQUENCES

Dialogue We need to be people of dialogue, firstly within our own communities and with other missionary communities. Are we? And then, with the world, with people specially of the business and marketing world; with the media who may not, indeed, do not hear our message; with those who exercise power; with those of other faiths than our own, - and with people of no faith.

This dialogue implies an understanding of, and respect for others, an openness, and a readiness to allow time for change to take place. It is not helped by judgemental and condemnatory attitudes. It always begins with an attitude of "physician, heal thyself!"

It demands that we are clear about our own identity as "missionaries in solidarity with the poor", that we do have a message, that we are clear about what it is at a given time, and that we do communicate, to ourselves, to the media, to the world.

And so we are forced to examine the oft present 'split leveling' in our institutes; the painful gap between word and action; between solidarity with the poor in theory and in practice; between statements emanating from religious superiors and Church leaders and what is actually done. Witness the gap between word and action in the way recently renewed Constitutions are received by many members.

Self-conversion There is a tendency to look outside ourselves when discerning the causes and extent of injustice in the world, to blame "others", - the rich, multinational corporations, administrative corruption, local governments and local Churches.

The Seminar recognised that the first challenge is to conversion of ourselves. The institutes need to make a close and continuing analysis of where they themselves stand on their own administrative structures, on their own attitudes to justice and solidarity with the poor.

This means making clear choices, not being content to live with uncertainties which arise from procrastination rather than from a humble, sincere search for solutions.

There is need for a deeper consciousness of the prejudices and biases that arise from cultures, our own included, and inbuilt resistances to change.

We must also look for the causes of world poverty where they really are - not only where we are content to see them. They are often in our own backyards.

- We avoid dealing with them there, while we go off happily to tilt at windmills far away. \ Can we avoid completely, for example, the problem of world population and its bearing on poverty?

Communicating Missionary Institutes are international organisations, a kind of 'multinationals'. Using their international character in solidarity with the oppressed is part of their challenge, yet many draw attention to the "powerlessness" of their own decision-making bodies.

A significant part of their role is communications yet many draw attention to their failure to communicate.

Sharing information, networking, collaboration are called for, yet many remark on the isolationism that still characterises much of their activity.

Concerted community action based on good communications is called for yet many call attention to persistent individualism. The desire for unity and peace in communities waters down the real issues.

There is no way back yet it would be foolish to pretend that there are not many fears and uncertainties. Moving away from situations of comparative stability into situations of insecurity through commitment to justice is a constant challenge. The majority of the members of a community may be precisely those who feel marginalised and betrayed by such moves.

Thus the need for sustained dialogue between members; for solid contextual analysis to support theological reflection and pastoral action; for dialogue with the "official" Church and with "popular" Churches, and for the wider dialogue.

QUESTIONS REMAIN

Can people follow the call to solidarity with the poor and oppressed to the extent of sharing their work and life, while remaining within the present structures of religious missionary life?

Can institutes agree to support, to accompany, "the innovators" as a community? Can institutes respond to new challenges while retaining all previous commitments? If not, can they withdraw in dialogue, in an ordered and systematic way, from some activities?

Is there not a basic opposition between making an option for solidarity with the poor and the aims of some institutes (for example, to accompany the growth of a local Church) - which take precedence over commitment to solidarity with the poor?

When discussing this whole topic of justice and the poor is it possible to use the same terminology, the same linguistic framework in Africa, Latin America, Asia, North America and Europe, without taking into account also, the effects of inculturation on local situations?

These are not easy questions to answer. And there are others.

TWO COROLLARIES

Two clear corollaries emerged:

1) Formation. A type of religious formation is needed which will take account of solidarity with the poor, the demands of dialogue and inculturation in the context of the poor, and the basic need to communicate with the world in a language it understands.

Those responsible for formation will need to plan for lived experiences with people who are immersed in situations of poverty and struggle for justice.

Formation will need to remain open to new theological insights coming from the poor and to growth in a spirituality which takes account of the conditions of the poor.

2) Spirituality. A new 'spirituality for violence' is needed in view of the increasing possibility of encountering violence, institutionalised or other, personally or in solidarity with others.

The anniversary of Archbishop Romero's death was remembered at the Seminar. He is but one of the more well known among many, mostly lay people, who have died in what may be a new situation, because of their solidarity with the poor and oppressed and their commitment to full human liberation in Christ.

CONCLUSION

A "creative reflection" methodology should leave room for creativity. It did. Few of us foresaw the direction this Seminar would take. It was challenging and disturbing. Participants did not go away with a feeling of euphoria. We did not go into technical questions regarding world economic systems but we were challenged by the overview of what is going on in the world and the shape of the future. We did not go deeply into theologies of liberation but we did get an overview, the full text of which will be published shortly. And we were challenged about our own self identity.

The Spirit seemed to be calling us to examine ourselves and our relationship with the world, to convert ourselves first, to see God in all people, but especially in the poor for whom he has a predilection, to allow ourselves to be evangelised by them - And about our relationships with lay people. Will they be present at future Seminars? In what numbers?

It may be a coincidence that this Seminar produced more written assessments proportionately than any previous SEDOS Seminars. We don't know all the answers. We will go on searching and groping for them.

WITH THE FARMWORKERS IN CALIFORNIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

AN EXPERIENCE

Julienne De Wolf, ICM.

(Soeur julienne décrit d'abord sa vie parmi les ouvriers agricoles de Californie, des gens pauvres, mais riches en esprit et conscients de leur dignité humaine; et puis avec les ouvriers saisonniers de la Caroline du Nord, qui sont les plus abandonnés de tous. Son expérience lui a fait comprendre que même la personne la plus deshumanisée peut devenir un homme ou une femme avec sa dignité et sa fierté. Elle comprend aussi qu'elle-même faisait partie du système d'oppression.

Sans l'appui de ses supérieures et de ses consœurs, elle est certaine qu'elle n'aurait pas pu continuer dans son choix de vie: elle aurait dû quitter soit les ouvriers, soit son Institut. L'engagement avec les pauvres nous concerne tous, bien que l'engagement total sur le terrain ne vaille sans doute que pour certains qui se sentent appelés à plus de radicalisme.

Si certains s'y sentent appelés, laissez-les aller et donnez-leur votre appui total. Ne les envoyez pas... S'ils y vont et s'ils persévèrent, ils seront libérés avec les gens. N.D.L.R.).

Julienne De Wolf, ICM., collaborates with the Farm Workers' Legal Services in North Carolina, USA.).

I want to share with you this morning my life among migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Let me begin by saying that my experience refers only to a very small group of people in relation to the whole population of the United States. Migrant farmworkers are people who follow the harvest from Florida to Maine, from Texas to the State of Washington. The seasonal workers are local people who live in the country the year round, and are usually dependent for generations on the same farmers.

THE SYSTEM

The word farmer or grower, in the context of my experience, has nothing to do with the small family farmers of a few acres. By farmers or growers I mean large landowners or Agribusinesses who form part of conglomerate Companies. From the beginning of its existence Agribusiness has based itself on the idea that one has to get as much as possible out of the soil with as little input as possible. To that end, the farmers look for cheap labour. In the West we know of the importation of Chinese, Japanese, Philippino, Mexican, Arab and Portuguese people. On the East Coast there were first, the slaves, later came the

sharecroppers. Today, in both the East and the West of the country there exists what is known as the labour contractor system.

In this system, the farmer, either directly or through the Employment Security Commission, contacts a labour contractor who in turn goes out and recruits people to do the harvest. He looks for these people in city parks, on streetcorners, poorhouses, or wherever desperate people gather together. In the cities of the United States there are always enough American born black people, desperately poor white people and all kinds of unemployed willing to accept an offer of spending a nice summer picking pickles, cropping tobacco, or digging potatoes, for money, house, and drinks. The border with Mexico is another inexhaustible source of labourers willing to sell what little they have or fall into debt to come to the States and help with the harvest. In recent years, thousands of Haitians and Latin American refugees have been added to this group.

The farmers usually offer a fixed amount of money to the contractor who provides some dilapidated tobacco barns or old farmhouses for living quarters, and leaves all responsibilities to a crew-leader. Food, drinks and transportation are provided by the crew-leader who makes his weekly accounts subtracting all expenses from the people's wages. The people, rather than earning some money gradually owe the boss more and more.

The rate of T.B., V.D., malnutrition and alcoholism is very high, and although medical care is provided and subsidized by the State, most workers are not cared for because they cannot get away from the camps. Surveillance of the camps is very strict. Sick people often remain hidden to visitors, and crew-leaders bring them out only when extremely ill.

The area in which I work covers 4 counties with a total of about 400 labour camps with from 10 to 100 people each. Some federal regulations concerning water supply, food preparation, crowding and toilets apply to labour camps but there is no agency to enforce the law. Inspections are done by the health-department but recommendations are not followed-up.

Besides the Health Department and the employment offices there is also the East Coast Migrant Health Association and the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Association funded by Federal funds. All of these are concerned about the workers' instant needs like clothes, food or health care, but do little about questioning the "why" of all these conditions. On the contrary in their collaboration with the growers they will harm the workers rather than help them. An example: a sister who worked for the East Migrant Health Association spent several years organizing workers and gathering evidence of unjust treatment of workers. Her efforts led to the arrest of three contractors. All three were convicted of having kept workers in slavery, but the sister lost her job. Another example: employment security Agents kept job applications in their desks to collaborate with Virginia Growers who want to work with 'H2 program' workers, people recruited in Mexico or Jamaica, and shipped back at the end of the harvest.

On the other side there are some groups and individuals who join forces trying to improve the conditions. Farmworkers legal services, a subdivision of Legal Services Corporation, joins efforts with the Peace and Justice office of the Raleigh Diocese and the North Carolina Council of Churches to have better laws passed. Both on Federal and State level some legislation has been passed to make the farmer more responsible for the workers' wages and living conditions.

CALIFORNIA

Working with farmworkers in the U.S.A. has been for me, two quite different experiences. In California I was with the United Farm Workers. They were already organized. They had just come out of a bloody strike that cost the life of two workers and saw hundreds jailed and beaten, a strike that seemingly ended without results. However, the workers, both men and women were people with a great sense of dignity. They had a pride in their work and a joy about their existence which I did not find in other places in the U.S. They were people whose fear had changed into hope.

They themselves had made an appeal to the Churches for help. They asked for people, not for clothes or food. They asked for Church people especially who could join them in their struggle. But their expectations of the Church were very precise. They wanted us to do what they could not do, and also a few things they could do. But we had to be just like them, not above them. My job after the strike, and after the Farm Labour Act was passed in California, was to go to workers who were against the Union, who had always opposed it, or had been hurt by some violent members. The people asked me to be a healer, a person who could listen to the other side and still defend the Union.

I felt this as a tremendous sign of their trust in me. I also had to listen to their stories about life in the fields before the Union began. I could not believe them at first but after a few visits to labour camps I had to believe that Californian riches were won with lots of pain on the part of farmworkers.

It was hard, working and living among people who were poor but who had a spirit that was rich. I had to be liberated from a lot of ideas, customs, attitudes which related to my life as a religious. However I also learned the freedom that came with this liberation. Hospitalization has a special meaning when you share a two person room and have to let in two more people. Sharing what you have comes very close to home when someone wants to borrow your last \$5.00 and you realize she'll never be able to return them. I was put to shame when a young woman who had borrowed \$5.00 did return them. She had felt my hesitation when she borrowed the money.

These workers had received very little support from the local Church but they knew very well how to 'form Church'. They joined in

with the many other denominations that helped and still kept their own Catholic faith. They taught us what Ecumene is, what being one is. It is in these simple people that I learned justice, forgiveness, hospitality, as well as gentle endurance.

NORTH CAROLINA

My experience of North Carolina is very different. There, the farmworkers are desperately poor. They are people with very little hope of change, without the courage to struggle, and with a tremendous fear of becoming worse off - if such were possible.

Many of the people in the camps are without material goods, but most of them are also without friends or family. With a group of volunteers from the Raleigh diocesan Peace and Justice office, and later, in conjunction with the Farm-workers Legal Services, I went to the labour camps and talked with the people about their work, the different crops they work at, or the places they have been along the way, building up a sense of friendship. We handed out a small booklet explaining to the people, their rights as workers: the right to just wages, freedom to cook their own meals, to buy food and other necessities where they want, to leave the camp, and to receive visitors. The booklet has two phone numbers of Legal Service offices where people can call 'collect' from any place. Many people call-in to be helped out of the camp, or to be taken to a doctor; some have run away and need to be picked up somewhere in a small town. This, however, does not mean that a complaint is filed either about wages, or about treatment. Experiences in court in North Carolina are very humiliating for Black people or for migrants in general. Often we can only encourage the workers to make a statement, ask them to keep us informed about their whereabouts and hope that three or more people from the same employer end up filing a complaint together.

The experience in North Carolina convinces me more and more that even the most desperate, dehumanized person can turn into a man or woman with dignity and pride. It takes friends or concerned people, however, to awaken this sense of dignity. We are still a long way removed from an organization of Farmworkers in North Carolina but people are beginning to come and talk. People begin to mention the word "Union" for the first time. People themselves begin to wonder about the possibility of changing their own situation.

Working with desperately poor people makes me realize so often that I too, am part of this oppressive system. It makes me question the why of my own needs, the how of my relationship with the people. I have to be careful not to make the people dependent on me after I have freed them from a labour camp. It makes me realize that in showing genuine respect and encouraging personal initiative I can help the poor more than by giving food or clothing or money.

In my work, both in California and in North Carolina I have been together with people of different faiths and with people of no faith, but with a faith in people. Our working together has been very enriching to myself, it has also been enriching for them. They can come to our religious Community and talk about Church and politics, liberation and oppression. Evangelization among the poor is not done by words, it can only be done by actions, and by a great openness to what people themselves have to tell us, and show us. It is essential in our work among the poor that we ourselves are willing to be evangelized.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR US IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES?

In California, where I worked with the U.F.W. I went wherever the workers would need me. I moved from Stockton to Sacramento, from Modesto to San Isidro, to San Luis, Arizona. Sometimes I was up to two months away from my community. I lived sometimes in a house with other staff people, sometimes in a farmworker's family. Never could I keep much personal belongings.

Life among the people, both the workers and the staff members has been most inspiring but I did need the contact with my community. I believe that without the support of my superiors and of my sisters I would have had to leave, either the work among the workers, or the Congregation. I am sure, that with people who do not have this support, the break comes in favour of the poor, because the very values that brought us to them are not lived in the narrowness of our religious communities, especially if the community is such, that it cannot support people who are radically involved with the poor.

The North Carolina situation is somewhat different for me in the sense that I lived in community. I say different, not easier. Irregular schedules have to be fitted into a lifestyle built on regularity. The whole lifestyle of the people living in that community has to adapt.

What I perhaps experienced as the greatest need is openness and trust among the people who live in a community among the poor. Times come, when town or church people begin to attack those involved with the poor. Attempts are made to bring division within the religious community. It is then especially, that openness and trust are necessary.

There came a time when people in our town began to question my involvement with a group of factory workers. The members of my community never approached me to ask whether I was allowed to do what I did etc. The sisters defended my involvement with the effect that our unity itself served as a witness to the people in town, and as a very strong encouragement to me.

I would like to end by saying that my involvement with the poor grew out of my reflection on the Gospel. It has been strengthened by the fact that I have seen this Gospel come alive in the people.

Commitment to the poor is for all of us. Street involvement is perhaps for a few who feel the call to more radicalism. Missionary involvement has "fashions", like development, schools, etc. but commitment to the poor cannot be accepted as a fashion. Please, - do not send any sister or priest to the poor, but if one wants to go out of conviction, out of love for the Gospel message, let them go and give them your full support.

And - do not begin a mission among the poor because you want a nice report in your Congregation's archives; you will only exploit the poor people. But if there are sisters who see the light and want real commitment, then I say: go-and stay - you will learn to know Christ together with the poor - you will be liberated together with the people.

- end -

MY EXPERIENCE OF THE SEARCH FOR AN EVANGELISING AND LIBERATING MISSION IN THE MIDST OF A SITUATION OF INJUSTICE

Heloisa Da Cunha, RSCJ

(Heloisa da Cunha, RSCJ, works in basic Christian communities and catechetis in Campina Grande, Paraíba, Brazil.

There were three motivations for her decision to share the life of the poor - the situation of the poor themselves, the witness of the fidelity of the Brazil Church to Vatican II and the findings of the General Chapter of her own Congregation.

She draws attention constantly to the pastoral programme of the Church in Brazil and the support of her own Congregation as she describes her life for ten years in a 'favela' in Vitoria. There she suffered with others the constant threat and frequent experience of violence and repression.

In 1984 she and her sisters went to Campina Grande in the Northeast to share once again the lot of the poor in a situation of "crying injustice". Her experience is that of a religious life lived within the situation of the church of Brazil to-day.

She concludes with three questions the last of which asks: "Is the involvement of religious in the struggle for justice, just optional, or tactical or a real Christian involvement based on the gosepl?"

(The text has been slightly shortened. Ed.)

Introduction: Invitée à vous présenter concrètement mon expérience personnelle d'Évangélisation dans un monde d'injustice, vous verrez que je vais vous parler bien plus de l'expérience d'une Eglise - celle du Brésil - que de mon expérience personnelle: Pourquoi? Parce que, pendant ces dernières années de ma vie religieuse, l'expérience la plus significative que je peux présenter est celle d'un plongeon direct dans la pastorale d'une Eglise qui, elle-même, s'est plongée dans la vie d'un peuple pauvre et opprimé.

TROIS MOTIVATIONS FURENT LES PLUS FORTES

La réalité, cruelle, chocante, pleine de défis: un peuple pauvre dans une situation politique d'oppression. Cette réalité peu à peu pénétrait dans le coeur de l'Eglise et de nous toutes.

L'Eglise du Brésil, par fidélité à l'Evangile, s'est ouverte à ce problème humain; elle a entendu la clameur d'une immense majorité de notre population, pauvre, exploitée, opprimée. Nous avons été conduits à tout cela surtout par l'influence de Vatican II.

La Chapitre Général: Et pour nous, religieuses du Sacré Coeur, le Chapitre Général de 1970 est venu confirmer les appels de l'Eglise et nous a conduites à un sérieux exode dans nos vies.

Cela a été un très heureux exode: En allant nous plonger dans le monde des pauvres, comme Eglise, nous nous sommes ré-encontrées comme religieuses; nous avons redécouvert le pourquoi de notre vie consacrée, la manière de vivre nos vœux, la vie communautaire et la spiritualité incarnée dans la vie et fondée sur la Bible.

Mêlées à beaucoup d'autres religieuses, à des prêtres et à des centaines de laïcs, nous avons redéfini nos charismes spécifiques de congrégations, au sein d'une Communauté Ecclésiale et Missionnaire!

Vivre cette pastorale au Brésil - c'est un défi - au service de la cause des pauvres, devient expérience douloureuse, PASCALE, bien sûr! Mais cela nous oblige à revenir toujours à l'Evangile et donc au point central de la Vie Religieuse dans l'Eglise.

AU COEUR DES MASSES

D'après le recensement de 1975 au Brésil:

- 52% des propriétés rurales mesuraient moins de 10 hectares.
- 0,8% des propriétés rurales mesurant plus de 1.000 hectares disposaient de 42% du total du sol disponible.
- Plus de la moitié des propriétés rurales n'occupait que 3% du sol, environ.
- 1% - et peut-être moins - des grandes propriétés (les "latifundios") occupaient la moitié du sol disponible dans le pays.
- Un grand nombre de paysans ont été forcés (ou le sont encore) de quitter leurs propriétés, légitimement cultivées par eux pendant des années. Cela s'est fait par des expulsions, des menaces, des persécutions et même des meurtres. Entre 1982 et 1984 il y a eu 236 paysans assassinés pendant les "conflits de terre".
- Pour les ouvriers, mal payés, ainsi que pour le très grand nombre de chômeurs, il ne reste plus que les bidonvilles, les taudis, dans des conditions infra-humaines.

Voilà Donc Les Faits:

La terre manque au paysan parce qu'elle appartient à une minorité riche et de plus en plus riche;

L'habitation manque à l'ouvrier dans les grandes villes, car le sol

urbain est une des affaires qui rendent le plus au Brésil, dans le système d'exploitation capitaliste;
Derrière tout cela il y a, évidemment, une option politique bien déterminée;
La majorité du peuple brésilien est donc devenue une masse déracinée, qui n'a pas où poser les pieds.

L'EGLISE FACE A CETTE SITUATION

Deux documents sont devenus célèbres; ce sont les évêques brésiliens écrivant sur le problème de la terre:

"L'Eglise et le problème de la terre" (1980)

"Sol urbain et action pastorale" (1982)

Ces documents, textes officiels de l'Eglise, sont un échantillon et un symbole de l'action quotidienne de l'Eglise, face à ce tableau aux dimensions dramatiques.

Parmi les diverses initiatives, deux me semblent plus significatives:

La "commission pastorale de la terre" (CPT) est devenue aujourd'hui un des "organismes annexes" de la Conférence Nationale des Evêques du Brésil (CNBB).

Les Communautés de Base rurales sont devenues une expression pleine de vigueur de cette Eglise nouvellement née parmi les masses populaires à l'intérieur du pays.

On peut voir que l'engagement de l'Eglise du Brésil pour le bien des populations sacrifiées ne se manifeste pas seulement dans ses Documents Officiels; c'est surtout dans la pratique de cette pastorale de la base que la communion et l'engagement courageux deviennent concrets.

Le plus grand nombre des CEB, "vraies cellules d'Eglise", selon la joie et réelle expression du Pape Paul VI, sont disséminées là où les paysans souffrent et luttent pour leurs droits.

Le cheminement de cette action évangélisatrice de l'Eglise du Brésil auprès des pauvres est souillé par le sang de ceux qui ont été tués, emprisonnés, torturés, persécutés et calomniés: laïcs, prêtres, religieux et même quelques évêques.

MON EXPERIENCE PERSONNELLE

De 1973 à 1983: Pendant cette période, avec d'autres religieuses de ma congrégation, j'ai vécu dans une sorte de "favela" à Vitória (ville de Espírito Santo). Ce furent mes premiers pas dans les chemins du peuple. Avec beaucoup d'autres agents de pastorale, suivant l'élan donné par une Pastorale Diocésaine très belle, nous nous sommes trouvés très souvent acculés à de graves problèmes d'occupation du sol, pour beaucoup de familles pauvres.

Les conséquences étaient toujours les mêmes:

- répression de la police, violences, menaces. Les événements de Février 1982 resteront toujours dans nos mémoires et dans nos coeurs. Environ 600 familles très pauvres, incapables de payer des loyers à cause de leur misérable salaire, ou bien sans travail, affamées, ont occupé un terrain appartenant à l'état et y ont construit leurs cabanes. Mais voilà la police qui arrive: les cabanes sont brûlées, les hommes, les femmes et les enfants frappés, battus...

- Le petit groupe qui commençait à s'organiser, avec l'appui de quelques agents de pastorale et de la Commission des Droits à l'habitation du diocèse (des avocats, des spécialistes et des agents de pastorale liés par la foi au service des pauvres) demanda l'aide de l'unique organisme qui pouvait apporter un secours immédiat.

Une Expérience Plus Récente: Depuis 1984, mes soeurs et moi, nous habitons Campina Grande, ville de Nordeste brésilien. Nous sommes dans un immense quartier populaire, 3.500 petites maisons construites avec le montant d'un impôt spécial, le "fonds de garantie pour temps de service".

Depuis 1980, ces maisons étaient prêtes (dans des conditions plutôt précaires). Elles étaient construites avec des matériaux très ordinaires, mal faites, ne disposant d'aucune infra-structure: pas d'eau, pas d'électricité, pas d'égoûts, pas de vraies rues, etc.

En mars 1983, très solennellement, des familles très pauvres ont occupé les lieux. Ne pouvant payer de loyer, sans logis, inscrites à la banque pour obtenir un toit et ne l'ayant jamais reçu ... C'était le Mardi Saint 1983 ...

Et l'aventure commença ... Les femmes y jouèrent le rôle principal: en 2 jours toutes les maisons ont été occupées, mais ... la police se trouvait tout autour. Ceux qui entrèrent y restèrent; ceux qui sortaient ne pouvaient plus rentrer.

Le peuple était devenu un ilôt, dans cet ensemble de maisons cerné par la police de tous les côtés. Avec un certain humour, face à cette vraie tragédie, le peuple donna à ce quartier le nom de "Malvinas".

L'Histoire serait longue: L'Eglise - dès les tout premiers jours - a marqué ostensiblement sa présence. L'évêque et le curé de cette région sont venus le Jeudi et le Vendredi Saints; sans s'occuper de la police ils sont "entrés" et une Messe, tellement significative, y fut célébrée ainsi qu'un Chemin de Croix très vécu.

Finalement le gouvernement a dû céder ... Les familles pouvaient rester, disait-il, en attendant d'autres dispositions prises plus tard, selon d'autres critères ...

Et nous, une petite fraternité religieuse, vivant au milieu de l'injustice criante? Il y a un an que nous habitons dans une de ces petites maisons, la famille qui l'avait prise ayant dû partir vers le sud.

Dès le début notre détermination a été de vivre et de participer aux luttes, et aux difficultés de ce monde des 'Malvinas'. Nous appartenons à une autre classe sociale et notre formation a été faite dans un autre contexte socio-economique-culturel, nous le savons. Mais nous nous sommes proposées d'être en communion avec ce peuple qui souffre.

Parce que nous sommes soeurs, compagnes, voisines, nous prenons comme nôtres les décisions des assemblées;

Nous prenons part aux Assemblées et sommes membres de l'Association des Habitants de l'ensemble des Malvinas;

Nous aussi, comme le plus grand nombre, nous avons été sommées de comparaître devant l'autorité officielle, afin de "régulariser" cette occupation des logements. Et pas plus que les autres nous n'avons répondu à cette intimation.

Au long de tout ce processus, les initiatives et les propositions ne sont pas nôtres. Elles viennent des occupants. Nous participons aux débats qui les font naître.

LA PREOCCUPATION EXPLICITE D'UNE ACTION MISSIONNAIRE

Tous savent que nous sommes religieuses. Ils nous acceptent très bien et ne font pas de différences entre nous et eux. Ils ne nous situent pas au-dessus d'eux.

Petit à petit nous pouvons mettre en route un processus lent mais aux propositions bien nettes en vue d'une pastorale de Communautés de Base. Il est bien entendu que la pédagogie du respect dû au peuple, de savoir partir de là où il est, sont des directives primordiales dans cette mission qui est la nôtre. Mais nous ne cachons pas que nous avons certains critères et certaines propositions.

Tout cela commence à peine et demande beaucoup d'attention, de patience et de précision pour les étapes à parcourir. L'immédiatisme, pour nous, ne vaut rien.

Nous ne nous sentons pas seules. Nous sommes au coeur d'une Pastorale d'ensemble du Diocèse.

Voici ce que nous nous proposons: participer à la vie et à la lutte du peuple en collaborant à son organisation par lui-même. Nous voulons être comme le sel et le ferment, bien mêlées aux tâtonnements du peuple. Nous essayons de réveiller les chrétiens: qu'ils aient une conscience critique plus aiguë et qu'ils soient capables de faire la synthèse - dans le concret - entre la foi et les luttes.

Participer aux réunions, aux prières que les gens ont l'habitude de faire chez eux, à certaines fêtes. Nous essayons d'unir toujours la prière et la foi, aux événements quotidiens, et à la vie.

Profiter des initiatives proposées par l'Eglise du Brésil et par le diocèse pour approfondir, débattre certains thèmes actuels qui touchent à la vie du peuple.

Favoriser l'éveil de petits noyaux, car l'ensemble des Malvinas est immense; l'objectif est d'obtenir que les Communautés de Base se forment dans le plus court délai, qu'elles soient vivantes, bien organisées.

Nous, religieuses, nous nous sentons de plus en plus invitées à la conversion et nous sommes évangélisées par la simple dureté de la vie du peuple, toujours menacé, et aussi par ses innombrables gestes de fraternité. Bien souvent nous nous sentons toute petites, fragiles, devant tant de clairvoyance, tant de gestes évangéliques des pauvres.

LE DEFI DU NORDESTE DU BRÉSIL

C'est une macro-région d'un million et demi de km². 38 millions d'habitants, presque un tiers de la population globale du pays.

Les habitants sont très pauvres; le taux de mortalité infantile est l'un des plus élevés du monde: sur 1.000 nouveaux-nés, plus de 100 meurent avant d'atteindre 1 an.

"L'espérance" de vie pour eux est de 52 ans, alors qu'au Sud on arrive à 65 ans et en Europe à 75 ans.

Là le mot FAIM signifie, automatiquement maladie pour des corps mal nourris.

C'est incroyable: dans une région si critique la concentration est encore plus grande aux mains des grands propriétaires.

Conséquence: une migration forcée; les gens s'en vont vers d'autres régions du pays.

Il y a une minorité arrogante qui domine ce pauvre peuple, domination économique et politique.

Derrière tout cela, sans aucun doute, il y a une option politique dictée par le capitalisme du Centre-Sud: il dispose ainsi d'une immense armée de main d'oeuvre bon marché que le Nordeste déverse en faveur des entreprises nationales et multinationales.

L'Eglise face au problème du Nordeste: Il faut reconnaître qu'une évangélisation libératrice n'a pas toujours été faite pour ce peuple du Nordeste. C'est même l'inverse: au Nordeste nous avons vécu un christianisme plus passif, un christianisme qui a insisté davantage sur la passion et la mort d'un peuple que sur le réveil de ses forces vives pour se libérer. Toutefois, ces derniers temps, ce sont les Evêques du Nordeste qui inspirés, mirent en oeuvre une Pastorale qui devait entraîner le renouveau de l'Eglise au Brésil. Il suffit de rappeler un nom: Dom Helder Camara.

Les difficultés chroniques du Nordeste, devinrent criantes et désespérées pendant les saisons sèches. La dernière calamité de cette nature a permis de voir bien plus clairement l'intervention de l'Eglise, aidant les pauvres par tous les moyens possibles. La solidarité est venue de tous les diocèses du pays, ainsi qu'une aide fraternelle.

On s'est rendu compte plus clairement que dans ces cas d'injustice dramatique, systématique, des gestes de bonté, de charité, ne suffisent plus. C'est ainsi que la position de l'Eglise s'est définie et consolidée: il faut une fois pour toutes assumer la cause du Nordeste! Cette décision a été publiée dans un document des évêques, pendant la dernière Assemblée Générale de l'épiscopat (il y a un an) et dont le titre est "Nordeste, un défi pour la mission de l'Eglise au Brésil".

C'est la au Nordeste que nous nous trouvons: Lorsque nous avons décidé d'emigrer de la banlieue d'une ville industrielle (Vitoria) vers une quartier "occupé" en plein Nordeste brésilien, nous ne faisons que suivre tout simplement une nouvelle option de l'Eglise du Brésil.

Mon expérience actuelle dans ce Nordeste éprouvé mais si riche en valeurs humaines et chrétiennes commence à peine dans ce quartier. Nous nous sentons heureuses: que de découvertes nous avons déjà faites. Ce peuple pauvre possède une telle capacité de résistance. Elle ne peut venir que de Dieu, croyons-nous: Parmi ces gens, nous recevons mille preuves d'amitié, de solidarité et d'une volonté immense de vivre et de vaincre les difficultés. Ils sont pauvres mais ils sont intelligents, pleins d'initiatives; ils se rendent très bien compte du poids de péché qui retombe sur eux.

Nous nous sentons heureuses car nous le savons: c'est le début d'une autre mission, et ce mot signifie conversion, dépouillement, espérance, car il y a quelque chose en train de naître. Plus heureuses encore sommes-nous de sentir que nous sommes une parcelle de la grande communauté des chrétiens qui vivent une mission vraiment historique. Tous nous croyons fermement qu'un jour la lumière, la paix, la joie de ce peuple si bon, triompheront. Voilà notre grâce: nous vivons incarnées et engagées dans une Eglise qui se renouvelle et assume la cause des appauvris, de ceux qui souffrent l'injustice et l'exploitation.

L'expérience d'une Eglise: Selon ma promesse, j'ai plutôt décrit l'expérience d'une Eglise - elle est belle et aimée - mais je crois que vous m'y trouverez. Comme religieuse je me retrouve dans cette tâche d'évangélisation libératrice. Je me rends compte que les bonnes intentions ne suffisent pas ... Nous avons besoin de critères, de propositions, de fondements bibliques et spirituels, de communion ecclésiale, d'une pédagogie qui libère. Nous nous retrouvons avec ces frères avec lesquels nous travaillons: nous prions, nous évaluons nos pas et montons nos projets.

Notre propos est de ne pas retenir en nos mains les décisions. Il faut faire passer et élargir les décisions pour que les groupes de base assument leur rôle et leur place dans l'histoire. Sans prière, sans étude, sans évaluation, sans critique et auto-critique, sans critères objectifs de mission, on court toujours le risque de rester au plan des actions personnelles, ingenuës.

Nous allons de l'avant, dans la joie et dans l'espérance. Nous cherchons à collaborer à l'évangélisation des pauvres de chez nous;

nous avons la conviction que notre peuple est l'héritier du peuple élu par Dieu, ce peuple de la Bible, pauvre, sans terre, toujours à la merci de ses puissants voisins. Le Dieu Libérateur de la Bible, la foi en cet Unique et Vrai Dieu illumine notre pauvre et fragile itinéraire.

UNE CONSTATATION

Nous faisons l'expérience d'une vie religieuse, au Brésil d'aujourd'hui, qui se retrouve dans ce grand espace qu'est l'Eglise. Une Eglise qui à son tour, se retrouve dans le grand espace des pauvres, des masses populaires. C'est là que la Vie Religieuse et l'Eglise sont appelées à la conversion, à une position courageuse face aux situations non seulement de légères in-justices, mais devant de vrais massacres, lents, progressifs, liés à la croissance des fortunes et du luxe de minorités privilégiées.

Je crois qu'il est bon d'affirmer que dans notre petit effort d'incarnation et de solidarité avec les pauvres en vue de la justice, nous nous sentons en communion avec les options générales de notre Congrégations, exprimées dans nos Constitutions, approuvées par le Chapitre de 1982 et qui nous invitent à une vie consacrée orientée fortement dans le sens de la mission.

TROIS QUESTIONS

Il me semble que celles-ci méritent une réflexion de votre part, vous qui m'avez écoutés si gentiment:

1. Comment peut-on expliquer tant d'oppression dans des pays traditionnellement catholiques?
2. Quelle est la signification pour d'autres Eglises (et particulièrement pour celle de Rome) d'une expérience comme celle du Brésil? Comment donc une telle Eglise doit-elle être vue et ... jugée?
3. Quel est les sens et quelle est l'étendue de l'engagement du religieux dans les luttes contre l'injustice:
 - Un engagement secondaire, facultatif?
 - Un engagement uniquement tactique?
 - Qu'est que veut dire un engagement chrétien évangélique dans les situations de grandes injustices?

OUT OF THE TOMBS, SET FREE ON THE PATH OF LIFE

Henry Volken, S.J.

"Se rapprocher des pauvres de la campagne", et, "Apprendre des pauvres de la campagne": ce sont les titres de deux opuscules publiés par l'Equipe Mobile d'Education (Mobile Training Team), à laquelle collabore en Inde le P. Volken. Ils indiquent le thème central de son expérience.

Le vrai problème a surgi, dit'il lorsqu'ils sont passés de projets parrainés par l'Eglise, à la création et au soutien d'organisations autonomes des gens. La méfiance fut une réaction normale, aboutissant parfois à des oppositions et à des représailles violentes.

Mais le problème principal était de savoir écouter, d'être là où l'on pouvait entendre ce que disaient les pauvres et de les accompagner lorsqu'ils sortaient de la tombe d'une oppression plusieurs fois centenaire. NDLR).

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Henry Volken, S.J., is responsible for the Jesuit Social Secretariate, Rome.

The experience I wish to share with you covers the last seven of my 36 years in India. It has to do with enabling the poor, excluded from development and victims of injustice, to emerge from being voice-less, to gain self-confidence and to be in effective solidarity. We were a Mobile Team of five: three young Indians, an Indian sister and myself.

When still a boy in the mountain region of Switzerland I used to help remove stones that avalanches left on the meadows. When we lifted those big stones we would find underneath, colourless stunted grass. I used to remember this later in India as a symbol of the people, condemned by society, to remain stunted in their humanity. I thought of tomb-stones and of the meaning of Resurrection. In the lives of these people, mostly Harijans and Tribals, the many and rich God-given human qualities remained like 'blossoms in the dust' as one Indian writer described the state of these people.

OUT OF THE TOMBS

Like Lazarus they were called to come out of their tombs. Our team was animated by a great faith in the hidden capacities of the poor, and this was confirmed through countless experiences we had when working with them. We trained and gave continued support to various types of animators chosen by the people from among themselves. Village health workers constituted one category. These were mostly illiterate

women, used to being considered ignorant or even stupid. Two examples will show how far this was from reality.

The first story is about one of these women who had joined a group of 30 in the first of four short training courses. A task was given to them. "How would you explain to women in your villages that they must make some preparation when they expect the arrival of a baby?" The belief prevailed in this region that to do so would be an evil omen. The next morning the group was seated on the ground in a circle. One of them had on her lap, a weaver bird's nest. What for? It took some time before she lifted up the nest and began to speak:

"With this nest I will explain to our women. See how many days the man and the woman bird have worked hard. Look, how it has been so carefully woven. Put your fingers inside! How soft is the place on which the baby bird will lie! Do we love our children less?".

In fact, all the charts used by our health trainer have originated in the minds and the imagination of such illiterate 'stupid' women!

Another story about these same types of women. Within one year a group of village health workers had gone through the four training courses and they had learned much from reflection on their day to day experience. On the last day of the meeting they were invited to work in small groups and produce a drawing that would depict the health situation as it existed initially and as it now was. Except for making customary decorations on the floor, in front of the door of their huts, they had never exercised this art. Yet this is what one group produced:

Two trees full of fruits were depicted on a big sheet of paper. In front of the first tree stood small human figures, whilst in front of the second were tall human figures plucking fruits from the tree. "In the past", one of the group explained, "we could not reach the fruits of health. The health centre was far away, and nobody came to our villages. Many small children died and also some mothers after delivery. Today we, in the village, can pluck the fruits of health. Our people have confidence in us. We can teach our women many useful things. We visit the houses and we can cure sick children".

"With the health-committees we have helped our people understand many causes of diseases. Some bad customs have now changed. People go less to the money lender and spend less on marriages. Often we have discussed the 'sickness' of the village society, and united we can change many things. We are no longer afraid to approach government officials..".

Some days ago I was intrigued to read the following in the document of the 32th General Congregation of our Jesuit Society: "If we have the patience and the humility to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they teach us what we can do to help them" (Decree 4, No.50).

Interestingly, the titles of two booklets our team had written as reports of our experience were: 'MOVING CLOSER TO THE RURAL POOR' and 'LEARNING FROM THE RURAL POOR'.

SET FREE

Besides women many young men passed through a similar process of spaced-out learning and became effective adult educators, animators and organisers. They had weekly meetings in their village units. From time to time they gathered to reflect on their experience and progress in their analytical ability. They came to understand the linkage of poverty with the prevailing structures: land ownership which left them landless labourers; village-markets where prices were determined by a few powerful merchants; the money-lending system that led to indebtedness and loss of land they might have owned, etc.

After months of reflecting on these facts and their effects on their lives, various 'liberating' initiatives were taken up one by one. Legal education became important and kindled new hope among the people. Social legislation did, indeed, exist in their favour, but it remained on paper. Thus for example, 'bonded labour' was declared illegal and condemned as a form of slavery. Yet in a region where there were thousands of such bonded labourers, they did not know about the existence of such legislation. But within two years these, so far powerless, people had organised themselves, and could even approach the Supreme Court in Delhi. After many dramatic events, which initially caused much suffering especially to the new leaders, the government is now implementing, in collaboration with these people an extensive programme of freeing and rehabilitating these bonded labourers.

What impressed us was the capacity of these so-called fatalistic people to express and articulate their experiences of exploitation. One night many had gathered for a legal-education meeting. One of them laid bare his shoulders and said:

"See how black my shoulders are. For forty years I have carried soil to the fields of my master. Even his bullocks had it better than me. They could eat when they were hungry, they could sleep and rest at night, I not - neither my wife nor my children. I often had to work for my master till late at night, and when I would reach my hut, my wife, awakened from her sleep, would shout in fear: "Thief, thief!"

We had helped many dioceses in Central India to set up diocesan programmes for Community Health, Adult Education, Small Farmers promotion. All these remained church-sponsored, somehow under the control of priests and sisters. They presented no great problems. It was a different matter however, to nurture and support autonomous peoples' organisations. United in a spirit of solidarity the poor became a social force in the region and this provoked resistance from the local powerful section, the upper castes.

In a Church that constitutes a small minority in the country yet is institutionally strong, this type of more direct and more decisive involvement in 'peoples' movements', is not easily appreciated. In a majority Hindu society there is much suspicion about the 'hidden intentions' (religious conversion) of those who claim to be interested in the suffering poor. It is not a small problem.

Hundreds of young christians, more and more priests and religious, have opted for an approach that unites all the poor and enables them to grow as persons, building up their organisation for united action, in order to gain basic rights and thus secure the minimum for existence. At least 40% of the people are officially recognised as living below subsistence level (300 million!).

ON THE PATH OF LIFE

Is this christian presence, this joining the doings of the Spirit among those rejected by society but loved in a preferential way by God, - is this a valid form of evangelisation?

I have seen marvelous manifestations of a spirit of sacrifice, signs of a 'spirituality of liberation' among those who share deeply in the mystery of Christ's suffering. The bishop of 'my diocese' seemed to share this perception. He brought several teams of sisters who are happy to live this type of christian presence into the diocese. They are encouraged to become first of all, real members of the village community, of the poor and exploited in particular, and to discern what the Spirit is telling them in their life shared with the people. They read the Gospel differently, they bring this solidarity into the Eucharist.

In other parts of India, among fishermen struggling for survival, priests and sisters have not found such support. Their joining the people in a hunger-strike - one sister fasted 19 days, another 23 days - has been critically viewed by some of the bishops. Priests and religious are not to get directly involved now in the fishermen's struggle without explicit permission. At the same time, a paper written by theologians, appreciated the deeply evangelical meaning of this type of active solidarity. In India such tensions and conflicts are likely to multiply as the gap between rich and poor increases and a new consciousness emerges among the people. Though an admonition to dialogue is legitimate, in the concrete, applying this, proves to be very difficult.

I had the privilege of meeting archbishop Romero one year before his martyrdom. I asked him how he saw the solution of a conflict arising from the contradiction between an analysis of a situation and a differing pastoral praxis, evident, even among bishops in El Salvador.

His answer was that this would require a real conversion of the Church to a preferential option for the poor.

The experience of our team in working with the poor has helped me understand some of the consequences of this option. Love leads one deeper into their anguished existence, into great faith in them. It eliminates paternalism. It enables them to believe in themselves, to think for themselves, to take decisions, and it shares with them a new-found hope. It means to join the God of the Exodus and the Magnificat there where He 'sees, hears, acts'.

How can we say that in prayer we meet a God different from the one sent by Moses and His Son 'to set the captives free'? Those who counted for nothing, He has chosen, that they may no longer be like blossoms in the dust.

Listening and learning from the people may well be the first and indispensable step in evangelisation ... an awakening to God who hears the cry of His people and shows compassion.

RÉLEXIONS SUR L'EXPÉRIENCE D'UN PASTEUR DU ZAIRE

Mgr. Bakole Wa Ilunga

(Mgr. Bakole wa Ilunga is Archbishop of the Diocese of Kananga, Zaire. He quotes a prayer of his "pagan" father to the God of creation in striking evidence of the deeply religious character of his people. They have a strong sense of life, community, authority, respect for elders.

The good news of Jesus Christ was a liberating event in the lives of his people. At the heart of this liberation he sees freedom from fear and the struggle for a more just society. He began this struggle through local communities, and a programme for development. It always began with the building of a Church - a place of prayer and celebration and meeting with God and thereafter fanned out to projects in health, education, agriculture.

The approach to justice and evangelisation of the people of Kananga in this presentation illustrates the importance of culture and context in any given situation. Mgr. Bakole wa Ilunga ends his paper with an appeal for continuing support by mission personnel. It will be an enrichment both for his people and for those who come. The text has been slightly shortened. Ed.).

Justice - Evangélisation, quoi de neuf sur un sujet où l'unanimité de fond semble acquise? Que cherchons-nous au juste? Justice - Evangélisation: En effet, annoncer l'évangile et en rendre témoignage par le combat pour la justice et lutter pour la justice par le témoignage de l'évangile, n'est-ce pas là votre vocation de responsables d'Instituts consacrés à la Mission? N'est-ce pas là aussi ma première tâche de prêtre et d'évêque-pasteur? N'est-ce pas là la mission essentielle de l'Eglise du Christ-Sauveur?

Je n'ai porté des souliers qu'au grand séminaire de philosophie. Nous marchions pieds nus. - Un proverbe africain dit: "Quand, nu-pieds, quelqu'un fait un saut dans le feu, il lui reste un prodigieux bond à faire". Le seul problème de la sagesse est de savoir dans quelle direction salutaire bondir: un insensé saute verticalement et retombe

dans le feu; l'imprudent saute à droite ou à gauche sur nos pistes de crête au risque de tomber dans le ravin; l'inconscient saute en arrière sur nos sentiers escarpés et se casse le dos; le sage saute dans la direction salutaire.

- Un autre proverbe dit: "Sur une rivière agitée, ne délcie pas une pirogue quand tu ne sais pas payer ni diriger..."

Eh bien, j'ai fait deux fois et demie le tour du monde. Chaque-fois que mon regard se pose sur la vie de notre monde actuel, n'importe où, chaque fois que mes oreilles s'ouvrent aux propos de notre monde actuel dans n'importe quelle culture, je constate des contraintes, des impasses, des inquiétudes, des misères, bref je constate partout ce désenchantement quasi généralisé face à la civilisation que l'homme a forgée avec ses mains et son cerveau.

Malgré le mirage de sa technologie et de sa consommation, du matérialisme économique avec sa loi du profit sans amour, malgré la multiplicité des réunions et discussions, le monde actuel, y compris l'Eglise surtout de vieille tradition, semble avoir fait, nu-pieds le saut dans le feu; il a délié une gigantesque pirogue sur une rivière agitée. Il est temps de se ressaisir.

Ce désenchantement généralisé et cette contestation multiforme annoncent la naissance d'un monde nouveau, dont nous serons peut-être les artisans, dont nous poserons, au fil des jours, des pierres de base et des valeurs de fond.

Voilà ce qui met à l'aise, car je me trouve et m'adresse à des frères: comme dit le proverbe luba: "le lion et le léopard affamés, devant le même gibier nourrissent les mêmes intentions".

LA BONNE NOUVELLE DANS MA VIE

Je suis né moi-même dans un petit village de brousse en 1920. Or, dans les quclque 65 ans de ma vie j'ai été à même d'expérimenter les très profondes transformations de tous genres qu'a connues l'Afrique en général et mon pays en particulier.

Mentionnons d'abord, les multiples transformations matérielles. L'Afrique Noire et nos populations ont vécu longtemps repliées sur elle mêmes, paralysées dans le ornières étroites des solidarités claniques, inconscientes des réalités économiques, indifférentes aux conceptions capitalistes du travail comme à la notion du temps.

L'imprévoyance, cause de stagnation, caractérisait ses différentes peuplades. Mais ce temps est révolu. Depuis, ces peuplades se sont ouvertes aux autres régions, aux autres pays, aux autres continents. Les contacts humains provoqués par les transformations matérielles ont engendré, à leur tour, un phénomène d'osmose au niveau des cultures. Autrement dit, les transformations matérielles ont suscité de profondes et importantes mutations culturelles.

Venons-en d'abord à l'histoire de ma petite vie. Elle m'apparaît aussi merveilleuse que celle de Salomon. Le raisonnement humain, ne peut comprendre ce qui m'est arrivé. Pourquoi le gamin de 8 ans que j'étais courait-il derrière le catéchiste au lieu de plonger dans la rivière et faire la chasse aux rats et aux oiseaux comme c'était le cas pour ses camarades? Pourquoi, tout jeune, parcourir chaque jour des kilomètres à pied pour suivre cette petite école embryonnaire de brousse et ce, en désaccord avec mes parents? J'ai beau chercher, je ne trouve aucun intérêt ni attrait humain qui aurait pu m'y pousser. Le catéchiste catholique n'était même pas un homme en vue!...

Pourtant, alors que tout m'invitait à y rester, j'ai quitté, malgré tout, le milieu rassurant de ma forêt et de ma rivière, de mes parents et de mes copains, pour m'orienter définitivement vers l'école à 150 km de chez nous et toujours à pied !

Péniblement, à travers d'innombrables difficultés j'ai fini par aboutir au petit séminaire... Maintenant, je sais que dès cette époque, je marchais, conduit par la main de mon Dieu. Mon histoire, n'est pas un cas isolé en Afrique. Que d'autres pourraient, comme je viens de le faire, proclamer les effets bénéfiques dans leur vie de la Bonne Nouvelle et du travail missionnaire.

LA BONNE NOUVELLE CHEZ MON PEUPLE

La Providence avait décidé que les temps étaient accomplis pour répandre également la Bonne Nouvelle chez mon peuple.

Je tiens dès maintenant à souligner une réalité non négligeable: ce sont nos ancêtres qui nous ont préparé le chemin du Christ et de son Evangile. C'est par eux en effet, que nous ont été transmises les valeurs authentiques et c'est par eux aussi que nous a été légué ce sens religieux qui devait nous rendre si disponibles à l'accueil du message évangélique. Quand on songe que ce n'est qu'en 1891 que tout a commencé. Quatre vingt-cinq ans, qu'est-ce que c'est? La durée d'une vie d'homme, en somme. Et pourtant, dans ce court laps de temps, le grain de sénévé jeté en terre est devenu un arbre solide planté au coeur de l'Afrique.

Une véritable âme noire a toujours été croyante. La preuve? Nos ancêtres priaient déjà (je cite une prière notée au début du christianisme, recueillie donc du monde "païen", maintes fois entendue dans la bouche de mon père païen, chef du clan Bena Nkongolo):

"Dieu, Seigneur et Maître,
Créateur des hommes,
Tout vous appartient,
Tout est à vous et pour vous ...
Tout: hommes et choses,
Tout est vôtre, Maweja Nangila,
Rien ne connaît d'autre maître que vous..."

Cette prière, transmise oralement à travers les âges, était formulée par ce qu'on appelle des païens. Je dis qu'un paganisme qui transmet ce genre de prière a déjà quelque chose de saint. Mon peuple, ayant un sens aigu de Dieu, a développé un sens profond de l'autorité sous toutes ses formes. L'autorité paternelle et aimée et respectée. Chez nous, la hiérarchie de l'autorité est la réplique exacte de la hiérarchie des âges et de l'initiation. Par exemple, injurier les parents constitue la plus grave des offenses et s'avère lourde de conséquences.

Il en va de même pour notre sens communautaire. Cette communion vitale entre frères, une des valeurs les plus positives et les plus indispensables de la personnalité africaine, nous prédisposait admirablement à créer une communauté d'hommes unis dans l'amour universel du Père.

Aux dispositions naturelles déjà mentionnées, j'ajoute notre sens fort de la vie. Pour l'Africain, recevoir, transmettre, sauvegarder, enrichir la vie est un devoir sacré. Dès lors, nous étions naturellement disposés à saisir dans toute sa profondeur le don ineffable de la vie divine qui nous a été dispensé dans, par et avec le Christ-Jésus.

La vie terrestre, pour nous, est étroitement liée à l'au-delà. Nos morts sont vivants et nous relient à Dieu. Nous avons conscience d'appartenir à un monde transcendant. Notre passage sur terre, bien que très important et déterminant pour l'avenir, n'est qu'une préparation à l'au-delà.

REGENERÉ PAR LA BONNE NOUVELLE

Toutes ces valeurs, que je viens d'énumérer, constituaient comme des pierres d'attente. En elles-mêmes déjà, elles étaient une manifestation de Dieu, notre Père. Elles s'offraient comme un atout naturel pour le christianisme qui n'est pas venue les abolir, mais les approfondir en les purifiant, les élevant et les élargissant.

Pour le comprendre, il faut, comme ce fut notre cas, avoir vécu le joug des forces du mal engendrant la crainte continuelle, le désespoir même. Mais à partir du moment où l'on admet la consanguinité merveilleuse de tous les hommes dans le Christ, à partir du moment où l'on se soumet efficacement à ses préceptes de charité et de justice, il est évident que les conséquences de tous ordres sont incalculables. - Dieu libère du mal. Dieu est Père. Dieu m'attend et m'appelle dans son Amour. Dieu m'associe à son oeuvre... Voilà des réalités capables de créer l'espérance qui vainc la souffrance, la peur.

Il faut avoir entendu une mère pleurer son enfant mort pour sentir comment le christianisme libère. Bien sûr, chaque mère sent la mort d'un enfant comme une peine atroce...mais si, par surcroît, elle est maltraitée parce qu'accusée de cette mort (à cause de toutes les forces obscures que l'on croit présentes en elle), cette peine devient inhumaine. "Un monde sans Dieu devient inhumain".

Il faut avoir entrevu la souffrance d'une femme stérile rejetée comme rebut inutile et néfaste, et voir, par la suite, le courage lui revenir par une meilleure compréhension de l'amour de Dieu pour elle aussi, nonobstant sa stérilité.

Il faut avoir assisté aux séances de fétichisme où ne règnent que la peur, l'exploitation, la cruauté et le désespoir, pour comprendre le salut par un Dieu juste, à qui seul appartiennent la vengeance et le jugement.

Il faut avoir été à même de constater comment l'absence de tout sens de culpabilité fait obstacle à la croissance et à l'épanouissement de l'homme, pour comprendre l'immense bienfait qu'apporte l'Eglise grâce à la formation de la conscience...

J'arrête ici l'énumération que je pourrais prolonger. Encore une fois, un monde sans Dieu devient inhumain. Dans ce monde, l'amour est remplacé par l'égoïsme, la générosité et le désintéressement par le calcul, la patience et la douceur par la force et les armes, le soulagement de la souffrance par son horrible exploitation. L'homme perd sa qualité d'homme et la bête resurgit sous ses aspects multiformes. Le Dieu de l'Evangile me commande d'aimer mon prochain et de pardonner à mon ennemi. Ce même Dieu donne un sens à ma souffrance.

AU COEUR DE MON TEMOIGNAGE DE COMBAT POUR LA JUSTICE

Depuis 19 ans que je suis évêque, je peux vous dire que j'ai pu toucher du doigt ces fruits de l'Evangile dans mon archidiocèse, et souvent même la réalité a dépassé la fiction. Mes très fréquents contacts avec les populations délaissées de l'intérieur de mon diocèse me mettaient sans cesse face à des réalités contraignantes. D'une part, je découvrais le sous-développement persistant qui laissait croupir dans la misère d'immenses régions alors que, d'autre part, tous les éléments susceptibles de procurer un bien-être indispensable me semblaient exister.

Rapidement, nous avons dégagé les principes suivants qui allaient devenir par la suite comme la ligne de conduite de notre action. Pour une meilleure compréhension de notre action, certaines précisions s'imposent. Nos sociétés africaines sont dominées par une notion de la famille, du clan et de la tribu. La mentalité et la situation sociale qui en résultent sont, dans un sens, très différentes de ce qu'on trouve en Asie, en Amérique Latine, au Canada ou en Europe.

Le passé nous a laissé un héritage aux multiples visages. Je cite, par exemple, le travail manuel qu'on considère comme une corvée indigne d'un être libre et civilisé. D'où la nécessité de créer une nouvelle mentalité. Une mentalité propice au développement, qui suscite des motivations et provoque chez nos gens le désir de sortir des ornières de la mentalité traditionnelle et coutumière. Les amener à se mettre au service d'une communauté élargie tout en étant conscients qu'ainsi ils font oeuvre plus utile et plus efficace. Il faut dépasser la mentalité sans horizon et collée à la terre pour les ouvriers aux vastes objectifs d'un développement intégral.

Il faut partir "d'en bas", c'est-à-dire de la communauté de base ou du groupement naturel. Il faut concentrer l'effort sur les besoins ressentis de cette collectivité fondamentale tout en respectant l'individualité de la personnalité de chacun. Ainsi seulement pourra prendre naissance une lente mais sûre modification de vie.

Voyant les souffrances de mon peuple, comme l'isolement qui prive de tout contact avec le bien-être, de tout espoir vers un destin meilleur, comme l'absence d'écoles, d'hôpitaux, de manque de soins aux enfants mourants, d'abandon des mères délaissées, etc... Voyant ces conditions inhumaines, j'ai mieux compris pourquoi le Christ était spécialement à l'écoute de la souffrance.

L'EGLISE DU CHRIST POUR TOUT L'HOMME

La gloire de Dieu, c'est le bonheur des ses enfants, le bonheur de son peuple. Et ce bonheur, il le veut non seulement dans l'au-delà où l'homme s'unira à Lui pour toute l'éternité, mais même dans son existence terrestre. La Pastorale de l'Eglise du Christ doit être très ouverte aux besoins concrets de l'homme tel qu'il est sorti des mains divines, à savoir un être à la fois spirituel et matériel, qu'il faut "sauver" pour le temps et pour l'éternité. C'est en aimant les hommes, en aimant tout l'homme et tous les hommes qu'on apprend à aimer Dieu.

Nous avons donc voulu améliorer ces conditions de vie, mais dans la perspective d'une pastorale d'ensemble où l'économique et le social s'intégreraient aisément.

Nous avons voulu le faire par nos propres forces en valorisant les potentialités en hommes et en matériel, en créant une nouvelle mentalité pour dépasser une économie de subsistance et repliée sur soi. Pour dépasser un attentisme paralysant et une apathie engendrant plus de mort que de vie. Nous avons essayé de provoquer une prise de conscience de la situation et des possibilités, un éveil des forces endormies, un déclenchement des énergies insoupçonnées.

Voici un témoignage important et véridique, solide comme le roc: l'Evangélisation est à la base de cette transformation. C'est à partir de Dieu et de son message que ce miracle de développement intégral a pu se manifester chez nous. En 10 ans, voici nos réalisations: 300 centres Pastoraux de Développement Intégral, véritables paroisses en miniature. En 10 ans, 150 petites et grandes églises construites, 30 écoles, 15 dispensaires ou Centres de santé, alliant la médecine curative à la médecine préventive. Sans compter une quarantaine de ponts qui ont énormément contribué à résoudre les situations d'isolement.

Dans un pays industrialisé cela peut paraître assez normal, rien de vertigineux. Mais dans un pays pauvre, mal équipé, à mentalité a-économique, je vous assure que cela tient du miracle. Mais il importe de bien comprendre le cadre de ces réalisations. Je vais vous en décrire le processus habituel brièvement.

LA STRATEGIE

Je passe dans une région déterminée. Lors de mon passage, les différents villages se concertent pour demander leur Centre. Ils en expriment le désir, soit à un de Membres du Comité pour le Développement et la Promotion humaine qui nous le signale, soit à un missionnaire, soit, le plus souvent, directement à moi-même. Ne vous étonnez pas. Le premier besoin ressenti chez mon peuple, c'est le besoin d'une maison de Dieu. Je vous ai dit que nous sommes un peuple profondément religieux. C'est le premier besoin ressenti devant l'autorité religieuse. Avant de penser à l'école, au dispensaire, à quoi que ce soit: "Monseigneur, notre église... nous prions Dieu sous un arbre...".

A ce moment, nous décidons de donner suite à leur aspiration. Pour la réaliser rapidement, nous les invitons à créer un comité locale, aussi représentatif que possible; nous leur suggérons de répartir les tâches pour une contribution plus positive et plus efficace. c'est relativement facile car c'est concret: il faut qu'ils fassent des briques, cherchent les moellons, le sable, le gravier, le bois; qu'ils réparent éventuellement ponts et routes, qu'ils fournissent la main-d'oeuvre subalterne...etc.

Choses qu'ils sont tous capables de fournir pour prouver leur ardent désir. Cette contribution doit se faire dans un esprit vraiment communautaire et dans un souci du bien commun. Et les préparatifs commencent. L'organisation est faite sous l'autorité du chef de village, qui contribue ainsi lui-même, très positivement, au relèvement de sa région. Je m'impose d'être là aux moments cruciaux de la construction. Ainsi l'église sort du sol, se dresse peu à peu, s'achève au grand étonnement et à la satisfaction des gens eux-mêmes. Après l'église on pensera à l'école, au dispensaire, au pont si nécessaire. Tout un Centre naît, nous l'appelons "Centre Pastoral de Développement", car, en général, le Catéchiste-Mulami entouré de son Comité devient le meilleur animateur et coordinateur et c'est de là qu'il conduira la communauté chrétienne.

Et petit à petit, la réalité démontre ce que veut dire: penser aux autres, vaincre l'égoïsme personnel ou collectif, rejeter la jalousie et la haine, travailler pour un bien commun. Avec une animation et motivation suffisantes, puisées toujours dans l'Evangile, le peuple passe d'une mentalité a-économique à un éveil, à un désir commun d'un développement intégral.

Vous voyez comment le développement, provoqué et soutenu par la christianisation authentique, souligne la dignité de l'homme, l'invite à se dépasser, à faire un travail pour le bien commun, à réorienter ou à vaincre les obstacles contenus dans certaines coutumes ancestrales, enfin à atteindre la dignité d'enfants de Dieu.

Permettez-moi de terminer cette communication par un appel, qui s'adresse plus directement à Vous en tant que responsables voués à la Mission.

Ne nous laissez pas seuls dans ce combat sous prétexte que c'est l'heure de la relève. Bien sûr, c'est nous, les Africains qui devons mener la lutte en Afrique.

Mais devant la complexité des problèmes de nos sociétés en crise, devant les dimensions énormes du terrain de combat-en milieu rural comme en milieu urbain - nous avons grandement besoin de l'appert de l'expérience et de l'inspiration de la foi de chrétiens venus d'ailleurs.

Nous avons besoin de plus de prêtres pour l'animation de toutes ces communautés vivantes et surtout pour la formation de nos animateurs et responsables de communautés et de nos futurs prêtres.

Enrichissez-nous en partageant avec nous aussi bien les faiblesses et les ambiguïtés que les joies et les forces de notre Eglise au Zaïre.

Apportez-nous la complémentarité de votre approche, de votre façon de comprendre et de vivre l'évangile. Et vous en serez enrichis à votre tour.

Je suis un simple Pasteur de la libération qui nous vient de l'évangile de Jésus-Christ. J'embauche donc des éclaireurs pour découvrir, avec nous toujours, de nouveaux "Chemins de libération". Je vous remercie.

JUSTICE AND EVANGELISATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE
SHARED EXPERIENCES: AN ECONOMICS VIEWPOINT

Michael Schultheis, SJ.

(Le P. Schultheis rappelle tout d'abord que Mgr. Romero fut assassiné il y a tout juste cinq ans, aujourd'hui. Ce fut certainement la profonde intégration de sa foi et de son activité dans sa vie et dans son enseignement, qui le menèrent vers la mort.

Il réfléchit ensuite sur les quatre aspects contemporains de l'exploitation tels qu'ils ressortent du partage d'expériences du Séminaire, en les situant dans le contexte de l'évolution du monde d'aujourd'hui et dans le schéma du monde à venir.

La lutte pour le contrôle des ressources économiques et des institutions par l'Ouest, l'Est ou le Tiers-Monde, est à son niveau le plus profond, une lutte religieuse et culturelle dont l'enjeu sont les symboles et les mythes sous-jacents qui profilent le monde en train de se faire.

Il examine le rôle de l'Eglise, ainsi celui des pauvres qui nous lancent un défi en faveur d'une foi vivante, nous engageant dans l'action. N.D.L.R.)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Setting: Today is the first day of spring, and even the snow flurries carry signs of new life here at Cavalletti. It is also the Persian New Year, and we remember people in the troubled lands of Iran and Iraq.

We might dedicate today to the memory of Archbishop Romero, who was killed five years ago this week. His life, his preaching of the WORD, was a profound integration of faith and action, of analysis and theological reflection. His people led him, even as he led them, into a new vision of God's love, human dignity and community.

Last December I visited several camps for refugees and "displacados" in Central America. Everywhere the people displayed pictures of Archbishop Romero, often with devotional candles burning. One evening in a camp of about 10,000 Salvadoran refugees in Honduras, a group of women,

"los madres", shared their stories - almost everyone had lost a husband and/or other members of their families. They spoke with love of Archbishop Romero: the memory of his life and his weekly homilies, broadcast across the country, continue to nourish and sustain them. He had helped them to discover their personal worth and dignity - "to see the mountain", in Martin Luther King's words - and for them there was no going back. In a special way he is a model of justice and evangelization for our day. (I recommend the biography of Archbishop Romero by Jim Brockman (Orbis Press)).

2. Our Task Today: Our task today is twofold: first, to reflect on the experiences which we listened to and discussed yesterday; and second, to begin to analyze and evaluate those experiences. What questions do they raise about society and culture, about economic and political institutions?

Here too we note, as the presentations and discussions indicated, that the poor often have analyzed their situation accurately and understand far better than we the forces of oppression. But they lack power and call us to bond with them in a common struggle for justice. Again I recall the "madres," who asked that we work to change US policies in Central America, so that they might go home again.

I will follow in a general way the methodology of the "pastoral spiral", which those of you who are familiar with Holland and Henriot's book, Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice (Orbis Press, 1983), will recognize. I will also draw on other aspects of Holland's work in some of these reflections.

B. WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR WORLD? A SOCIAL-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

1. The Experience of the Poor: Yesterday we entered into four worlds of the poor, admittedly as portrayed by persons who have shared those worlds rather than by the poor themselves. Those experiences touched on four contemporary faces of exploitation:

- 1) in the state of North Carolina (USA), a contract labour system enslaves farm workers to produce fresh vegetables to urban consumers;
- 2) in northeastern Brazil, rural people are forced into urban slums because commercial interests, often with multinational funding, are appropriating their lands for export crops and/or mineral wealth;
- 3) in India, the majority of the people are left behind in a development process which focuses on accumulation with little consideration of the impact on communities; and
- 4) in Africa, entire communities are caught up in the conflict between traditional and western cultures and in the struggle to overcome degrading poverty and to create institutions for a new society.

These experiences generated questions about the old/new systems of exploitation, about powerlessness, about the forces and structures of injustice and oppression. They also involved moments of hope. In

Bishop Bakole wa Ilunga's words, the aspirations of the poor witness to the birth of a new world and to the formation of artisans who are the foundation stones of new values.

2. The Poor as "Signs of the Times": Our world is a complex of many realities, but we understand in faith that in a special manner God is present in the experiences of the poor, with those who suffer. Jesus said: "What you do to the poor, the sick, the hungry and the imprisoned, you do to me". Let us look at some other faces of the poor in our complex world today:

- the refugees, now far exceeding 15 million persons across the world, if the "displaced" are included;
- the hungry and starving millions in Africa;
- the growing numbers of homeless;
- the more than 30 million unemployed in western Europe;
- the 35 million poor in the United States;
- the anxiety, the fear, the battered wives and children, the suicides.

If God is present in a special manner in the experience of the poor, then we look to the poor for God's presence in history. Without romanticizing the poor, we look to them for God's voice in reflecting and condemning the injustices of our modern world. They are the "early warning system", which tells us that something is wrong in the world today. The poor are part of "the signs of the times", which Jesus and the Second Vatican Council urged us to read for God's presence and Word in history.

And what do the poor tell us? Are they simply random occurrences or are they signs of fundamental disorder in the present world systems? Observers differ in their response to this question, but I suggest that the poor are telling us forcefully that the world is in crisis. They are signs which point to disorders of such magnitude that the world can only be described as in crisis, i.e., a moment of great transition.

3. A World in Crisis

a) The end of a story: If this interpretation is correct, we might look at different aspects of it for a more careful analysis. And here we turn to the social sciences to assist us in that analysis and evaluation. Sociology, economics, political science, psychology, demography, anthropology, history - increasingly they are saying that the old paradigm, the foundational or root metaphor on which the modern world is built, is unleashing destructive forces.

The paradigm of the modern industrial society, the machine, has generated tremendous energies, but today the paradigm itself is turning the creative energies of the human spirit against humankind. This is reflected in the accelerated arms race, in the diversion of productive resources in the midst of widespread hunger and poverty, in the destruction of the environment. It is reflected in the fatalism and despair so prevalent in many societies.

The present crisis touches every aspect of human life in "modern" industrial societies: the ecology, the economy, the polity and the culture. The analysis of the causes must look to the origins of the industrial world and how that world understands itself. What is its story of origins, of values and meaning, of the proper relations of humankind to the earth, which generates human life, and of the individual in relation to the human and total life community?

This "story" may also be termed the foundational or "root" metaphor of a community or civilization.

The foundational metaphor of the modern industrial world is rooted in the Enlightenment, which enthroned science and defined reality as the measurable. The principles of Newtonian physics were applied to human society. Just as the atom was the basic element of matter, so the isolated individual was the basic unit of society. In this mechanistic model, communities as basic units in which persons find life and meaning have no importance. Society is viewed as a machine, and individuals become as so many cogs in the machine. Economics and politics in this mechanistic model became the study of individuals in conflict, either in the marketplace or in the body politic.

Marx analyzed the contradictions in this mechanistic paradigm as it developed within industrial capitalism and became divorced from the larger social matrix. His followers sought to resolve the contradictions by absorbing the isolated individual within the collective of the industrial communistic state. What should be noted here is that both industrial capitalism and industrial communism develop from the same source, the scientific rationalism of the Enlightenment and a mechanistic model of society.

Both industrial capitalism and industrial communism are destructive of the individual and the community. Both view the economy as a machine, with "efficiency" as the highest good. Both look on the state as a means of public order and control, and they emphasize efficiency and stability. Both marginalize and dismiss religion as non-scientific and relegate it to the unreal world of myth and symbol. Both secularize religion and manipulate the symbols of religion for their own ends.

b) The present crisis: interdependency without mutuality: If the roots of the modern crisis lie in the scientism and rationalism which developed during the period of the Enlightenment, why has the crisis emerged at this moment? The reason, I believe, is that the world has become an interdependent and unitary system in our present period. We see this in the new forms of interdependency in four areas:

- 1) ecology: the planet earth is bound together in a single environmental system. Although this was always so, the study of the environment and the accumulation of pollutants in rivers and lakes and the atmosphere have brought an awareness of the unity and interdependent nature of the planet.
- 2) technologies of communication and transport: developments in micro-electronic and satellite technologies bind the world together in an

integrated communications network, which makes it possible to be in simultaneous contact with almost every area of the planet; and

- 3) economy: new forms of economic organization are developing as a result of the technologies of communication and transportation. A global economy is emerging in which production, markets, and the "division of labour" are becoming integrated on a global basis. The moving forces are technology and capital.

In the political area, new forms of global interdependency also exist, but these have not paralleled developments in the ecology, communications and economy. Instead of interdependency based on mutuality, the superpowers have promoted a resurgence of nationalism around the east-west axis and conflict of ideologies. Both the USA and the USSR have blocked the development of the United Nations institutions as effective instruments to address the global common good.

c) An historical digression: A brief historical digression may illuminate this point. In the closing years of the Second World War, the major nations of the western alliance gathered at Bretton Woods (1944) to chart an international market system based on four guiding principles:

- i. an open and "fair" trading system;
- ii. free movement of capital and technology;
- iii. access to relatively unlimited supplies of natural resources;
- iv. institutions to support and expand this economic system, i.e., the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to finance short term trade imbalances and The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) to finance longer term development programs. The viability of the system was ensured by the strength of the U.S. economy and by military alliances.

The Soviet Union had its own vision of the postwar economic and political order. It attempted to implement this in Eastern Europe and in other satellite states, which had special trading arrangements and military alliances with the USSR.

Challenge to these competing world systems emerged quickly in the postwar period. Beginning in the 1950s, the "new" countries of the "third world" sought political rights and a voice which would be independent from or "non aligned" to either east or west. Within the United Nations they sought to negotiate economic and political changes in the international economic system - in the ownership and control of their resources, in the structures of production and markets, in access to financial resources for development purposes, and in participation in the major institutions.

To the challenges by the poor, the "architects" of the system responded initially that their questions were political and ideological rather than economic and rational. As the challenges persisted and became more persuasive, the architects began an ideological onslaught, often carried out by military force, on the poor. The industrial capitalists have moved against working people by attacking unions and against peoples' movements and communities. The industrial communists

have also attacked their working people and other peoples' movements which have sought political rights. In both instances the attacks have bolstered the central position of the nation state and nationalist interests within the present international system. In effect both the challenges and the reactions have served to focus on those features of the world system that manifest the present crisis.

C. THE SHAPE OF THE COMING PERIOD

1. The Role of the Poor: The greatest threat to the world system, established by the industrial countries to serve the needs of industrialized societies, is the poor. The faces of the poor and suffering challenge the status quo. Their voices call us to re-examine the premises on which the modern world is based. They point to the dehumanizing features of a mechanistic society. Industrial capitalist societies look on individuals as so many cogs in a machine, to be manipulated by corporations in terms of the priorities of capital. Industrial communist societies look on individuals as components of the collectivist state. In both systems the state is turned against the individual and the community.

This far too brief analysis points to the present struggle for the shape of the new world that is emerging. In biblical terms the struggle is against "principalities and powers". At the deepest level it is more than a struggle for control over economic and political resources and institutions; it is a religious and cultural struggle over the underlying values and the content of the symbols and mythologies which nourish and shape the world that is emerging.

The forces of the right recognize this, even as Hitler and Nazi Germany understood the critical importance of controlling the propaganda machines which shaped the cultural values of a civilization. In the United States Mr. Reagan and the moral majority exhibit a keen awareness of this. Thus they promote an arms race to destroy evil and to enhance freedom; they destroy the protective net for the poor to protect the family and promote religious values.

2. The Role of the Church: Redefining Community. The Church, insofar as it stands with the poor, has joined in this struggle. It recognizes that a new community is being defined. The "preferential but not exclusive option for the poor" is redefining neighbour in the Good Samaritan sense in terms of the world community. Who is my neighbour? My neighbour is anyone who in her/his need has a claim on me. In this age of instantaneous global communication, my neighbour is the hungry person in Ethiopia and the displaced family in El Salvador every bit as much as the person who lives on my block or in my parish.

Moreover, as we begin to understand better the nature of the interdependencies in the global economy we recognize that the policies

of the stronger nations, undertaken to promote the perceived interests of national groups and the national good, often harm the poor.

The poor communities whose realities we experienced in a partial manner yesterday point to these interdependencies. These poor call us to examine the underlying premises of our cultures, which are given expression in the dominant economic and political institutions. The poor challenge these institutions and point to the bankruptcy of the solutions offered by both industrial capitalism - individualism cut off from community - and industrial communism - the individual and community submerged within the collectivist state.

3. Carriers of a New Vision: Where then is the source of a new vision of community and the creative energies to incarnate that vision? If God is present in the poor, then we turn to the poor for the source of the creative divine energies for this new age. The Church of the poor will be critical in shaping the cultural and religious values and symbols of this coming age.

Thus the refugees call us to new forms of solidarity that cut across national borders and the nation state. The search for national security that fuels the arms race and promotes national security states points to the need for global institutions which will promote the global common good.

The unemployed and the homeless call us to new forms of organization of the economy in which communities control capital and utilize it and other resources for the needs of the community. Ecological destruction calls us to a new respect for the earth and a recognition of our common bonding with the earth. Unbridled individualism and the power of the collective state call us back to an emphasis on the community itself, as the origin of human life and the ambience in which the individual becomes wholly a person.

D. CONCLUSION: JUSTICE AND EVANGELIZATION

The poor then challenge us to a "living faith" that leads to "loving action". This is action on behalf of justice, which today is no less than the transformation of our societies. It is more than simply understanding our economic and political systems. It is searching for the deeper and underlying cultural and religious values which shape our polity and economy, or in other words, the underlying values which underlie the way we order our lives in community.

The call to justice then is a call for the evangelization of our cultures. It looks to a delegitimation of the present order, the development of a new language on which to build a new order and the creation of alternatives based on co-operation and solidarity.

We return to Archbishop Romero. His life and his death continue to nourish his people with a new vision, one that has provided the people of Central America with a new sense of dignity and community. But the incarnation of that vision involves a struggle, and one that must

not be romanticized. To sustain that vision and to remain committed to that struggle involves a spirituality of poverty embodied in service. There we discover discipleship and a dwelling place with Jesus.

I conclude with a brief schemata to assist us in this new challenge to justice and evangelization. Not all can work directly with the poor, but if we are convinced that God is present with and lives among the poor in a special way, then we will find time to be with them.

Consider the example of the body. The head thinks grand thoughts: we study and write and engage in conversation to promote the intellectual life. The heart carries the emotions: we pray and school ourselves to become loving persons. But the lowly feet carry the head and heart: to a great extent, where our feet take us determines what our head thinks about and who our heart loves. We might consider "tithing our time", i.e., spending a ten percent of our time with the poor. This would seem to be a critical and often missing element in our work for justice and evangelization.

JUSTICE AND EVANGELISATION: A REFLECTION ON THE
SHARED EXPERIENCES, A COMMUNICATIONS VIEWPOINT

Dominick Coyle.

(Quelques extraits du monde de la communication: A la fin de la journée, il ne s'agit pas de savoir qui a parlé, mais qui a écouté... Peut-être avez vous trop de choses à dire; peut-être vous faut-il trop de temps pour prendre une décision... Y a-t-il un évangile pour les riches et un autre pour les pauvres?...

Devez-vous essayer de tranquilliser vos consciences en vous concentrant sur des cibles évidentes comme les banques internationales, ou au contraire devez vous travailler le mieux que vous pouvez dans votre mission comme vous la percevez le mieux?....

Je découvre, en ces jours, une très grande incertitude parmi vous... Le monde est là, au-dehors; il est réel. Il n'est sans doute pas toujours très juste, il peut même paraître pas juste du tout... Il changera, lentement, mais il changera. Le voulez-vous? Le pouvez-vous?... N.D.L.R.)

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The trouble with seminars is that they often generate more heat than light! However, as I have been complaining ever since my arrival about the cold, it may auger well for your conference. If what I have to say is seen to have any modest merit, then please thank me; if not, blame Fr. Jenkinson, since it was he who invited me. I am very pleased to be with you all, but I guess my London head office is none too happy that I am away from the store for four whole days. Such is the world of business.

I don't have very many insights for you or, fortunately, many questions either. I do have a few reactions, and some observations. They are, I hope spontaneous, in the sense that they do not represent any pent-up criticism of your role, or how you go about it.

I work in newspapers, for one newspaper to be precise, the Financial Times, of which I am editor of our international edition.

To put it mildly, missions and missionaries are not quite the stuff of our everyday news columns - although we do claim to have a mission ourselves. It is to represent the world of business to the business community in the world in which we circulate, or some 114 countries.

We do not see ourselves as being capitalists, or socialists, or communists, or any other of the "ists". We - the people who write for the newspaper - are individuals. Most of us are specialists in some relatively narrow domain, whether it be Transport or Environmental issues, the Stock market or International Company news, African or American affairs, Management questions or developments in Technology. We have, as it were, a Generalate in London with an Editor-in-Chief, a kind of editorial pope. We have a curia of deputies and assistants, branch offices (not quite missionaries) in the field - in fact, bureaux in some 32 locations around the world.

Each issue of the newspaper daily is a small Russian novel. It contains roughly 110,000 words, news, views and opinions. It doesn't exist most days until work starts around 9 a.m. Some twelve hours later we start printing the first edition!

Believe you me, a Russian novel created largely in twelve hours, and a new one produced six days a week, concentrates the mind wonderfully. It makes for fast decision-making, and I like to think we get it right most of the time, and so do our readers. This, perhaps, shows up a basic difference between us. We, too, grapple with complex issues and changing social, economic and cultural environments. Our editors and leader writers are individuals, with individual ideas, political and economic base points and, dare I say it, moral values. Our leaders, or editorial articles, daily address a wide range of issues, and daily the Newspaper takes a view. It is trashed out in a white heat of intense debate at our daily editorial conference. The chief editor will dictate finally - if needs be; but if needs be too often, he or we will go. It did happen once, some six years ago; the editor went!

What I affectionately call "Mother Church" - Fr. Willie never ceases to give me lectures on who precisely makes up the Church - operates at a more leisurely pace, but perhaps the world is changing more rapidly than you think. Closed minds can operate in a climate of certainty, but then Certainty needs Divine guidance, and even HIS patience may sometimes get exhausted!

Maybe you have too much talk; perhaps it takes too long to make decisions; perhaps consultation can become an excuse for not taking action - or at least some decisions. Maybe if you talk out a problem long enough it will go away, or the underlying issue may have changed. Perhaps an "unruly" (do I really mean that word?) national church may be brought into line in time - maybe a couple of bishops changed here or there over, say, five years or more, and a decade later it will be

back in the Roman fold. Maybe fresh air is bad; perhaps it is thought better to batten down the hatches, and the winds of change will go away.

Its an established response to challenge. Isolate the innovators, try and silence the questioning few, confuse, or even conceal hierarchical lines, reward the "faithful". The house may be secure, but the winds of change won't go away. Your task, in great measure, is not only to define or (better still) re-define your role; your mission may have as much to do with "educating the educators", and not just within your own communities, but through them to what I euphemistically term the "wider church" - that is shorthand for Rome!

At the end of the day, it is not a question of who is talking, but who is listening. Do you not have some internal conversions to be put in place first? If the answer is YES - even in part - and I suspect it is, do your organisations have a structure in which this process can take place? Perhaps the world of commercial management could teach a thing or two. Time for sound reflection certainly but in the end we are all dead!

My own small role - with others - shows a bit of the way. We supervise the management of investments for a number of Irish communities, and we think we're qualified for that role. We do not think this is a task for priests and nuns; they surely have other and better things to do, if you all can only decide what they are - and convince others that this is so.

And what are - or should be - these things you should be about? That is for you to decide, but I detect in these days a considerable uncertainty. I came here with a wrong notion, a minor capitalist David against the missionary Goliath, someone called upon to try and defend the seen "real enemies" - the multinationals, the international banks, the commodity traders and associated financial manipulators.

I expected to have to answer for the usually mis-quoted John Paul Getty's assertion that he didn't give a damn whether the meek inherited the earth; all he wanted were the mineral rights underneath! The bit about the camel and the eye of the needle was sure to come up.

Instead, from Sisters Julianne and Heloisa all I heard was relatively conventional stuff about the need for land reform and housing campaigns, complaints about police brutality, and about bureaucratic indifference. It is all rather ordinary material - the type of things we write about, and regularly campaign for and criticise (the police brutality and indifference and corruption, that is) many days in the Financial Times.

We do not have, like Senator Barry Goldwater in the United States, the "conscience of a Conservative", but the constant editorial questioning by a mostly liberal newspaper.

We are not unique; we do not reflect ALL the values of the international business community, and you would be very wrong to think so - or, in a curious way, to take consolation from the fact - that all business is corrupt, or that all businessmen are devoid of concern and conscience. The concepts of justice and peace are not limited to missionaries.

I find it almost condescending to hear (from Sr. Julianne, I believe,) that "the Rich will be evangelised!" I had'nt really thought otherwise.

But please do not worry too much. After all, the occasional layman cannot really have the insights, cannot know what is happening on the ground not even if he is a journalist! Indeed, that trade, calling or profession probably excludes in the eyes of many in this room the remotest possibility of seeing the truth, whatever that may be. Yet, what has impressed me in these days is the uncertainty you are demonstrating about your own role, about what you should be about in the missionary world today. Yesterday morning with our two speakers I thought villains and heroes were more or less clearly defined; yesterday afternoon I was not too sure. Fr. Henry Volken spoke with passion and an obvious conviction. He was much more willing to listen than to preach. I quote him - I hope accurately: "We must be in a place where we can hear".

His objective, his mission seemed to me to be one of working within structures that exist, to try from very small communities to make change gradually. I liked his simile - as a boy in Switzerland, he lifted a stone and allowed in some light. He wasn't, so it seemed to me, content to curse the darkness, but rather to light a candle or two. He may not like the real world - and I suspect that he does not, but it is there, and it represents a starting point for him.

He was asking questions as much - or even more - of himself than of the system. Asserting blame, real or imaginary, is not really productive; villains and heroes were the stuff of cowboy films of our youth - even for the girls!

Of course, the world is unjust, income is badly distributed, some businessmen are immoral, or corrupt, or both, and so are some labourers in the field who also, where it is available, draw unemployment pay from the state.

Virtue is not exclusively for the poor, or vice for the rich. It is not what we subjectively perceive that represents the total truth, but what is often deep down, and casting first stones is not nowadays wholly constructive - or indeed legal!

Mission today must surely be as much to do with good as campaigning against evil. The world is not the promised land, for otherwise it would be futile to worry about tomorrow, or to work toward it. Sr. Julianne referred to the Founding Fathers of the United States, and she mentioned that some of them (did she really claim ALL) were slave-owners. That founding of democracy had its limitations also. The

preamble to the U.S. Constitution talks of ... "We, the people ..." but they, the people, were then few indeed, and only represented those who had the right to speak in a few states.

Did it undermine seriously the objective, or the motivation?

Of course it was not perfect, nor is it still - witness the migrant farm workers. But the Irish of the last century worked the American coalmines, and now many of them run that country. There were other successful immigrant races, not least the Poles and the Italians - all three groups from safe havens of Catholicism! They mostly built the Democratic Party in the United States; today many born from those same immigrants are among the more reactionary Republicans in the Union.

Sr. Heloisa had a similar reflection on Brazil: why all this injustice in a Christian country? Why indeed! Is there a gospel for the rich, another for the poor or, like in ancient Greece, why is there a felt need to kill the messenger because we do not like the message? If the message is the same, perhaps you the messengers have something to answer for. Perhaps it is a shared responsibility. Maybe I should not be a lone layman here in such a sea of missionary doubts and questioning. Perhaps you have gotten the balance wrong; maybe you are too introverted, or too subjective, or both; maybe "capitalism" has become a whipping post because it seems to be the most convenient object for a confused knee-jerk.

Perhaps the villain/hero scenario does not conveniently accomodate difficult concepts, although they just might be equally important.

Take population growth, for example. Differences in population growth rates since the 1950s (put, admittedly, in crude statistical terms) have helped perpetuate international differences in per capita income. Between 1955 and 1980, GNP (gross national product) grew at around 4 per cent in the low-income countries. This growth in general produced some modest increases in income per person. However, in many of the poorest countries, say, in Bangladesh and sub-Saharan Africa, economic activity slowed considerably in the past decade. Coupled with rapid (and in some cases accelerating) population growth, this economic slowdown resulted in stagnating, or even declining, per capita income.

NOT surprisingly, the absolute gulf between the low-income countries and the rest of the world widened considerably.

I don't know the full - or the best - solution. But does the "Church", or does it want to? I know, for instance, that Kenya (to take but one example) faces a doubling, or even a tripling, of its school-age population by the end of this century....and more school-age children require more spending on education, even if the objective is merely to maintain current enrollment rates and educational standards.

I know, too, that in Latin America as a whole, public spending per primary student fell by over 40 per cent in real terms in the

past ten years. Is it good enough? Can we, can you, can governments of whatever kind, assuming they care (and some of them must), can we turn a blind eye - or a Papal declaration - to this reality of a population explosion?

Can Justice and Peace, Evangelisation and human liberation be fostered on such fast-growing sands? I do not have the answers, as I indicated at the outset...but only the worrying questions.

Will the drive to industrialise the urban areas in the less-developed countries only provide greater slums; will it really make inroads into the ranks of the unemployed? Will it improve the quality of life of those in work, or make more miserable still, that of those many without work? Is industry taking an increasing priority over the development of agriculture and the important associated question of land reform?

Will the absence of a meaningful North/South dialogue be made better or worse - by the current South/South conflict? Is national sovereignty only a limiting factor to political and economic integration in the developed world, or is it just the same in the Third World?

Most airlines crossing the Atlantic from Europe are half empty, yet each "emerging" Nation wants to mark its independence by launching a national carrier and a national flag - and at what cost. What price prestige!

May I say with some degree of condescension: we may not have taught them well, but they have not learned too well either.

I, too, did not learn well my fundamentals in religious education, but I did get them from the Irish Christian Brothers, and they had a real mission - without doubt! It is, or certainly it was, that they had knowledge which they were determined to communicate - preferably (I think) the easy way but, if necessary, with whatever sanctions it took - here I reflect, UNfondly, on the strap! It sank in - I think. I seem to remember some question about why a Final Judgement was needed, and it went something like this " So it would not be seen that the good suffered in life while the wicked prospered.....".

Perhaps it IS wise that the inequalities of this world should be left largely until tomorrow. I do not see the role of the missionary as being an assignment to change today's world. Yes, campaign for change, if that appears reasonable, or possible, but I think most of you must need work within the established order, however unjust you perceive it to be. And I suspect it is not quite as unjust as you think.

Multinationals and international bankers may seem fair game, and some of them are; but should you really try to ease your consciences on obvious targets, or work as best you can in your mission as best

you perceive it.

Otherwise, you may really be seeking an excuse for inaction, or an explanation for your failure to DO in favour of PREACHING. The tools will never be perfect, but that is no cause for blaming them. There ARE major questions of ethics out there, but there are few Absolutes, of either Good or Bad.

There are injustices, just as there are depressing statistics - on declining commodity prices, manipulation, commercial exploitation, corruption, bad government, confused missionaries, rigid church bureaucracies. Need I go on

Is the conglomerate much more than a collection of small shopkeepers? Can the single missionary survive without his or her community? Is the Church too poor, or too rich? Do the odds against, not add up to the challenge?

May I just end with - as I started - a reference to my good friend, Fr. Willie. During a break in your deliberation I had to 'phone my office in London. He was waiting in my room upstairs when I returned. His comment: "Dominick, tell me, how goes the real world?"

It's out there, its real. It may not always be just; it may not seem just at all. It will change - slowly, but it will change. Will - can - YOU?

Your commitment is a marriage to a Challenge; believe me when I tell you, most marriages represent a Challenge; the ideal is always there, or almost always. There is not much wrong with the institution, but sometimes with the people involved. I can tell you for sure, in that state there are few absolutes.

One final - perhaps even an encouraging - thought and maybe it is appropriate, given that we are so close to the city of Rome, and to the Vatican. There is a widely used Polish saying which goes...."If my Auntie had whiskers, she could be my Uncle!"

But is it wise to live always in a conditional framework, always to ask what would be my situation IF.....

JUSTICE ET EVANGÉLISATION. UN APPORT DANS LA PERSPECTIVE
DE LA THÉOLOGIE DE LA LIBÉRATION

J. Van Nieuwenhove, PA

(As a theologian 'he speaks about God' and tries to identify God's action and the power of the gospel in the varied experiences which have been shared. "Fear not", Jesus told his disciples but there are real fears in face of the resistance to justice.

Fr. Van Nieuwenhove identifies some of this resistance and the demands of a spirituality which arises from doing justice - the heart of christian fidelity and mission. He examines the human and Christian dignity of the poor, to whom the kingdom is promised as a priority and who are themselves the bearers of that promise to others.

Liberation theology emphasizes these aspects in defending the rights of the poor in society. He concludes with remarks on the incarnation of the Church in popular milieux, basic communities and the emergence of 'ministries' among the poor - themes developed in his later conference on the theology of liberation. Ed.).

Ma tâche dans ce séminaire consiste à entrer dans la dynamique créatrice de la pédagogie adoptée et à présenter quelques perspectives théologiques susceptibles de faire avancer notre réflexion. Je parlerai donc de Dieu. Plus précisément, je me demande où est Dieu dans les expériences présentées, où émerge l'Evangile dans ces engagements et ces options pour le pauvre? Comment Dieu est-il engagé dans les conflits de ce monde et dans la naissance d'un monde nouveau? Pour répondre à ces questions, je reprendrai quelques convictions théologiques exprimées par nos témoins et je ferai quelques observations. Ce faisant, je voudrais respecter la grande diversité des expériences analysées dans cette session et éviter le danger de généralisations indues.

Notre assemblée a soulevé des perspectives théologiques qui peuvent être articulées autour de quatre thèmes:

1. la pratique de la justice et l'identité chrétienne et missionnaire;
2. la dignité des pauvres;
3. les droits des pauvres dans la société et
4. l'engagement pour la justice et l'émergence d'une Eglise des pauvres.

I. LA PRATIQUE DE LA JUSTICE ET L'IDENTITE CHRETIENNE ET MISSIONNAIRE

On a souligné avec insistance que "l'action pour la justice et la participation à la transformation du monde (sont) une dimension constitutive de la prédication de l'Evangile qui est la mission de l'Eglise pour la rédemption de l'humanité et sa libération de toute situation oppressive" (Synode de 1971).

On ne peut remettre en question cette dimension de l'évangélisation. La pratique de la justice et celle de l'évangélisation ne sont donc pas deux réalités autonomes, extérieures l'une à l'autre dont il s'agirait de faire l'addition. Elles sont deux moments complémentaires d'une unité organique.

On ne peut réduire la pratique de la justice à une "pre-condition et conséquence" de l'évangélisation. Elle en est une dimension constitutive. Non seulement de la crédibilité et de l'authenticité de la mission ad extra; aussi, et en première instance, de l'authenticité du chrétien, de l'identité du témoin et de l'Eglise: élément indispensable de sa correspondance vécue au message de l'amour de Dieu qu'il ou elle désire communiquer et partager.

Ceux qui ont laissé cette vérité pénétrer dans leur spiritualité et leur pratique redécouvrent que la vie chrétienne est une "voie", - comme disent les Actes - et que la mise en pratique de la justice constitue un long processus de conversion, de reconversion des personnes et des institutions. Tout ceci ne va pas sans douleurs, sans lenteurs, sans angoisses, sans résistances.

Au sein de ces expériences, il est bon de se souvenir que le Christ a dit aux apôtres, pris dans la tempête, : "n'ayez pas peur", et qu'il a promis et donné aux disciples, surpris par sa mise à mort, l'Esprit Saint, envoyé pour les conduire à la vérité plénière. La solidarité pratique avec les plus pauvres est une expérience pascalle qui recentre notre foi sur le mystère central du salut chrétien: la mort violente et la résurrection de Jésus Christ.

Cette référence à l'Evangile est essentielle. mais ne suffit pas, car il est difficile d'entrer dans une spiritualité de la justice. Il est donc important d'analyser les résistances qui s'y opposent.

Une première série de résistances semble tenir à une sorte d'aveuglement devant la réalité des pauvres et des victimes d'injustices. Les statistiques concernant la pauvreté massive et structurelle (même en Europe) sont connues, mais cette connaissance notionnelle ne suffit pas. Il y a une différence entre connaître et voir, entre savoir et être concerné. On peut vivre au sein d'un peuple maltraité sans toutefois assumer sa cause.

Selon Mgr. Romero, la solidarité avec des victimes exige une conversion du regard. Celle-ci se réalise dans la pratique. C'est pourquoi la spiritualité demande, pour se constituer et se développer, un discernement spirituel sur et dans des pratiques concrètes.

La découverte de la réalité "à partir des victimes de l'injustice" se réalise dans le même lieu, par une analyse de situations et d'expériences concrètes... Dans la prière nous pouvons assumer toutes les injustices du monde; dans la pratique il faut être plus concret et modeste. Les responsabilités universelles souvent écrasent ou créent une mauvaise conscience; l'action concrète engendre le dynamisme et l'espérance.

La peur des tensions et des conflits est une source majeure de résistance et d'hésitation. C'est sans doute là que le bât blesse le plus. Le conflit n'est pas un bien en soi ni une voie qui mène automatiquement à la communion. Jésus Christ n'a pas cherché ou provoqué le conflit pour l'intérêt de se battre ou pour imposer sa volonté et ses intérêts aux autres. Pourtant, son message et sa pratique ont suscité des conflits et c'est au sein d'un conflit qui le mènera à la croix qu'il a révélé les valeurs du Royaume et manifesté, jusqu'à l'extrême, son amour du Père et sa communion avec ses frères et soeurs.

Le conflit n'est pas nécessairement en contradiction avec la communion ou contraire à l'amour. La spiritualité de la justice suppose un discernement spirituel, une prise de conscience de ce que l'on a compris des béatitudes au sein de conflits assumés pour une juste cause.

Les communautés religieuses devraient favoriser ce genre de réflexion à l'occasion des retraites spirituelles et des discernements communautaires. Certains conflits sont inhérents à la cause du Royaume que l'Eglise est appelée à servir. La question est de savoir lesquels et de découvrir la façon de les vivre pour qu'ils deviennent des écoles de fidélité et de maturité chrétiennes.

L'intégration de la pratique de la justice dans ce qui fait le coeur même de la fidélité chrétienne et la mission suppose souvent un changement profond dans la spiritualité. Des chrétiens engagés nous disent que cette pratique est un lieu où l'on peut découvrir des aspects importants du mystère et de la vie chrétienne. Ils indiquent quelques pistes:

L'exigence de devoir toujours humaniser et donner plus, de devoir toujours recommencer, peut être une découverte de la transcendance du Dieu toujours plus grand. Une expérience dans laquelle l'appauvrissement personnel se situe dans un processus où s'affermir une connaturalité avec la réalité de Dieu tel qu'il apparaît dans l'Ecriture.

La pratique de la justice fait prendre conscience que l'expérience de Dieu ne consiste pas seulement dans une remise de soi "entre ses mains", mais aussi dans l'acceptation de ses exigences. Au sein de cette

pratique, la charité devient plus que le don de ses qualités et de ses talents et se réalise dans le don de sa propre vie. Elle est une école de gratuité, de l'espérance qui libère l'histoire grâce à son ouverture au Dieu qui vient; un lieu où l'on affronte la tentation du scandale du mal, où l'on demeure avec Dieu dans sa passion, où la foi en Dieu demeure une foi et évite d'être simple possession de Dieu.

Cette pratique est le lieu où l'on est confronté avec le choix radical que suppose la foi biblique en Dieu: une option (en conformité avec le Dieu de la vie) pour la vie de ceux qui sont meurtris et (en conformité avec Dieu qui rejette les fausses divinités qui sacrifient des êtres humains), un refus des idoles qui donnent la mort.

II LA DIGNITÉ DES "PAUVRES"

L'objectif du séminaire est de faire une réflexion sur et une analyse de pratiques concrètes. En fait c'est le thème de l'insertion des agents pastoraux dans le monde des pauvres qui a retenu l'attention. Cette insertion a été présentée comme un processus de conversion pratique, psychologique et spirituelle; comme point de départ d'une réflexion théologique. Vaste mouvement qui est à la fois découverte du visage du Serviteur de Yahvé ressuscité dans le visage concret de collectivités marginalisées, victimes d'injustices structurelles, et rapprochement de leur monde, déplacement du lieu où l'on vit la vie religieuse et relit le sens de la Bible et où l'on redéfinit la solidarité avec leurs luttes.

Dans une perspective de justice, ces solidarités doivent être analysées et évaluées à l'aide d'instruments appropriés. La spiritualité et la théologie ne suffisent pas pour mesurer l'écart qui peut exister entre une intention proclamée et une intention réalisée. Même la dénonciation n'est pas un instrument adéquat pour une action qui vise la transformation des situations et des structures.

Ceci dit, l'assemblée a utilisé un discours sur le pauvre dont il est utile de relever les accents. Il a été beaucoup question de la dignité réelle mais méconnue des pauvres.

D'une part les pauvres sont apparus comme des marginalisés, objets de mépris et de manipulation de la part d'un petit nombre, victimes des intérêts et du pouvoir de ces derniers. Ils sont peuple, membres de classes sociales appauvries, dépendantes, exploitées. Un double danger de langage s'est présenté. D'abord celui de souligner cette image négative des pauvres, négligeant de reconnaître leur identité et leur richesse culturelle et humaine. Ensuite celui du langage vague et non analytique qui réduit les pauvres à une masse anonyme et indifférenciée.

L'expérience de certains membres de l'assemblée les a amenés d'autre part, à souligner le potentiel humain et la dignité chrétienne de ceux que nous appelons (avec la Bible) le pauvre. "On pensait que ce peuple était muet et stupide, mais on découvre qu'il possède des trésors de sagesse, de créativité, de résistance patiente et d'astuce. Ce qui lui manque c'est les moyens de s'exprimer". Ce peuple peut devenir un maître, en tout cas un compagnon. Il s'agit de se libérer des préjugés qui voilent cette dimension de leur réalité.

Dignité humaine donc. Mais aussi dignité chrétienne. Certes, la Parole de Dieu libère du mal et n'est superflue pour aucune catégorie de personnes. Au contraire, il faut qu'elle retentisse avec toute sa force transformatrice. Mais nous ne sommes pas les propriétaires de cette parole. Le peuple l'exprime de sa façon, dans son langage et à partir de son expérience. Dans ce sens Puebla a reconnu le "potentiel évangélisateur des pauvres". Les approcher comme "évangélisateurs" et être disposé à se laisser évangéliser par eux, modifie profondément la relation pastorale et les attitudes de solidarité.

Ces remarques sont une invitation à approfondir le regard que Dieu jette sur ceux que nous appelons les pauvres et de scruter leur dignité dans l'histoire du salut et leur rôle dans l'avènement du Royaume.

Une conviction s'impose à la conscience chrétienne: que "le pauvre" n'est pas seulement le premier destinataire de la promesse du Royaume (le préféré de Dieu, selon la parole de Jean Paul II), mais aussi, et en même temps, un porteur du message, bien qu'il ne soit pas automatiquement le meilleur des missionnaires. La conférence de Puebla nous dit avoir découvert cette dignité du peuple pauvre et croyant au sein d'une solidarité pratique vécue dans le monde des pauvres.

III LES DROITS DES PAUVRES DANS LA SOCIÉTÉ

La théologie de la libération est fortement marquée par le droit biblique des pauvres et la dénonciation du péché social.

Selon la Bible le droit du pauvre est le droit de Dieu. Le pauvre n'ayant personne sur qui compter pour défendre ses droits, Dieu assume sa cause (cf Prov. 22, 22-23). Dans un langage plus analytique Medellín a dénoncé comme étant 'péché social' une situation où,

"par la déficience des structures de l'entreprise industrielle et agricole, de l'économie nationale et internationale, de la vie culturelle et politique, des populations entières manquent du nécessaire, vivent dans une dépendance qui enlève toute initiative et responsabilité, toute possibilité de promotion culturelle et toute participation à la vie sociale et politique, violant ainsi les droits fondamentaux".

Ce concept de "péché social" a fait couler beaucoup d'encre. Pour l'appliquer il faut des analyses attentives de situations concrètes, faites à partir non pas des plus forts, mais des victimes des systèmes. Ces analyses sont une base pour une éthique qui prend la défense des droits des pauvres et se centre sur le droit fondamental à la vie:

"Le droit à la vie est en dernière instance le terrain où il faut situer la discussion sur les questions économiques et sociales, sur la lutte pour la libération, la construction d'une société juste et sur le témoignage de l'amour de Dieu dans les pays du Tiers Monde. Il s'agit d'un niveau simple, élémentaire; mais c'est à ce niveau que se joue le sort quotidien du pauvre" (G. Gutiérrez).

IV LA PRATIQUE DE LA JUSTICE ET L'EMERGENCE D'UNE EGLISE DES PAUVRES

Le temps manque pour développer la perspective ecclésiologique dans laquelle se situe le témoignage qui nous est venu du Brésil.

Quelques remarques cependant pour rappeler que l'engagement pour la justice se situe pour plusieurs dans un contexte missionnaire plus vaste: celui de l'incarnation de l'Eglise dans les milieux populaires.

Dans la pastorale des communautés ecclésiales de base, le "faire justice" fait partie d'un "convoquer en église". Au nom de la justice se créent les conditions qui permettront aux couches sociales subalternes de participer à la vie ecclésiale sans devoir perdre leur langage, leur identité culturelle et le sens de la foi qui leur est propre.

La présence de pauvres dans la réflexion biblique et les délibérations pastorales et leur participation aux "ministères" ecclésiaux sont des expressions concrètes d'une justice pratiquée entre frères et soeurs appartenant à la même communauté ecclésiale.

REFLECTION AT THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION, MARCH 22, 1985

Maureen Flood, SSS

The story of the meeting at the well of Samaria (John 4:1-15) presents us with two people;
two people with lots of background:
Jesus and an unnamed Samaritan woman.
Let's look for a while at these two people, in the light of what has been happening among us here in the last few days.

We've been talking quite a lot about tension, the high tension, of many kinds, that exists for missionaries in relation to questions of Justice and Evangelisation. Running through the story of the meeting between Jesus and the woman there is a considerable amount of tension:
tension between Jews and Samaritans;
the very fine tension between Jesus and the woman, in the unfolding of their encounter;
tension between Jesus and the disciples, when they come back and are so shocked;
tension between them and the woman, by whose presence they are so disconcerted;
and the pervading tension between long-standing tradition and something new about to happen.

In my reflection on this Gospel, it seemed to me that Jesus and the woman mysteriously changed roles now and then. Both have something to give, both have something to receive. They seem equally poised. Both were margined:
the woman was something of an outcast;
Jesus was in a position of disadvantage - he was the foreigner in a hostile country; perhaps there was a language difficulty; he was the hot, tired, thirsty one.

Both are symbols of life and both are outside convention:
this much-loved woman (not just by the six men in her life but by all of us who have met her, down through the ages);
this much-loved man - Jesus;
this disconcerting woman;
this disconcerting man.

I wonder if Jesus hesitated a moment before he spoke to her. He was about to walk through and away from long-established, deeply rooted traditions and customs, tightly bound-up with official religion and culture. He moved with great sensitivity

with this woman but he did move. He seems to have decided early in his life that people are far more important than the rule and customs of organised religions. So he spoke to her, asking for something.

And she responded, in amazement,
"You can't do this! It's not allowed!"

Maybe Jesus laughed a little as he said,
"Well if you only knew how much the presence of God is in this situation (of risk) for me, and if you knew who I am, maybe you'd ask me and perhaps I'd be able to give you something too".

If only we knew who is asking
when the poor ask,
maybe we'd ask them
and maybe they could give us a blessing.
If only we knew who is asking:
the stranger, the foreigner, the outsider,
the hungry, homeless, landless, needy ones,
the oppressed.
If we knew
We could ask them and they could give us a blessing.

I learned this through an incident in my own life. I was praying in a small chapel, in a poor, inner-city area of Sydney, when an aboriginal man came in. His name is Harold. He is very poor and slightly mentally handicapped. He sat beside me, looked at my breviary and said, "You got a blessing in that book for me, Sis.?" "Sure, Harold", I said and quickly found a psalm of blessing and read it over him. We sat there quietly and I felt good. I'd blessed Harold and everything was in order, just as it should be. But Harold seemed to be waiting for something, expecting something. I had no idea what it was, not the slightest. Then Harold enlightened me, "Don't you want me to read one for you?", he asked.

I was stunned. It hadn't entered my head. I was unconsciously saying, "Harold, you haven't got a bucket; you haven't got a well full of blessings".

I didn't know him at all.

But he did bless me and it is the most memorable blessing of my life.
The woman did ask - "Give me this water....."
And we know what happened.

In the end she became a missionary. She knew exactly what to do to bring the whole town out to Jesus and she didn't need a disciple to go with her to make sure she did it right. She knew, too, how to leave the people to have their own experience of Jesus - to find out about him for themselves. She is such a fabulous woman! She plays a spectacular role in the history of salvation and then she vanishes so rapidly from the scene.

Yet she is present.

Her secret is carried in the hearts of women and of men down through the ages, till today, till here and now.

And she hasn't finished speaking yet. There is a lot more she wants to say this woman.

She can teach us something about the joy of that living water, springing up to life eternal, and she can teach us about the streams of silent tears behind the cry: "Give us this water".

A MODERATOR'S MEDITATION

Michael Fitzgerald, PA.

Some people have asked me: "What is your impression of this meeting? What view do you get from the "high table"? To my mind this SEDOS Seminar has been more of a celebration than a study, but a celebration in which contradictions have been felt.

We have been speaking much about the poor, and we know that "blessed are the poor". We certainly cannot say that we are poor, but we can recognise that we are blessed. Or at least we are lucky.

Lucky with the weather. We have had no snow, and even some sun.

We have enjoyed pasta, potatoes and rice; sambuca and scotch.

We have sung songs of praise and songs of fun, and heard melodies tinged with celtic sadness.

We have prayed together and played together, and together we have worked and worried.

We have struggled to communicate:

an Indonesian has spoken Dutch
the Dutch have spoken French
the French have expressed themselves in Italian
and the Italians in English
English-speakers have been heard in Spanish
and Spanish-speakers in English!

We have struggled, with joy, perhaps
with enthusiasm, I think so
with commitment, certainly
(the small group meetings were always well attended)
searching for insights, and criteria,
moving, with questions, towards an elusive paradigm.

We have met marvellous women

in the villages of India
in the Brazilian "Malvinas"
at the well of Samaria

We have felt the forces of destruction, but we have also seen the power of the forces of life,

in solidarity with workers as they struggle to have
their dignity respected
in the vitality of young churches, and the fraternity
of the Gospel

in the theology of people for the people, systematised
by the pastors who remain part of the people.

We have met liberated prisoners, but we have discovered that we
are still prisoners ourselves.

Have we talked about justice and evangelisation?

I feel rather that we have been invited to examine community and
called to conversion.

We have celebrated, confessing our weaknesses, but professing our
faith in the Lord of strength.

Our celebration is ended. Let us go bearing peace.

SEDOS SEMINAR - JUSTICE AND EVANGELISATION

MARCH 19-23, 1985

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