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*WE SEND TO ALL OUR READERS OUR SINCERE WISHES THAT YOU  
MAY HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND PEACE THROUGHOUT THE  
COMING YEAR.*

IN THIS ISSUE: This issue of SEDOS Bulletin contains a selection from the addresses given at the one day Seminar on Religions and Peace held on October 21, 1986 and also an important document from the Conference of Religious of India.

Don Giovanni Cereti, the Catholic priest who is the representative in Italy of the World Conference for Religion and Peace gave the keynote address at the SEDOS Seminar. There is a widespread prejudice that religions are more often sources of conflict than of tolerance and peace. Religious wars are all too frequently and simplistically identified as

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such, but it is precisely because there is a lack of comprehension of, or unfaithfulness to, the message of religion that so called "religious wars" are so classified. The onus is on believers to-day more than ever to discover and carry out their responsibility for constructing world peace.

- To the question "Is Islam a religion of peace?" there is actually only one answer, and that is another question: "Which Islam do you mean?"

There were also presentations from Rabbi Abramo Piattelli of the Jewish community, Chandra Caffaro a Hindu, Bosa Siliana a Buddhist nun, all of whom are from Italy, and from Sita Radhakrishnan a Hindu from India. The Seminar was attended by approximately 80 participants.

We recommend you to read the statement from the 1986 Conference of the Religious of India on the emergence of the theology of liberation there. This is not the first time that religious in India addressed the need for solidarity with the poor in their formation programmes and in their lives as religious. It is now practised also by the Conference of Bishops who have introduced an "immersion" or "insertion" experience with the poor on the occasion of their Assemblies. What was once seen as a voluntary alternative is more and more regarded as a necessary part of the preparation for and living of religious life in India - and elsewhere.

SEDOS Annual Assembly 1986 took place on Tuesday 9th December, at the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The morning Seminar session was attended by 84 participants. It was announced that two new Societies - The Congregation of the Holy Cross and the Little Company of Mary have applied for membership of SEDOS. SEDOS Bulletin of January 15, 1987 will contain a Report of the Meeting.

Justice and Peace/Solidarity with the Poor in the Initial Formation of Franciscans with their Local Churches was the theme of a two-day session organised by the Franciscans (OFM) for their Justice and Peace Co-ordinators and a group of invited representatives from other Societies. SEDOS Staff conducted a Workshop on this theme on the second day of the session which was held at the Franciscan Generalate on December 3, 1986.

SEDOS SECRETARIAT will be closed from December 22, 1986 to January 2, 1987.

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RELIGIONS AND PEACE

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Giovanni Cereti

*(Don Giovanni CERETI est le représentant italien de la Conférence Mondiale pour la Religion et la Paix (World Conference for Religion and Peace). Il est aussi le Fondateur du groupe "Anawin", dont le siège est à Rome et où il réside.)*

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Last week I was at Rovereto, an Italian frontier town close to the linguistic frontier between Italian and German speakers where the front ran during the first world war. There, I was making preparations for the next European assembly of the Conference of Religions for Peace to be held in that town. Rovereto has custody of an ossuary containing the bodies of 20,000 soldiers, and the Bell for the Fallen has sounded every evening there for 60 years in remembrance of those fallen in every war.

Rovereto, however, also has the biggest war history museum in Italy. Visiting this museum, which contains weapons used by man from the stone age to the first decades of this century, I thought of the epic advance made in this century by the destructive potential of weapons: although so deadly, the weapons used in the first world war appear closer to those of the stone age than to those possessed nowadays, with their immense capacity to exterminate, and to put in the balance the possibility of man's survival on our planet.

If the destructive capability of weapons has taken an epic turn, a similar turn has been taken by humanity regarding the approach to the problem of peace. Humanity has known war since the beginning of its history. It must now take charge of its own existence on earth. After being able to overcome slavery, torture, the death penalty, it must also finally definitively overcome war.

Peace, however, will only be the fruit of a profound conversion of hearts. The creation of a public opinion which will no longer permit violent solutions and threats of war must become strong enough to force the governments of the world to choose peace. It is to achieve this objective that organizations for peace are working throughout the world beginning with the most important of all, the organization of the United Nations. It was created to "save future generations from the scourge of war" and that people might "live in peace with each other as good neighbours". Its members were thus pledged to "resolve international controversies by pacific means". Movements of every kind exist now, attempting to achieve peace by means of pedagogic action, scientific research, or concrete pledges of non violence.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF BELIEVERS TO ACHIEVING A PEACEFUL WORLD

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In this year, which the United Nations has proclaimed the international year of peace, even believers have discovered as

never in the past their responsibility towards constructing world peace. This is even more important since there is a widespread prejudice according to which religions are more often sources of conflict than of tolerance and peace. The history of the wars of religion, the struggles which have opposed the Christian world to that of the Moslem, and many events in our times, seem to justify this prejudice. The monotheistic religions, which are based on a "revelation", with their exclusiveness and doctrinal intransigence, are considered especially intolerant. If the religious factor may be only a screen to hide other conflicts (political, economic, social, ethnic) as is often the case, we must still recognize that it adds a sacred character and absoluteness to conflict, rousing passion and justifying even the worst excesses. A minimal grasp of the message of religion, will indicate that teaching of fraternity, good will, justice, and love for one's neighbours are part of the patrimony of all religious traditions. If there has been intolerance and conflict, it is because of a lack of comprehension or faithfulness to the religion's message, and not as a necessary consequence of it. Religious communities and their leaders and responsible officials can have an immense influence on the vast human masses.

The common patrimony of all religions can be brought to fruition only if they cease fighting each other, learn greater respect for each other, know and listen to each other. They must march together for the benefit of humanity. This applies also to Christians. After the Council, the Catholic church made a considerable change in its approach to other religions, learning to see them in a more positive light, forming a new theology of religions seeing in them the fruit of the Spirit's action, a manifestation of the Word ("Semina Verbi").

And so Pope, John Paul II, has convened in Assisi, at the end of October, an encounter of prayer for peace, open not only to all Christians but also to believers from all religions. Not to pray together, it has been said, but to be together to pray for peace which is above all a gift of God. Prayer for the gift of peace must take a prior place in the creation of a peaceful world but it is not, however, the only contribution that believers from all religions can make. Within the great mass of human beings who deeply live their religious creed, there are in fact treasures of spiritual energy: penance, humble recognition of faults, conversion of the heart to love, education and common work for peace and many others. What is necessary is the action of someone who knows how to orient these typical ways of religion to the search for peace.

#### THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Is it possible to have an instrument, made up possibly of believers from all religious traditions, from many countries, free from political and governmental manipulation, so as to be able to undertake concerted action contemporaneously within all the blocks existing today? In fact an instrument of this kind already exists - the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). This organization was created to draw ideas and spiritual energy from the very rich spiritual and human patrimony of religious people and to put these at the service of peace and the well-being of humanity. At Nairobi in August 1984 it defined itself as "a voluntary associ-

-ation whose scope is to promote peace in the world and which consists of people who are religiously involved. The principal elements are: all religions, in all regions of the world, on all aspects for peace". Its specific center of focus is: a fraternity of religious people, oriented towards action and work for peace through the application of spiritual motivations". (1)

A little history: The World Conference of Religions for Peace was born and developed first of all in Asia, the great continent where more than half of mankind lives, and where Christianity is confronted by the challenge of other religions. In its origins it involved Indians, heirs of Gandhi's teachings, Japanese, who had known in their own flesh the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Americans, who were questioning the responsibility for that tragedy. The Catholic Archbishop of New Delhi, Msgr. Angelo Fernandes, was named president of the preparatory committee, and then president of WCRP up to August 1984. He is now president emeritus. Pastor Homer A. Jack, was secretary until the end of 1983. The three first big world conferences took place at Kyoto in 1970, Louvain in 1974, and at Princeton in 1979.

The fourth World Conference took place in Nairobi from 23 to 31 August 1984, with the participation of about 600 people, coming from some sixty countries and from practically all religions recognized as such today. Listing them in numerical order of participation they were: Christian, Buddhist, Moslem, Hindu, Shinto, Judaism, Sikh, Jain, Confucian, Zoroastrian, and members of the traditional religions of Africa and America. Among the impressions I received from taking part in the Nairobi meeting, I recall the following:

The African context: disarmament for development: There is a scandal in squandering on armaments the immense resources which could be used instead to confront and resolve dramatic problems of unequal and insufficient development. This was brought home to me by visits to shanty towns before the Conference began. The experience helped me to see the problems of peace, justice and development not from an abstract perspective but from the dramatic situation of poverty and underdevelopment which characterises not only the cities of Africa but so many parts of the present world.

Ecumenism in being: I had the happy surprise to see how Christians, were capable of making common testimony in worship, in discussions, in daily life. It was not easy to know if a Christian participant was a Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox. Nor was this a question of white peoples' solidarity before people of other continents as I have experienced on other occasions, because the Christians truly came from every part of the world. The motives for division among Christians appear to be really secondary and easy to overcome when the problems of the world are faced together with other religions.

Religions and their reciprocal influence. The third impression was that of the enormous influence that religions mutually exercise over each other. Above all the evangelical message of love for others has deeply influenced religions. Is this perhaps due to the political and cultural leadership exerted for so long by Christian countries?

More generally, one might say that the great monotheistic religions have exercised an influence on the other religions. In their turn Christians have undoubtedly been stimulated, enriched and purified by encounter with other religions (for example, with regard to meditation). Dialogue, confrontation, emulation, reciprocal enrichment between religions constitutes a stupendous adventure whose possibilities and future developments we are only beginning to glimpse.

The same applies to prayer together which more and more believers from various religions consider possible. An authentic inner conversion to the One and to the invisible reality of the Divine has grown from the encounter between all believers, going beyond the barriers that divide them, not only at the "heart" level but also at the perceptive and intellectual level.

#### DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Much more interesting has been the discovery of the variety of possible approaches to the problem of peace and justice, which are given different values within the various religious traditions. Yielding a little to schematics I could reduce them to four.

The first way appeals to inner conversion (world peace through personal peace, reached above all through meditation). This is the way preferred by Buddhists and Hindus. "We cannot speak of world peace, if we are not first at peace in ourselves. In an atmosphere of hate, anger, competition and violence, no enduring peace can be reached. Negative and destructive forces may be fought with compassion, love and altruism, - the principal teachings of Buddha ... Buddhism says that it is necessary to develop true peace, because only in this way can the peril of war be averted and world peace reached. If men thought more often of being part of the same family and that all humanity is one, many conflicts would cease". (2)

A second road recalls the need for reform and renewal in our own religious communities which, with their integralism and fundamentalism, are often the cause of conflicts and wars. This was emphasized in Nairobi above all by Jews and Christians, Europeans and North Americans who were worried by the spread of integralist and fanatical attitudes in all religious communities.

The third approach is indicated by the theology of liberation, - represented in Nairobi not only by those coming from Latin America but from Africa and especially from South Africa, - who saw liberation and conscientious awareness of people and nations as a way to peace. They pledge themselves to fight, if possible by non-violent means, for respect for human rights and the realization of justice amongst people and nations.

Finally, there is an orientation insisting on action at the level of governments and international organizations. This seems to be preferred by Moslems because of the close relationships which exist in their countries between the religious and political factor and between religious and civil law.

Such a variety of approaches helps to understand how the building of peace and growth towards full respect for the dignity of man can be pursued along different ways which are complementary

rather than contradictory.

#### THE ROLE OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

"Peace is more than the absence of war", it is filled with "shalom", well being, harmony, solidarity, justice; it is the fruit of "a dynamic process involving all aspects of individual and social life"; it may be founded on security that comes more from mutual faith rather than from force and "tends to create the conditions that permit everyone, in every country, to develop their full humanity and to live a meaningful life"(3) (Statement from Nairobi).

All religions, in fact, in their reference to the one or Absolute God, believe that human beings must recognize each other as sisters and brothers and must learn to welcome, love and mutually serve each other to live; must teach good will and mercy to their neighbours, rejectig hate, violence or war as contrary to Divine Law. All recognize the presence of a divine seed hidden within all persons who must, therefore, be welcomed with respect and with love, and helped to develop fully their own potential. In the end, all religions teach one to live in the hope of a better future which must be fulfilled, at least partly, during our time here on earth. This partial fulfilment is the beginning of that total perfection in human life and human society towards which each one strains, almost as though for inner illumination.

Religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, are often considered to be religions that led to evasion from the present life which is looked on as one of outward appearance and suffering. They too, have produced movements for reform that have lead to a pledge to change the world and liberate mankind.

Something analagous may be said for Islam. Opposed to customs that maintain a restricted and fundamantalist approach, giving more importance to strict observance of the letter of the sacred books and closed to any change, there are orientations towards a more dynamic conception of Islam. The religion itself may become a factor for change; an obligation to promote peace and justice becomes obedience to the will of God, while holy war is reinterpreted as an obligation to fight against evil in all its forms.

Finally, Judaism and Christianity both of which recognise the development of a history of salvation and see mankind in its corporal dimension, are committed to liberation from every slavery, and to changing the world by implementing policies of justice and peace. It should not be forgotten that the universal message is already present in the Jewish Scriptures, and that Christianity's fundamental teachings are of love towards enemies and of nonviolence (cf. Mt 5, 38-48; Lk 22, 35-38, 47-52).

WCRP's characteristic is precisely to treasure these religious teachings and these enormous reserves of spiritual and human energies present in religious men, putting them at the service of peace and justice.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE CONFERENCE

The field of work which opens before the WCRP is immense, from the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons ("the new abolitionist campaign of our century") to the struggle against apartheid; from

the pact made by believers of all religions to live in peace and community to the opening of interreligious places of prayer for peace, or to an initiative like that of the week of prayer for peace, held every year around 24 October, the United Nations' Day for peace and disarmament.

Leaving everything. Preaching one day of the episode of the rich young man, in the Roman parish where I celebrate the Eucharist, I asked my listeners to seek together what Jesus would have said to us today. What does "leaving everything to follow Jesus" signify, to this new community of brothers and sisters? Perhaps selling everything, leaving everything, may today signify leaving our security, our military defenses, our confidence in the weapons of war, to go unarmed and defenseless behind Christ, together with all our sisters and brothers who want to do that in every country of the world. Perhaps then we shall have the promise confirmed for us, once made to Peter: "Very well, you who have left the security of a homeland armed to the teeth against other countries, you will find a hundred times as much again, - every country will be your homeland, and everyone will be your sister and brother!"

The WCRP appears as a fragile David before a gigantic Goliath, the powerful military and industrial organizations in each country. Their hundreds of thousands of dependents and their enormous profits are used to pressurise and blackmail governments. Nor have they difficulty, thanks to the means they possess, in discrediting organizations opposed to their designs. But it is no longer possible to remain passive before the threat that oppresses humanity today. War is not inevitable. It can be opposed and avoided. Every endeavour must be made to avert such a menace. All who believe in God must feel a special responsibility. It is not possible to love God if you do not love your brothers and sisters.

And it is not possible to think of loving them if one is not capable of making every effort to ensure them a better future in which peace is safeguarded, justice is achieved, and the rights of all are protected, - above all the fundamental right to survival and a life no longer harried by the nuclear threat.

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- (1) Statement "Oltre Nairobi", in Il Regno documents, 19/84, 642.
  - (2) P. Pisarra, La pace comincia dentro di noi (interview with the Dalai Lama), in Jesus, October 1986, pp. 23-24.
  - (3) Statement "Oltre Nairobi", in Il Regno documents, 19/84, 642.



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RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

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Principe Aboldhassen Amini

*(Nous sommes reconnaissants au Prince aboldhassen Amini, Secrétaire Gén. de la communauté musulmane de Rome, d'avoir bien voulu participer à notre séminaire et d'avoir témoigné du désir des musulmans en faveur de la paix et de la réconciliation.)*

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In the Islamic world live millions of Christians who for hundreds of years have enjoyed religious freedom and all basic human rights. Accordingly most of the European countries recognize Islam and the Muslims living there and recognise their right to build mosques and Islamic centres and practice their religion, educate their children and unite themselves.

The recommendations of the Second Vatican Council played a major role in enhancing tolerance between Muslims and Christians and respect for the Islamic creed, forgetting the past and striving sincerely for mutual understanding. Fourteen hundred years ago, Islam applied and preserved human rights and freedom of belief which is one of those rights. Allah the Most High said:

- "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error". (Quran 2.256).

The Quran explains clearly that man is free to choose to believe or disbelieve. Allah says:

- "If it had been your Lord's will they would all have believed - all who are on earth - would you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!" (Quran 10. - 99).
- "Say the truth is from your Lord, let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject it". (Quran 18, - 29).

The Quran also emphasizes that the duty of the Prophet is to convey the message of Allah and not to impose it upon man. "To those who received the Book and to the ignorant say 'Will you surrender yourselves to Allah? If they become Muslims, they shall be guided: if they give no heed, then your only duty is to convey the message. Allah is watching over all His servants". (Quran III-20).

The call to Islam is based upon freedom and conviction. It guides the people to righteousness with kindness and through logical discussion without compulsion or forceful means.

Islam recognizes all the previous heavenly messages and all prophets who were sent by Allah to convey His message. This fundamental principle in Islam helps to enhance understanding respect and the approach between Muslims and others. Furthermore there are enough common points and similarities between monotheistic religions to promote this approach to religion.

The relation between Muslims and others necessitates mutual assistance, co-operation, righteousness and justice. Allah the Most High said: "O mankind, we created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you despise each other); verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things". (Quran XLIX - 13).

The Quran praises Christians on more than one occasion. Allah says: - "We sent after prophets, Jesus, the son of Mary and bestowed on him the gospel and we ordained in the heart of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy". (Quran LVII - 27).

The Quran also praises their humility and affection. Allah says:

- "And nearest among them in love to the believers will you find those who say 'We are Christians' that is because there are priests and monks among them; and because they are free from pride". (Quran V - 85).

Allah says: "And do not argue with the people of the Book except in the best way, save with such of them as do wrong; and say "we believe in that which is revealed to us and which was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one, to Him we surrender ourselves". (Quran XXIX - 46).

Islam does not only grant religious freedom to non-Muslims, but also protects their churches. History records that when Muslims conquered Jerusalem, the patriarch asked Omar Bin Al Khattab, the Caliph, to pray in the church of Al-Qyama. The Caliph refused so as not to give Muslims an excuse to take over the Church and change it into a Mosque, eventually preserving sovereignty for Christians over the church.

And finally Islam forbids all kinds of discord or disputes among believers.

"If you fall in mutual dispute with regard to anything, then refer it back to Allah and the Messenger of Allah, if you have faith". The Holy Prophet told:

"Do not revert back to disbelief, cutting the throats of one another. When two Muslims fight with each other, with their swords, the killer and killed are both in fire of hell".

Hazrat Ali in Nahjolballagha 5th sermon says:

"O people steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of diversion and put off the crowns of pride".

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 THE PEACE OF ISLAM
 

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Armand Garon, WF

*(Le Père Armand GARON, Père Blanc, est professeur à l'Institut Pontifical des Etudes Arabes et Islamiques de Rome. Sa contribution sur le concept de la paix dans le Coran et parmi les musulmans d'aujourd'hui a été très appréciée. Dans sa brève conférence il explique les nuances dans la façon de comprendre la "Jihad" et le "Salam" parmi les musulmans d'aujourd'hui.)*

This title, "The Peace of Islam", has been used quite deliberately. I could have said, "Peace and the Muslim World", but, obviously, that phrase would have conveyed a different meaning, a meaning not devoid of political overtones. When I say "The Peace of Islam", I mean peace as belonging within the framework of a particular religious system: in other words, peace according to the Muslim faith. But before proceeding any further, it is as well to mention that Islam, according to a classical saying in Arabic, is din wa daula, that is, Islam is religion and state together. Keeping this at the back of our minds let us now try to understand the meaning of peace in Islam, all the while keeping as close as possible to a purely religious point of view.

Salâm: Let us examine the Arabic word salâm which is usually rendered by peace in English. We note its similarity to the Hebrew word Shalom. In fact, both words go back to the same semitic root and are closely connected in meaning. The semantic content of shalom extends far beyond the mere absence of war. It is a very positive word and it conveys all the benefits that peace is thought to bring with it: order in society, friendly relations with other nations, understanding between the peoples of various clans and tribes and, from the point of view of national welfare, - general prosperity, including plenty of water and rain, fertility of the soil, food for everybody, etc. More important still for a correct understanding of the word, this shalom is a blessing from God.

Salvation : When one comes to the word salâm in Arabic, its fullest meaning is probably best conveyed in English by the idea of salvation. It is in this way the Encyclopédie de l'Islam explains it: "Nom verbal de salima, être sauf, intact, puis comme substantif au sens de salut, salutation" (1) Actually, in that encyclopaedia, the word salâm is never translated as peace, nor does the encyclopaedia use the word peace in connection with salâm. For instance, it translates the expression dâr as-salâm by 'the paths of salvation' (2). That a word meaning salvation can be used as a form of greeting, for instance as-salâm aleykum, is well exemplified in the Latin 'Salve' or the French 'salut!' This does not mean that the idea of peace is absent from the salâm, as salvation from the plague of war, includes peace as one of its greatest blessings. In this case again, salâm as peace, is one of God's most precious gifts, so much so that in the Muslim faith it has become one of Allah's beautiful names (3).

Religious Content: From these short remarks, we may conclude that the root s-l-m, both in Arabic and Hebrew, and,

we may suppose, in all Semitic languages, has a religious content. This comes from the sacral character of those early cultures. In other words, the welfare implied by such words as salâm and shalom is understood primarily as a blessing that comes from God. This appears in Arabic even more clearly since, in the older passages of the Koran salâm is the eschatological blessing par excellence. Those, for instance, that will enter Paradise shall hear the one word salâm: "They shall hear not therein any frivolity, nor any taint of sin save 'Peace, peace' talked of" (4).

In an article written for the bulletin Se Comprendre, Father Cuperly states: "This word may be rendered by peace, security, preservation, salvation, exemption, rest (5). And the author, although he seems to prefer the rendering 'peace', is often obliged to couple it with 'salvation' in order to convey the full religious meaning of the word salâm as used by the Koran. Muslims themselves would seem to bear this out when, to Christians greeting them, they reply with a quotation from the Koran: "The 'salâm' be (is) upon those who follow the right way" (20,47), as indeed was said to me in the Sudan some time ago when I used this greeting. The Muslim peace not only comes from God, it is a blessing which, properly understood, belongs only to those who believe, that is, to the true believers (6).

House of Peace and House of War: In those cultures which have accepted the divorce between the sacred and the worldly, the word peace naturally suggests the absence of war. It is true that our own word peace can be given a religious meaning, and we so use it in our Christian liturgies. But the two areas of meaning to which the word peace may belong, the secular and the spiritual, are not in the western mind necessarily connected together. But to the Muslim way of thinking, it would seem difficult to conceive of a salâm without some religious connotation. In fact, the very opposite of peace, which is war, rendered in Arabic by harb, is replete with religious implications. In Muslim parlance, the world is divided into two camps: the House of Peace and the House of War, the first expression referring to the Muslim and the latter to non-believers.

Consider for instance the religious tone of the following passage from the Koran: "Then when the sacred months have slipped away, slay the polytheists wherever ye find them, seize them, beset them, lie in ambush for them everywhere; if they repent and establish the prayer and pay the zakat, then set them free; Allah is forgiving" (9,5) (7). This call to war is not simply directed against enemies and foes, but against polytheists, that is against pagans. This passage makes it quite clear that war may have a sacral dimension, although it would be wrong to give this verse of the Koran applications that would force it out of its historical context.

Jihād: Our own patterns of thinking do not make it easy for westerners to understand the attitude of Islam towards war and consequently towards peace. It is more facile to lump all Muslims together and think of them as easily resorting to violence, a feeling enhanced by the fact that some terrorists claim to act in the name of Allah. On the other hand, the word Jihād is usually translated by 'holy war', although this interpretation must be qualified and explained. The Jihād is something sacred in the sense that it is a duty rendered to God - a meaning which can only obtain within the framework of a

sacral society, such as Islam professes itself to be when it calls itself religion and state, ḍīn wa dawla. However, the word 'war' does not translate jihād adequately. It should be understood as a strenuous effort towards a holy goal for the sake of God, or, as the Arabic has it, in the way of God (8). This effort may include war and it is quite probable that it does convey that idea to the ordinary Muslim, especially nowadays in the context of the merciless conflicts taking place in a number of Muslim countries. Some commentators have felt the need to spiritualise the jihād and they appeal to a saying of Muhammad in order to draw a distinction between a small jihād and the greater jihād, the latter being the fight against one's own evil inclinations (9).

In an article entitled Islam and Violence Professor Abdelmajid Charfi (10), in order to relativise certain passages of the Koran, contends that in the teachings of the Holy Book a distinction must be drawn between eternal truths that are of divine origin and other considerations arising from historical situations that are only of limited application. It is indeed true that Islam had to fight against pagans in order to ensure its survival as a religious group and this fighting was soon seen as a struggle for the propagation of the true faith, a duty to be carried out for the sake of Allah.

Military Conflicts in Sacral Societies: It is relevant here to remember that this way of looking at military conflicts is common in sacral societies. The wars that opposed Protestants and Catholics at the time of the Reformation were fought in the name of religious truth. During the French revolution, when Vendée rose against the central government, people went to the combat singing hymns and canticles. The temptation is always great to drag religion into what are basically political confrontations. Considering that official Islam is still, according to the classical phrase, religion and state together, the danger in its case is even greater. When I was in Cairo in 1980, I saw a film about the 1973 October war in which Egyptian soldiers were shown rushing to the Israeli defence line with shouts of Allahu akbar (Allah is the greatest). Against this background, one should not be too surprised when one finds the Pakistani jurist, Muhammad Hamidullah, writing in his 1968 edition of "Muslim Conduct of State" (11) "Islamic polity being based on a community of co-religionists, it is unthinkable to contract a treaty of perpetual alliance with non-Muslims". Or again, "Muslim jurists conclude that treaties of friendship should not be concluded with non-Muslims for perpetuity" (12).

A Religion of Peace? Should we then retain as a lasting impression the notion that for Islam all nations that are not Muslim should be considered potential or latent enemies to be fought against whenever there arises a chance of victory? This would not do justice to the facts of history nor be fair to all the trends of Muslim theory. To the direct question, "Is Islam a religion of peace?", all Muslims will obviously answer in the affirmative. But where they will differ is how this peace should be brought about. For traditional jurists such as Mawardi (972-1058) and Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), Muslim peace depends primarily on the faithful application of Koranic law. A modern writer such as Abū al-A'la al-Mawdudi belongs to that school of thought, as also do the Muslim Brothers and the Wahhabite Movement which originated, and is still dominant, in Saudi Arabia (13).

At the extreme opposite, one finds those Muslim thinkers and mystics who would interpret the Koran in a spiritual sense: under what is explicitly stated they would try to uncover the hidden meaning of the sacred revelation. In this view, what is advocated is the example of the Prophet and a behaviour which takes as its guidelines the virtues of God as they are expressed in the beautiful names of Allah: God is peace, truth, justice, equity, righteousness, benevolence, mercy, compassion, etc. There are masters of spiritual and mystical life in Muslim literature who can be taken as guides in this field, the Soufi writers for instance. One can also mention the numerous Muslim brotherhoods or confraternities which aim at developing a life of union with God through various forms of meditation.

A Middle Way: Between a narrow literal interpretation of the Koran and a merely spiritual one, a growing number of Muslim thinkers would propose a middle way in which the Koranic teaching on justice and peace could be summarized in a few major principles applied to the new realities experienced by modern Islam in the field of social relations, economics and politics. A number of well-known writers come to mind, such as Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Arkoun, Hasan Hanafi, etc. There is, however, little uniformity to be found in the practical applications of such middle-of-the-road ideologies. The governments of countries like Turkey, Syria, Lybia, Morocco, could all with some justification claim to base their political plans for a society on this kind of interpretation of the Koranic revelation (14).

Peace in Islam: What of peace then in Islam and what kind of peace does Islam have in store for all those who do not belong to the "House of Peace"? Islam is a missionary religion which has set itself a definite goal: that of bringing the world to submission to Allah. Will all the groups described earlier on accept to do so only through peaceful means? To this day the fights of Muslim people have easily assumed the character of holy wars. Situations such as the Russian occupation of Afghanistan and the unsolved question of the Palestinian people have underlined the militant nature of Islam as a religion. One can only hope that Muslim thinkers and leaders, in full awareness of the apocalyptic consequences of war between the superpowers, will finally strive after a peace which will not discriminate between Muslims and non-Muslims. The greeting 'Peace be upon you' would then become a universal salutation and not only a Muslim exclusivity.

To the question "Is Islam a religion of peace?" there is actually only one answer, and this is another question: "Which Islam do you mean?"

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#### NOTES:

- (1) Encyclonédie de l'Islam, Tome IV, 1934, pp. 92-95, article by C. van Arendonk.
- (2) Compare the article on salām by the same Van Arendonk in the Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, Brill, Leiden, 1974, pp. 489-491, where the author translates salām by peace, health, salutation, greeting.

- (3) Compare in the Bible; Micah 5,4: "He himself will be peace".
- (4) Koran 56, 26. Translation of Mri Ahmed Ali, Karachi, 1964.
- (5) Se Comprendre No 86/06, 21 juillet 1986, "LA PAIX - al-salām", 7 pp.
- (6) Muslim commentators have debated whether Christians and Jews should be greeted with the salām. See Etudes Arabes, No.69, 1985-2, DISAI, article "Al-Salamu 'Al-Salāmu 'alaykum", pp.19-37.
- (7) Koran, translation Mri Ahmed Ali. Zakāt means alms-tax.
- (8) According to the Koranic Vocabulary (in Arabic) of Muhammad Fou'ād 'Abd al-Baqī, the word jihād is found 4 times in the Koran, but the corresponding verb and its derivatives recur 31 times.
- (9) See Pierre Crépon, Les religions et ... la guerre, Editions Ramsay, Paris, 1982, pp. 131 ff.
- (10) Abdelmajid Charfi, "L'Islam et la violence" in Se comprendre, no 129, 28 avril 1975, p.2. This article (13 pages) reproduces an address given at the Colloque islamo-chrétien held at Tunis in 1974. When Professor Charfi states (p.10) that "tous les révolutionnaires refusent formellement la violence gratuite, anarchique et aveugle", one can only wonder how to reconcile this idealized description with the facts.
- (11) Muhammad Hamidullah, Muslim Conduct of State, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1968 (5th edition, revised and enlarged), art. 565, p.268
- (12) Ibid., art. 568, p. 269.
- (13) These and the following observations are a summary of Prof. Maurice Borrmans' analysis in Se comprendre, no 78-8, 5 oct. 1978, "Justice et paix dans le monde à la lumière de la foi musulmane," 11 pp.
- (14) For more on this, cf. Professor Borrmans, loc. cit., pp. 5-7.

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 BUDDHIST PACIFISM
 

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Vincenzo Piga

*(Vincent PIGA est Président de Maitraya, l'Institut de Culture Bouddhiste à Rome. Il est aussi responsable de la revue "Paramita", une revue trimestrielle publiée par la Fondation Maitraya, de Rome, où il réside. Dans cette courte présentation Monsieur PIGA traite de la façon de comprendre bouddhiste du pacifisme, qui commence à être d'abord en paix avec soi-même.)*

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I begin this talk by reading some verses from the Dhammapada, one of the better known works from the Buddhist canon, translated by an Indian Dominican father, Anthony Elenjittam:

*"One can beat thousands of men thousands of times in battle, but the one who conquers himself has achieved a much greater glory."*

*"Hate is never beaten by hate, only love kills hate: this is the eternal law."*

*"Victory generates hate, because the one who is beaten is bitterly struck by suffering; but the peaceful man lives happily, avoiding both victory and defeat."*

*"Man conquers hate with love, beats bad with good, annuls avarice with liberality and answers lies with the truth."*

1 - The foundation of Buddhist pacifism is above all in the theory of anatta and of karma and in the ideal of the Bodhisattva. Anatta (literally: non-I) is the proof that "I" does not exist as individual essence, like a soul, permanent, unchangeable, inherent and independent. The "I" of our daily experience is only the temporary combination of various somatic and mental components, in continuous transformation, making it every moment different from what it was and what it will be. It is, for example, like the water of the Tiber which is always different, only we have the habit of considering it a permanent river.

The experience of anatta - to be realized rationally but above all intuitively in meditative states - destroys the bases of egoism. In this connexion, a great living master of Buddhism, the Sinhalese monk Walpola Rahula, founder of the Colombo "Buddhist and Pali University", writes: "According to the teaching of Buddha, the idea of oneself is a false and imaginary belief, which does not correspond to reality and is the cause of dangerous thoughts of "me" and "mine", of egoistic and greedy desires, of attachment, hate, spitefulness, vanity, pride, egoism, and other contaminations such as impurity and problems. It is the source of all our worries in the world, from personal conflicts up to wars between nations."

The theory of anatta has no comparison (to my knowledge) in other religious traditions and can consider itself the authentic originality of Buddhism, much more rightly than the so-called "Buddhist atheism", supported by those who confound Buddhist apophatism in comparing the Absolute with the negation of the Absolute itself.

2. The theory of karma instead is common to Buddhism and to Hinduism. Karma is a Sanscrit word which



means "action", but in the Buddhist and Hindu context it is only used for voluntary actions, which leave impressions on our psycho-physical structure (above all in the unconscious, Freud would say); from these impressions, tendencies and habits are derived until the personal character is built at the psychic level and the physiognomy at the somatic level and so the karma, that is, our present action, conditions our future. For good or bad, in joy or sorrow we are, in the present time, the result of our past actions and in the future we shall be the result of our present actions.

We alone are the single cause of our physical, psychic, social, economic, intimate, etc., conditions; it is ignorance to attribute their merit or blame to outside interference, human or super-human. In this way every justification for dividing other into friends or enemies collapses. Every extenuating factor must be eliminated and Buddhism invites one to define interpersonal relationships based on the four Brahmavihara, four "divine dwellings" in which our mind can take refuge, and which are:

- good will (to desire the well being of others),
- compassion (to suffer for the sorrow of others),
- altruistic joy (to be happy for the successes of others),
- equanimity (to foster these three sentiments for all others, without discrimination).

These mental states must regulate not only interpersonal relationships, but also international ones, because, as the Dalai Lama says, "we have come to such a point of interdependence and strict contact with each other, that without the development of a sense of universal responsibility our mere survival would be problematic. A nation's problems can no longer be resolved only within it, because they depend on the attitude and cooperation of other nations."

3. The Bodhisattva (to be sentient, whose essence is Illumination) is the one who has followed to the end the difficult path that leads to Liberation, renouncing the ineffable personal happiness of Nirvan to stay in Samsar, in the world of suffering, so as to indicate to other beings the way that leads to Liberation.

This choice comes from the conviction that there cannot be true happiness for individuals if there is no happiness for all. We are all manifestations of the one reality, shunyata, that is, emptiness, the absence of inherent existence, the ultimate non-existence of phenomenal appearance and this "emptiness" is common to all beings, from the most powerful men to the most insignificant insects. The Bodhisattva is also inspired by ethical impulses, but above all by the intuition that its somatic and mental entity is inseparable from that of every other sentient being. Here it is then that to damage others is to damage ourselves, to help others is to help ourselves. And the others are not only our neighbour, but the whole of humanity and, beyond humanity, every other sentient being.

4. Dare Peace: Months ago a Franciscan-inspired pacifist movement adopted a particularly effective slogan: To Dare Peace. I would propose using this slogan again and taking the consequences. I mean by this that we must have the courage to single out and point out offenses to peace which even come from within religious movements, where, in spite of lofty proclamations of principles like those I have recalled for Buddhism, a residue of archaic positions remains from times in

which "religious wars" were habitual. We must have the courage to see peace being enacted even in the religious traditions represented here. Let us remember the horrible struggles between Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka in our days, Hindu and Sikh in India, Christians and Jews and Moslems in the Middle East, Moslems and Christians or animists in Africa, Catholics and Protestants in Ireland.

"Dare peace" means binding ourselves consistently, within our own religious tradition also, to oppose the culture of violence, which returns in integralism in the East and fundamentalism in the West. "Dare peace" means being at the head of pacifist and anti-military movements, because the presence of religious and spiritual inspiration in these movements may safeguard their authenticity and idealism from every risk of being made use of and will cement the approach towards the goal which is imposed on all humanity for the third millenium: construction of the planetary polis.

"Dare peace" means eliminating the causes, nearby or distant, for armed conflicts: the social injustices, racial segregation, neo-colonialism, and dictatorships of every kind.

"Dare peace" means developing encounters and dialogue between all religions, in convinced participation in religious pluralism, because - citing from a recent book on Italian Catholics - "beyond adherence to whatever creed there is a spiritual capacity to unify all men who have made their fundamental option: they have renounced egoism and are open to love."

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EMERGENCE OF THE THEOLOGY OF  
LIBERATION IN INDIA

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Conference of the Religious of India

*(La Conférence des Religieux de l'Inde a tenu son Assemblée nationale de 1986, du 5 au 9 Janvier, au Loyola College de Andhra. L'Assemblée était divisée en trois groupes: religieuses, frères et prêtres. La déclaration suivante de l'assemblée sur l'Emergence de la Théologie de la Liberation en Inde, attire l'attention sur la nécessité de la part des religieux de s'identifier avec les pauvres dans leurs espérances et leurs craintes, dans leurs souffrances et leurs joies, dans leur insécurité et dans leurs luttes, dans le contexte de la vie d'aujourd'hui en Inde.*

*La déclaration ne recule pas devant les difficultés et les problèmes que cette nouvelle manière de vivre notre engagement religieux peut nous poser, mais les traite en détail. Cela réclame un changement radical de notre formation qui facilitera une interaction constante avec la vie des pauvres.*

*Au cours de leur dernière réunion, les évêques de l'Inde ont commencé individuellement à s'immerger et à s'insérer pendant une semaine dans des situations de pauvreté. L'évaluation de cette rencontre indique que cette expérience a eu une influence profonde sur leurs discussions.*

*Ces deux réunions, celle des Religieux et celle des Evêques, semblent indiquer un développement important dans la vie de l'Eglise, en Inde.*

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INTRODUCTION

1. "The powerful and almost irresistible aspirations that people have for liberation constitute one of the principal signs of the times which the Church has to examine and interpret in the light of the Gospel" says the Vatican document Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation (1,1). Though this document gives a strong warning against the serious deviations of some 'theologies of liberation' without, however, rejecting liberation theology as such, it also sounds a strong condemnation "of those who keep the poor in misery, who profit from that misery, who notice it while doing nothing about it, or who remain indifferent to it." (XI,1).

The church has declared a preferential option for the poor and the social teaching of the Church, which is by no means closed is; in fact, "open to all new questions which are so numerous today." So the document has declared that "the contribution of theologians and other thinkers in all parts of the world to the reflection of the Church is indispensable today." (XI, 12).

2. "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force of liberation" (ICATL, Introduction).

It is a message of freedom because it announces the coming of the Kingdom of God, that is, of the kingly action through which God decisively saves humankind by the revelation of his love. This experience of God's love revealed in Jesus is a force of liberation. It frees us from greed, ambition and prejudice, and empowers us to love our fellow human beings. For these are now experienced as our brothers and sisters, because they are experienced as children of our one Father in heaven. Like his love, our love too which issues from the love of the Father (1 Jn 4, 7) and reflects it (Mt 5, 45) will be an active and effective love. It will respond to the needs of our neighbour (Lk 10,29-37) and show itself not in words only but in "deeds and in truth" (1 Jn 3,18). In our situation of massive poverty rooted in injustice and exploitation such love will inevitably drive us to an option for the poor, the concrete expression of which will be a committed struggle against the injustice in which their poverty is rooted. Our option for the poor will be that of Jesus himself. For in line with the great prophets of the Old Testament who consistently voiced Yahweh's concern for the powerless (Amos 2,4-6; Mic 3,1-3; Is 58, 6-9; 61,1), Jesus expressly defines his mission as one of 'proclaiming good news to the poor' and 'setting free the oppressed' (Lk 4,16-18).

Our focus on the person of Jesus, who continues to inspire and empower us, does not make us insensible to other forces of liberation at work in the world. We are aware that the liberative love of God is at work everywhere and that his saving history encompasses all things. But as Christians we see in Jesus the visible expression of that liberative love. He thus became for us the great sacrament of liberation, symbolizing the forces of liberation at work everywhere.

3. In the light of this urgent call of the Church and the central message of the Gospel, heard in the context of India with its massive poverty and its pluriform religious traditions, we the Major Religious Superiors gathered together for the annual meeting of the CRI at Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, January 5-9, 1986 have reflected on the theme of liberation to which we as religious are profoundly committed and on the theology that claims to focus on this theme. We have tried to understand the biblical foundations of the Theology of Liberation, the sociological reasons for its emergence, its methodology and its practical applications to our apostolate. We present here the results of our reflection.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION IN INDIA

In colonial India, the immense poverty and misery caused by incoming capitalism through the destruction of social and economic relationships, was met by institutionalized charity. The supposition here was that poverty could not be eradicated but could be alleviated by inviting the rich to share with the poor. This approach did not allow any role to those helped.

After the Independence of India the belief that poverty could be eradicated through the development of natural and human resources, led to the launching of large-scale educational, health and develop-

ment programmes. These required a great investment of money and hence allowed the beneficiaries only a very limited participation.

Since the seventies, the consciousness is emerging that poverty is a man-made phenomenon, and that it can be eradicated by the proper organization and total participation of all the people concerned. For religious concerned about poverty this means that they would have to pass from the role of initiators of charitable institutions or managers of development projects to that of collaborators with the poor. They would have to identify with the poor in their hopes and fears, sufferings and joys, insecurities and struggles in order to work for their total liberation. This does not mean that the older forms of service to the poor are to be abandoned as irrelevant; rather they are to be subordinated and integrated into the vision of the new approach. The promotion of justice must therefore be a primary concern, one that will inspire all forms of our service to the poor.

This approach calls for a new way of theologizing. Such theologizing can no longer mean drawing conclusions from established and clearly enunciated principles and applying them to concrete historical situations through accommodation and adaptation. Instead we need to listen to the Spirit speaking through the poor. Listening to the poor calls for a sharing of their experience of struggle, a questioning of the present social order which is the root cause of their oppression, and action with them aimed at structural change. In this way the message of the crucified Lord, is rediscovered in the groans of the modern crucified; and the past of the church rediscovered and made relevant to the present. Genuinely inculturated theology will then emerge.

This commitment of the religious to the service of the poor is a spiritual adventure. It implies a new asceticism: the denial of greed and prejudice. It calls for liberating prayer which is a critical reflection before God on our faith experience, in our relationship with God and the world. It requires new values such as solidarity with the oppressed; genuine participation in community; and acceptance of the insecurity which results from the absence of traditional structures of religious life; and an unbounded trust in God's enduring presence in the midst of the people.

#### DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS

This new way of living out our religious commitment poses serious difficulties that have to be faced squarely.

- Our concept of religious life itself was evolved at a time when flight from the world and isolation in the service of God was the ideal. We have to revise this to suit the requirements of new ministries, without however sacrificing the unity of the community and the continuity of tradition. This calls for an ongoing reflection on our involvement, from which alone an adequate methodology for action will emerge. In this way we shall be able to avoid false oppositions, such as those between matter and spirit, soul and body, evangelization and liberation, which have often led to confusion and conflict.

- The life style of many of our religious communities makes our involvement with the poor more difficult.

- The lack of adequate tools makes it difficult to evaluate our involvement and so allows us to feel satisfied with an exaggerated estimate of our commitment to the poor.
- The more seriously we take our commitment to the poor, the more our treatment of our employees and co-workers in our communities and institutions will call for self-examination. Justice, like charity, begins at home.
- Involvement with the poor makes it difficult for us to meet the financial needs of our apostolates and those of the members of our congregation. This can lead to a questionable dependence on foreign funds.
- In the field of the apostolate, where people have a say in decision-making, the role of the religious Superior is a delicate one. It requires greater involvement in the activities of individual religious and greater attention to the stirrings of the Spirit. That the religious who face these new challenges were formed in a different set-up and are often ill-equipped to meet the problems and dangers that arise, only compounds the difficulties of the Superior's role.
- Young religious often show considerable sensitivity to the cry of the poor but can be discouraged by lack of support, and sometimes even criticism, from their communities. Getting caught up in institutional commitments often has the same effect.
- This call to involvement with the poor often leads to conflicts with ecclesiastical and civil authorities and even with members of the community. These call for an ongoing process of dialogue, undertaken in a spirit of openness to the Church while keeping intact the prophetic role of religious life.
- A difficulty facing many congregations is the seeming resistance of several to accept the new thrust towards involvement with the poor.

#### NEW HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

Though the difficulties are many we believe that these can be overcome.

The problems we face require of us a preparation that is spiritual and theological, sociological and psychological. But together with these we need an attitudinal preparation. This implies attention to what goes on in the depths of our hearts: the stirring of the Spirit and the inner call of Christ, revealed in our hopes and aspirations and in the challenges of the difficulties and failures we encounter. Only by growing in true authenticity and enduring fidelity to our religious commitment can lasting results be attained. The discerning role of the community should not be overlooked in this process.

A radical change has to be effected in the method of training especially of young religious so that they can grow imbibing the genuine message of the Gospel. The location and setting of our houses of formation, their life-style and the outlook of the formation personnel should make possible a constant interaction with the lives of the poor. Those religious who did not have the advantage

of such a formation can be helped through seminars, lectures, exposure to actual involvement situations and other programmes of ongoing formation.

A careful and continuing evaluation will help us to identify obstacles to our total commitment to the poor in our apostolates and enable us to re-orient them.

We need to be convinced that religious life is not merely a call to individual perfection but a call to radical discipleship in community.

#### CONCLUSION

Our reflections have been for us an occasion of growth - growth in our awareness of the many dimensions (social, economic, political, cultural, religious) of the liberation to which God summons humankind; growth too in our commitment to its realization in our troubled world. We firmly believe that the God of History call us in Jesus Christ through the cry of our people to collaborative action for justice. In this venture we wish to join forces with all who are moved by the oppressive situation in which the bulk of our people exist. For the concern for justice is not a uniquely Christian concern. We wish to respond to today's needs with the same earnestness that characterized the response of the founders and foundresses of our religious congregations in their moment of history. We salute those members of our congregations who through their radical involvement inspire and challenge us to similar heights of self-surrender in the cause of justice. We look confidently to our Bishops for effective leadership, guidance and support in this endeavour.

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## APPENDIX I

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