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IN THIS ISSUE: Many different sources draw our attention increasingly to the importance of respect for the integrity of creation as a dimension of mission today. This is reflected in a number of recent items in SEDOS Bulletin. The first article in this issue comes from the Philippine bishops who, in the midst of their many problems have taken time to issue a pastoral letter on this topic. It is a deep-seated crisis, they say, lying at the root of many of their economic and political problems and a profound challenge where the very future of life is at stake for the Philippine people.

Bob McCahill shares with us in another of his letters his experience of how his Muslim friends see his helping the poor. "Where does the money come from?" they ask.

Enrique Dussel sees the history of mission as passing into a second stage. In the first stage the Gospel goes out from the spiritual "centre" (the First World Churches of the North) to the "periphery" (the "new" young churches of the Third World or the South). In this second stage, there is something like a return flow of the gospel; as the churches at the centre receive the missionary challenge of the "new" churches. The martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, the example of Bishop Tutu of South Africa or the Christians of the Philippines are having an undeniable missionary impact on the world of "central" Christianity. The "Church of the poor" is becoming prophetically missionary and evangelizing. How are the churches and we as missionary institutes responding to this challenge? Are the churches at the 'centre' defending themselves against this flow? At two recent General Chapters of missionary congregations the poor were being described as not only the objects but also the subjects of evangelization. Only after considerable

debate was this viewpoint approved by the assembled capitulants of one congregation!

"The missionary is coming home" we say. But is she or he really coming home? The person has changed, the culture has changed, the politics of the country has changed, parents may be dead, the family dispersed. Where is home for the missionary? There are some most useful hints from Maria Rieckelman and Jack Sullivan for all those who have spent years in a cross-cultural situation.

The final contribution examines possible new frontiers in inter-religious dialogue. Complex theological questions cannot be avoided. The basic question in dialogue has to shift from "How can Christianity relate to other religions?", to - "What is the place of Christianity itself in a religiously pluralistic Asian world?". Felix Wilfred's article has been considerably condensed due to pressure of space. The full text, which we recommend, is available in SEDOS Documentation Centre.

And there are news items and notices of some important coming events.

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## SOMMAIRE DE CE NUMERO

De différents côtés, notre attention est attirée de plus en plus sur l'importance du respect de l'intégrité de la création comme dimension de la mission d'aujourd'hui. On peut le constater par d'assez nombreux sujets abordés récemment dans le Bulletin de SEDOS. Le premier article de ce numéro est emprunté aux évêques des Philippines, qui, malgré les nombreux problèmes qui les assaillent, ont pris la peine de publier une lettre pastorale sur ce sujet. Il s'agit d'une crise très profonde, disent-ils, qui se trouve à la source d'un grand nombre de leurs problèmes économiques et politiques, et d'un vaste défi où l'avenir de la vie du peuple philippin est en jeu.

Bob McCahill nous communique dans une autre de ses lettres son expérience sur la manière dont ses amis musulmans considèrent son action en faveur des pauvres. "Mais d'où vient donc l'argent?" se demandent-ils.

Enrique Dussel donne des exemples du flux et du reflux de l'Evangile au cours de l'histoire, du mouvement du 'centre' spirituel vers la périphérie et ensuite de la périphérie vers le centre. Ceux qui ont été évangélisés deviennent à leur tour des évangélisateurs. Aujourd'hui un trait caractéristique de ce processus réside dans le fait que l'"Eglise des pauvres" de la périphérie exerce un rôle prophétique de mission et d'évangélisation. Et les Eglises du "centre" se défendent contre ce courant.... La théorie de Dussel peut être illustrée par l'expérience de

(suite p.135)

## CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF THE PHILIPPINES

### WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR BEAUTIFUL LAND?

Pastoral letter on Ecology

#### Introduction

The Philippines is now at a critical point in its history. For the past number of years we have experienced political instability, economic decline and a growth in armed conflict. Almost every day the media highlight one or other of these problems. The banner headlines absorb our attention so much so that we tend to overlook a more deep-seated crisis which, we believe, lies at the root of many of our economic and political problems. To put it simply; our country is in peril. All the living systems on land and in the seas around us are being ruthlessly exploited. The damage to date is extensive and, sad to say, it is often irreversible.

One does not need to be an expert to see what is happening and to be profoundly troubled by it. Within a few short years brown, eroded hills have replaced luxuriant forests in many parts of the country. Loggers and 'kaingineros' have reduced the primal forest cover to less than 1 million hectares. The effects can be seen throughout the country. We see dried up river beds where, not so long ago, streams flowed throughout the year. Farmers tell us that, because of erosion and chemical poisoning, the yield from their croplands has fallen substantially. Each year the country loses the equivalent of 100,000 hectares of soil one meter thick. Fishermen and experts on marine life have a similar message. Their fish catches are shrinking in the wake of the extensive destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests. The picture which is emerging in every province of the country is clear and bleak. The attack on the natural world is whittling away at the very base of our living world and endangering its fruitfulness for future generations.

We are not alone in our concern. Tribal people all over the Philippines, who have seen the destruction of their world at close range, have cried out in anguish. Also men and women who attempt to live harmoniously with nature and those who study ecology have tried to alert people to the magnitude of the destruction. The latter are in a good position to tell us what is happening since they study the web of dynamic relationships which supports and sustains all life within the earthly household. This includes human life.

#### A Call To Respect and Defend Life

Faced with these challenges where the very future of life is at stake, we, the Catholic Bishops call on all Filipinos to take a stand on the side of life. We know that a nuclear war would turn the whole earth into a fireball and render the planet inhospitable to life. We tend to forget that the constant, cumulative destruction of life-forms and different habitats will, in the long term, have the same effect. Even

today the scars on nature, which increasingly we see all around us, mean less nutritious food, poorer health and an increase in political and social unrest for the vast majority of Filipinos.

We also know that the Earth will not be mocked. Even now nature is lashing back at us and taking its revenge. Though we try to squeeze more and more from our lands, they produce less food. The air in our cities is heavy with noxious fumes. Instead of bringing energy and life it causes bronchial illness. Our forests are almost gone, our rivers are almost empty, our springs and wells no longer sparkle with living water. During the monsoon rain, flash-floods sweep through our towns and cities and destroy everything in their path. Our lakes and estuaries are silting up. An out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality flushes toxic waste and mine tailings into our rivers and seas in the mistaken belief that they can no longer harm us. Because the living world is interconnected, the poison is absorbed by marine organisms. We in turn are being gradually poisoned when we eat seafood.

We Can and Must Do Something About It: It is already late in the day and so much damage has been done to our living world. Signs of stress and collapse are multiplying all around us. As Filipinos we can and must act now. This is our home; we must care for it, watch over it, protect it and love it. We must protect what remains of our forests, rivers, and corals and heal, wherever we can, the damage which has already been done.

### Signs of Hope

Despite the pain and despoliation which we have mentioned, there are some signs of hope around us. Our forebearers and our tribal brothers and sisters today still attempt to live in harmony with nature. They see the Divine Spirit in the living world and show their respect through prayers and offerings. Tribal Filipinos remind us that the exploitative approach to the natural world is foreign to our Filipino culture.

We are also encouraged by the growth in environmental awareness among some Filipinos. Small efforts which teach contour ploughing, erosion control, organic farming and tree planting can blossom into a major movement of genuine care for our Earth. We are happy that there have been some successes. Both the Chico dam project was suspended and the Bataan nuclear plant mothballed after massive local resistance. This year the people of San Fernando, Bukidnon and Midsalip, Zamboanga del Sur defended what remains of their forest with their own bodies. These are all signs for us that the Spirit of God, who breathed over the waters, and originally brought life from chaos is now prompting men and women to dedicate their lives to enhancing and protecting the integrity of Creation. In order that these drops and rivulets will join together and form a mighty stream in the defense of life we need a sustaining vision to guide us.

Our Vision: As we reflect on what is happening in the light of the Gospel we are convinced that this assault on creation is sinful and contrary to the teachings of Our Faith. The Bible tells us that God

created this world, (Gen. 1:1); that God loves this world and is pleased with it. (Gen 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31); and that man and woman are created in the image of God and charged as stewards of Creation. (Gen.1: 27-28). God, who created our world, loves life and wishes to share this life with every creature.

The relationship which links God, human beings and all the community of the living together is emphasised in the covenant which God made with Noah after the flood. The rainbow which we still see in the sky is a constant reminder of this bond and challenge. (Gen 9:12).

Christ Our Life (Col 3:4). As Christians we also draw our vision from Christ. We have much to learn from the attitude of respect which Jesus displayed towards the natural world. He was very much aware that all the creatures in God's creation are related. Jesus lived lightly on the earth and warned his disciples against hoarding material possessions and allowing their hearts to be enticed by the lure of wealth and power (Matt. 6:19-21; Lk.9:1-6). But our meditation on Jesus goes beyond this. Our faith tells us that Christ is the center point of human history and creation. All the rich unfolding of the universe and the emergence and flowering of life on Earth are centered on him. (Ehp. 1:9-10; Col 1:16-17). The destruction of any part of creation, especially, the extinction of species defaces the image of Christ which is etched in Creation. St. John tells us that Jesus saw His mission in this light. "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full". (Jn. 10:10).

Mary, Mother of Life: We Filipinos have a deep devotion to Mary. We turn to her for help and protection in time of need. We know that she is on the side of the poor and those who are rejected. (Lk 1:52) Our new sensitivity to what is happening to our land also tells us that she is on the side of life. As a mother she knows how fragile life is so she is pained and saddened when she sees the integrity of creation being destroyed through soil erosion, blast-fishing or forest destruction. Mary, Mother of Life challenges us to abandon the pathway of death and return to the way of life.

### This Is What We Suggest

In the light of this vision we recommend action in the following areas.

- a) What each individual can do. Be aware of what is happening in your area. Do not remain silent when you see your environment being destroyed. Do something concrete like planting trees or rehabilitating corals and involve as many people as possible in these projects.
- b) What the Churches can do. The Church has been slow in responding to this issue. Now it must play a leading role in protecting life. The Care For the Earth Ministry must underpin its liturgies, catechesis, schools and peace and justice programmes.

c) What the Government can do: The government must not pursue short-term economic gains at the expense of long-term ecological damage. We suggest that the government groups together into an independent Department all the agencies which deal at present with ecological issues. This Department should promote an awareness of the fragility and limited carrying capacity of our island ecosystems and advocate measures designed to support ecologically sustainable development.

d) Non-governmental Organizations play an important role in developing ecological awareness among people and monitoring government policies regarding environmental protection.

### Conclusion

This brief statement about our living world and the deterioration we see all around us attempts to reflect the cry of our people and the cry of our land. Our small farmers tell us that their fields are less productive and are becoming sterile. Our fishermen are finding it increasingly difficult to catch fish. Our lands, forests and rivers cry out that they are being eroded, denuded and polluted. As bishops we have tried to listen to their cry and respond in an appropriate way. We are convinced that the challenge which we have tried to highlight here is similar to the one which Moses put before the people of Israel before they entered their promised land.

"Today I offer you a choice of life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life and then you and your descendants will live".  
(Dt. 30:19-20).

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## MUSLIMS, MONEY, AND A MISSIONER

(A letter received recently from Bob McCahill, M.M. Bangladesh).

"Where do you get the money to do this work?" That is a question put to me daily during the past thirteen years in Bangladesh. The only other question posed by Bangladeshi Muslims with comparable frequency is "Why don't you marry?"

Eleven years ago when the opportunity to serve the sick-poor presented itself I reckoned that the time and energy I spent searching for sick persons in many villages, and accompanying them to hospitals, were my biggest expenditures. The poor and the non-poor observed those physical expenditures and were pleased. However, the expenditure of a wee bit of cash (by American standards) impressed them even more. Paying bus fares to the hospital for the sick, providing pieces of unleavened bread for them to eat while they waited in line for the doctors, and buying some ordinary medicines: these were the expenses that most startled the people.

They were surprised to see such a willingness to spend money on "helpless" persons, and they were amazed to learn that I did not do it in order to receive a salary. "Where do you get the money to do this work?" they always wanted to know. I replied: "My own brothers and sisters and the members of our extended family support me. They share their money with me so that I can serve the sick-poor, and maintain myself. Helping persons in need, now, is an important goal of our Christian faith. Assisting widows, orphans, and afflicted persons is an expression of that faith for us. Like you Muslims, we too believe that the key to paradise is love for the poor. My family is quite happy that I am here in Bangladesh, serving in this way. They believe that because they are supporting me in service to the poor Allah is blessing them richly".

Bangladeshi Muslims like that. "That is very good!" is their standard comment on the fact that my family is with me in this work of love. They are pleased that money is not supplied by some fabulously wealthy Western organization. (At last count there were 256 foreign-funded organizations at work in this relatively small nation). A foreigner might imagine that people in such desperate circumstances would have no concern about the source of the help they receive. But, they are concerned.

If I were to claim to Muslims that the services I offer are supported by an organization, such as my society, the witness value of this ministry would be vitiated. It impresses Bangladeshis minimally to observe a foreigner living among them whom they perceive to be totally supported by a rich foreign organization.

Why this concern? My hunch is that it is due to their own tradition of alms giving. Muslims are required to give alms, and they do so. The money they use to fulfill that religious obligation is their own. It was raised through personal effort or through the family. No organization supplies them with funds by which to assist the poor. They respect others who rely, as they do, on personal or family resources to help the poor.

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## THE EBB AND FLOW OF THE GOSPEL

### WHEN THE EVANGELIZED POOR BECOME EVANGELIZERS

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Enrique Dussel.

The history of mission theology has passed through different stages in recent times. From a spiritual "centre" the gospel goes out to the "periphery". (We will call it the "ebb" of the message, the "going out to" the gentiles). In a second stage, then, there is something like a return "flow" of the gospel; the evangelized become evangelizers and the "mother" churches at the centre receive the missionary challenge of the "new" churches at the periphery. This return "flow" is not the first in history, but it acquires special characteristics today on which we want to reflect.

The "ebb" of the Gospel to the Periphery: It is obvious that the gospel went out from Israel: from Jerusalem at Pentecost when Peter spoke up and began to convert the pilgrims in the holy city. "Fellow Jews, and all you who live in Jerusalem". The work of Peter began there and through "persecution" - and not through a secretariat or congregation - the gospel spread among the gentiles. Paul was also sent as "a minister of Christ Jesus to the gentiles". This "centripetal" movement is well expressed in the saying that "salvation comes from the Jews".

From North to South: In the same way, not widely known, the gospel arrived in Ireland between the fourth and fifth centuries in the hands of monks who organized in the "island of the saints" a flourishing Christian community on the periphery of that on the continent.

As from the fifteenth century, Latin-Germanic and western European Christians, first from Portugal and Spain and later from Holland, France and England, culminating with the United States, set out to evangelize the third world. This was again a centripetal movement, from the north to the south this time.

The attitude of spiritual "superiority", with which the missionaries of all churches went to the third world, is well-known, an attitude in which, for the sake of "Christianity" they mixed up the gospel and their own culture.

The "Flow" of the Gospel toward the Centre: As the waters of the sea "ebb" off the coast and "flow" back toward the centre, the gospel also "flows" evangelistically to the centre. There are secondary movements that do not touch the centre of the church. For example, we speak of "reverse mission", or the evangelistic action of missionaries returning from the third world to their mother churches. Thus a North American missionary working in Africa can explain the action undertaken in the "mission countries" to friends and neighbours at home. In an analogous way, in the time of the



early church, the churches of the diaspora collected money for the "saints" of Jerusalem and thus, in part, gave thanks for the gift of the gospel (II Cor. 8-9). But this is not what is at stake. It is something more essential and profound.

Challenge by Communities in Diaspora: It is certain that the community of Jerusalem began to be challenged by the communities in diaspora and to learn from them the universality of salvation, the overcoming of the narrow nationalism of Jerusalem, the fact of a gospel for all nations and not only for the Jews: "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich enough for the need of all who invoke him".

The New Missionary Centre: In the same way the Irish periphery was transformed into the new missionary centre which, like a centrifugal flow, returned to the "continent", which needed the faith, to evangelize it. Like Columba in the fifth century, Winfrid (675-755) then evangelized the Teutones under the name of Boniface. The gospel was "flowing back": from the gentiles to Israel, from Ireland to the continent. In the same way we begin to see this movement at the present time. After five centuries of evangelization of the periphery, of the third world, of the poor, there begins a return flow to the mother churches to remind them of the essence of the gospel, somewhat forgotten in the triumphalism, the riches, the pride of being the first, the most ancient, the most knowledgeable, the most "punctual", the most disciplined, the most orderly, the cleanest, the most civilized.

The New Churches Give Witness: All the "new" local churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America (with the exception of North Africa or Ethiopia and Kerala, India) are poor and in need... but full of the renewed strength of the Spirit. What they learned in the gospel - through the scandal of the expansion of European - Anglo-Saxon Christianity - from the poor and crucified Christ, they now live as a paradigm and give witness to the "centre" in this way of living their Christianity. The martyrdom of Mgr. Oscar Romero in El Salvador, the heroic poverty of someone like Mgr. Pedro Casaldáliga in Brazil, the example of Bishop Tutu in South Africa, of the "fishermen" in Kerala, or the Christians in the Philippines, are "universal" evangelizing facts today that have an undeniable "spiritual", paradigmatic and missionary impact on the world of "central" Christianity.

#### "SOLIDARITY", THE PRESENT-DAY NAME OF CATHOLICITY AND MISSION

The present-day missionary stage of Christianity is undergoing a change. It is the end of the "era of missions" and the beginning of "solidarity" (of koinonia, II Cor. 9:13) among the "local" churches. The centripetal movement (north-south) is transformed into a circle: it forms a circle around the Christian life. Rome now learns from Latin America; Geneva from Africa; New York from the Philippines or China. It is the hour of a new universality.

Solidarity is Co-responsibility: Christian "solidarity" is the co-responsibility of the Christians with a

view to the other "local" churches (and the churches of Rome or of Geneva are as much "local" churches in the unity of the same Spirit); co-responsibility in the liturgical, economic and church life in general; a "circular" co-responsibility of all for all. We thus move from a model of dominating uniformity (bureaucratic catholicity) to the model of pluriformity of the time of Vatican II and of Melbourne; and from there to a model of authentic solidarity where the pluralism of indifferent coexistence is subsumed in the co-responsible unity of universal solidarity of a church that is one, not under the command of an extrinsic and authoritarian obedience (imposed unity), but through the organic structure of mutual responsibility in solidarity (unity from the interior life of the Spirit of Jesus and of the Father); "community" (koinonia).

In this case the churches of the "centre" are open to the witness of the poor churches at the "periphery". They do not want to control their testimony (e.g., the case of a missionary organization that cannot publish certain works coming from the periphery because they are too advanced, or of an "uncertain" doctrine; in this way the word of protest and criticism of the poor is controlled). The recent confrontation between the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and the theology of liberation coming from the periphery has to be interpreted along this line. The "centre" fearfully protects itself from what the poor at the periphery are doing. It feels attacked, humiliated, forced to change and resists.

A Greater Universality: This view does not take into account, however, that the Christianity at the "centre" is the product of an ambiguous identification with the Mediterranean and European culture and a later identification with the capitalist system. Today both identifications are "prisons", "straight-jackets", which the church must break through in order to open to a greater universality (beyond western culture and capitalism as a necessarily historical system). It is in this stage of conversion to go beyond (the essential transcendence of the gospel) both limitations that the poor who were evangelized from the fifteenth century onward become evangelizers at the end of the twentieth century: "You who once were far off have (now) been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood. For he is himself our peace" (Eph. 2:13).

#### THE PROPHETIC-EVANGELIZING "CHURCH OF THE POOR"

The Melbourne Conference (1980 begins with an option: "Good News to the Poor" (Section I). Melbourne recognized that "the concept of mission being from sending to receiving countries has long been replaced by a mutuality in shared missions involving a two-way flow between the churches in the industrialized countries and the so-called third world" (IV, 23). But it is more than that. "Solidarity" is enabled from a "nucleus", from a "community" where the gospel flows more clearly, more prophetically, more profoundly, more spiritually. This evangelizing "place" par excellence is the "church of the poor", or the part of the churches that is planted among the "objectively" poor: among the poor nation, poor classes, among the marginalized in the cities, the minorities, the tribal and ethnic groups, the "condemned of the earth" -

as Franz Fanon would say.

Christians in the Base Communities: When a "base community" meets in Riobamba, for example, where Mgr Proano was bishop until recently, when these poor hands, marked by heavy daily work, injured by the cold of the Andes, prematurely aged through exploitation... hold the Bible; when these eyes weakened by malnutrition and illness... read the Bible; when these mouths whose lips are split from the dryness, from the beating by the "masters", from the irregular food supply... open to explain the gospel; when these men and women, youth and children form a community, all of them together, putting what they have at the disposal of the others, breaking the eucharistic bread at the table where they assemble the bread and prepare the beans for their miserable meals, or where the mothers give birth to their children... who could make a comparison? Is the big cathedral of St. Peter a more sublime place than the poor hut of these Andean indigenous people?

The Church of the Poor is Prophetic and Evangelizing: This "church of the poor", an integral part of the one church, but its most undefiled, most prophetic and most tormented "part", is the part that today turns prophetically missionary and evangelizing. It is the one that can convert, that can move the hearts of the young people, of the men and women of good will, at the "centre" and at the "periphery". Now the evangelized poor become evangelizers. "God says, 'This will happen in the last days: I will pour out upon everyone a portion of my spirit; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Yes, I will endue even my slaves, both men and women, with a portion of my spirit...' (Praxis 2:17-18).

A Radical Change in the Institutional Church: Gerald Anderson was right in writing that "the focus at Melbourne was on the poor in relation to the kingdom", and for this reason the final message declared that the poor will mean "in many cases... a radical change in the institutional life of the missionary movement". More, this presence of the poor "as a church" in the churches (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) is a challenge to change not only the missionary institutions, but the mother churches themselves in their own life at the "centre". The churches at the "centre" defend themselves against this change. I remember the opposition of some members of the Roman curia when meetings of third world theologians were or are being organized. A theology of the third world, how is that possible? Is theology not one and universal? There is, therefore, opposition to the voice of the poor reaching out to the "centre" and the other churches at the poor "periphery". There is mistrust, fear, doubt. In reality, however, the fear is of overcoming identifications that tie the church to the past: to western culture, to capitalism, to power, to domination. It is a challenge of poverty, simplicity, hope. The "spirit" of John XXIII, who had experienced a poor and oppressed "periphery" in Turkey, teaches us how to learn from the others, from the poor, from other "local" churches.

Subjects of the Kingdom: It is clear that in order for the poor to evangelize it is necessary to listen to them, to

regard them as worthy carriers of the gospel, as subjects of the kingdom, as "Jesus himself" in history among us. But for that it is necessary to keep the "windows" open. How could the Samaritan see the poor person who was thrown down and robbed at the wayside if there had been a wall separating the path from the poor? It is necessary to pull down the walls, or at least to put in windows to see the poor. What is needed in addition, however, is humility, poverty, openness - spiritual positions that are very difficult in today's world of the "centre".

The Sanctuary Movement: In movements like "sanctuary" in the United States, where Christians from the "centre" open themselves to the poor who have come to their country from the "periphery" and who are received even if this means counteracting laws against foreigners (especially those who are poor and come from capitalist countries and do not serve as propaganda against socialist countries), these Christians are evangelized by the poor and become an evangelizing "church of the poor" in the midst of the churches at the "centre". These conversions to justice are the fruit of evangelization, the mission of the poor: they teach how to live a more demanding, real, global, true gospel.

Christian Communities Evangelizing: In this way, the return "flow" of the gospel has begun, only begun. In the near future, as the crisis intensifies, as the exploitation of the poor countries becomes more inhuman, the Christian communities among the poor (poor countries, poor classes, poor groups and persons) will become more and more exemplary and evangelizing. They will suffer in their flesh the oppression of the poor and the same tortures as Jesus. They will evangelize.

Ref. International Review of Mission,  
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## MISSIONARIES IN TRANSITION

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Maria Rieckelman, MM, and Jack Sullivan, MM.

(In August 1987, at the request of IMU, a study-day on MISSIONARIES IN TRANSITION was conducted by Maryknoll Missionaries Dr. Maria Rieckelman and Fr. Jack Sullivan. Both speakers - besides having considerable personal missionary experience - are professionally qualified to help missionaries adjust to the demands of the various forms of transition they are required to make in the course of life. They had come to Ireland following workshops in Korea, Hong Kong, Kenya and Tanzania, and were on route to Central America).

### COMING HOME

"We say the missionary is coming home", said Fr. Sullivan, and "perhaps that is the problem, for, in fact, the missionary is not coming home. For it is as difficult to return and begin as it was to begin when you first went."

He advised that we let go of the concept of coming home, because the person has changed, the culture has changed, the politics of the country have changed, and for most, parents are dead or we are coming home to take care of them.

"So let's re-conceptualize it: we are not coming home, we are going on a new mission assignment. We have made that transition once, let's build on a previous experience and feel we are going on a new commitment. This takes a lot of work."

Fr. Sullivan had much to say about the concept of re-entry. He suggests that rediscovery might be the more accurate term for the missionary's experience than re-entry and he says: "I believe a lived recognition of this last distinction by the missionary and concerned friends makes all the difference between continual development and creativity, and constricting disorientation and stagnation."

### THREE STAGE PROCESS

Rediscovery is a three-stage process of transition: Letting Go-Letting Be and Letting Begin.

With regard to letting go, he stresses that the time before departure seems to be the most important stage, and also, a time of greater need of active involvement by the departee. He warns that the abrupt 'ride off into the sunset' approach, without goodbyes, endings, and with intense work right up to the last minute, may well be the worst way to begin this transition.

"Such a denial of departure" he says, is the shadow image of

subsequent inability to begin again; "no ending, no beginning... The missionary does self a great service by actively saying and doing goodbye".

During the letting be time, that is, after arriving "home", he says:

"The assumption of being home again is perhaps most destructive to the transition process. However, the awareness of beginning again, as done previously in another culture, at an earlier time with different strangers, is the most helpful attitude for taking root again and blossoming in life and ministry... This "letting be" time is as important now as were the weeks, months and years of introductions, orientation and language study in a mission region.

Letting begin. In the third phase of transition, that of letting begin, the emphasis in the past has been on the new work or responsibility, rather than valuing the person beginning the work: "Job orientation and on the spot job training have to be blended with a deep and respectful recognition by the 'trainers' that this 'beginner' is highly experienced and capable in areas not now available".

"Most often the work and activity of the returned missionary changes most radically... This is a time for him or her to remember and utilize skills already assimilated and learned, particularly the skills of adaptation previously used during the initial transition to another culture, language and people. These skills are like good currency; they are transferable. So many missionaries need time to remember the transitional skills and abilities they already have and to utilize them".

#### HOME TO ONESELF

Sr. Maria told the participants:

"One of the principal challenges for the missionary, I believe, is to go out of our own culture to come home to ourselves, to find that home more and more within ourselves - not in a place or in a particular set of relationships... And so, the first challenge for the returning missionary is to deal with that transition, to own the experience of being in mission wherever that may have been, and be able to come home to oneself through a period of time in a process of letting go of those people and that place and that experience - not in the sense of disowning it, but so that it becomes part of who we are in the next stage of our journey".

In the transition process missionaries need to establish a stable space in their own life. It may be in a place, it may be simply in a schedule, it may be an attitude, it may be a hobby. Not to find such a stable place may leave a person open to a long period of floundering and more and more loss of their sense of identity.

A feeling of inadequacy is often felt on return. There needs to be a coming to terms with the new changes, the new theology, new church and new ministry. Anger can be the first response but it can be complex. It may feel degrading to come home - all the things we were good at are not here. But to the extent that people were able to cope with the challenges and changes in mission, they are able to cope with the new challenges back home.

It is important, she said, for the returning missionary to assume personal responsibility, rather than saying 'the community should have helped me'. And one of the key things for helping people who come home is to help them take responsibility for the choices made.

## REDISCOVERY HINTS

### LETTING GO

1. Take time for endings and saying goodbye.
2. Celebrate departure in symbol and ritual.
3. Continue schedule and habit of prayer and recollection, focusing on your own departure
4. Review and own your life and ministry over the past year.
5. Strategize on means of continued growth in an expression of significant directions in this life and ministry.
6. Specify means of keeping contact with good friends.
7. Gradually let go of and hand over commitments and projects before departure.
8. Talk about your separation feelings with someone able to listen.
9. Acknowledge that your vision, experience, knowledge, skills and significant relationships are part of you and cannot be taken away; they are indeed transferable.
10. Expect newness and stress, and minimize your expectations of "being home" again.
11. Before departure make specific plans for rest, vacation, retreat and renewal; a sabbatical after a number of years of service is extremely valuable.

### LETTING BE

1. Give yourself the time and opportunity to realize that your absence from your previous assignment is not temporary; you are not on an annual vacation or home leave.
2. Actively recall your earlier adjustment time in the mission region and employ skills and patterns learned then.
3. Exert effort to renew old friendships and relationships in your new surroundings.
4. Be patient as you learn a 'new' language and adapt to a new living situation and relationships.
5. Don't wait for others to ask you to tell your story; find someone someone willing and able to listen.
6. Keep in contact with others also on their rediscovery journey.
7. Persist in daily prayer and recollection, giving it priority time.
8. Schedule time to allow for rest, relaxation, exercise.,
9. Listen to your own body and emotions as you adapt to new food, surroundings, relationships and challenges.

### LETTING BEGIN

1. Establish and implement personal short term, and accomplishable

- goals to adapt to newness; one day, one week, one month at a time.
- 2. Take time to learn your new job well.
- 3. Keep up with hobbies, reading habits and utilization of proven skills and interest.
- 4. Expect to be challenged by the new.
- 5. Expect to offer new challenges.

In addition to the insights provided by the two Maryknoll visitors, the participants also brought up interesting aspects of the problem of transition. Space allows us to mention just one that is especially worth remembering:

We missionaries don't have a monopoly on insecurity! It is a common experience even for those who have never been abroad, and, as one participant put it, "we are all going through transitions, so we share common needs".

Ref. IMU Report Feb.- Mar. 1988.  
Orwell Park, Dublin, 6, Ireland.

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## DIALOGUE GASPING FOR BREATH?

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Felix Wilfred.

We need to open new frontiers and find new trajectories on the horizon of inter-religious dialogue. This would call for a fresh and deeper theological reflection than what we have been used to. While fully recognizing and affirming the validity of the reasons generally adduced for the practice of dialogue, such as... The Kingdom of God is broader than the Church... The Spirit is active also beyond the borders of the Church... We need to create a new world and a just society. etc., it is nevertheless important to realize that today we can enter into a meaningful dialogue with other religious traditions only by facing certain complex theological questions.

A critical reflection on the practice of dialogue is bound to lead us to the conclusion that traditional theological frameworks can no longer meaningfully integrate into themselves the new experiences, nor adequately respond to new questions and problems that continue to emerge. In this paper I intend to focus on six theological questions the study of which can shape the future of dialogue as they have far-reaching practical implications.

### 1. A SHIFT IN THE LOCATION OF THE QUESTION

Though geographically dialogue is taking place in various countries of Asia through meetings, live-ins, ashrams, etc., yet the spiritual, theological and mental climate of it is that of the Western discussions on the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions. It is said time and time again that the Church has in the course of its long history encountered various peoples, races and cultures. Dialogue would be, then, the extension into Asia of the same process which characterized the Church's encounter with the Greek world, with various peoples of Europe and their religions.

What is the Place of Christianity in Asia? The situation in which we live today in Asia is markedly different. It is fundamentally important to recognize and state this fact clearly. This will avoid simplistic parallelisms between the past and now.

The first step towards new frontiers in dialogue is to be aware of the new location of the question. The question has to shift from how can Christianity relate to other religions to what is the place of Christianity itself in a religiously pluralistic Asian world. This shift would imply two things. First of all the relationship between religions cannot be considered in the abstract, at the conceptual level. This question entails also the context of the wider world with its struggles, problems, hopes and expectations.

The Question cannot be Christianity-Centered: Secondly, the new location

means that we cannot now seriously enter into dialogue with other living faiths if our question is Christianity centered. In other words, as long as we are concerned with asking how the Church can relate to other religions, the focus of attention turns to the Church and to making it relevant, meaningful and at home. This brings in its train mostly structured forms of dialogue and an organized enterprise of inculturation. All this is the result of a question posed from without. It is a question that has as its background the experience of long centuries of isolation of Christianity from the other religions of humanity.

The Concrete Socio-Political Context of Asia: As long as the point of departure does not change, we will be concentrating on such questions as salvation in other religions, because we have spiritually and theologically transported ourselves to the perspective of European and North American Christianity and its history with all its discussions concerning "vera et falsa religio". For us, the point of departure for dialogue is the concrete socio-political and historical context of Asia. From within this situation the question is thrown up about the place of Christianity and its relationship to other religions which form part of this context. These religions have contributed in various ways to shape the context, and are continuously interacting with it. The colours and shades of Christianity as well as of all religions, the ideals they profess and the claim they make can be seen and tested only when they pass through the prism of the Asian realities.

Buddhism in Europe: What is meant by the shift in the questions will be better understood if we reverse the situation. Instead of Christianity in Asia, let us think of Buddhism in Europe today. The Buddhists, a microscopic minority in Europe, might well ask how can Buddhism be at home in Europe where Christianity is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the people. This would be basically a self-centered question in as much as Buddhism aims ultimately to preserve the old identity it had in the East with some adaptations to the local European situation. On the contrary, if Buddhism asks what is its place in the technological civilization of contemporary Europe, in an advanced industrial and consumeristic society, it is on the path of reconstructing its self-identity anew which can take place only by an encounter at depth with Christianity, the matrix of European culture.

## II. SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The problems deriving from the mixture of religion and politics in Asia are compounded by the fact that in many cases ethnic identity is also religious identity. For example, to be Thai is to be Buddhist, to be Malay is to be Muslim, Sinhalese means Buddhist while to be Tamil is to be Hindu, and so on. The interplay of religious and political forces in many Asian societies has caused endemic communal and ethnic conflicts, exploitation and oppression weighing heavily, specially on the poorest sections of society. All this is far from the goal of unity and integration of peoples, groups, tribes, etc., towards which politics and religion are called to work.

Universal Human Values: In this overall situation, there is, I think, no other way out than to accept as point of departure universal human values, secular and democratic ideals and institutions, human rights, etc., inspite of the limitations and conditionings of the ideals. This alone in the complex situation of today could pave the way for ensuring justice, equality, freedom to the people from all machinations and manipulations. Having said this, I should immediately add that the mere affirmation of these values, rights, institutions and ideals will, so to say, cut no ice in Asian societies. In fact, the modern ideals of society, democracy and the values they embody have not been able to strike deep roots in the Asian soil, as the experience of the past few decades has amply proved. To be effective and operative in Asian societies these values, ideals and institutions need to be appropriated by the people and integrated into the subjective and emotional sphere of individuals and groups.

A Religious Foundation: The functioning of a modern secular state with a just societal order paradoxically requires, in Asia, a religious foundation. This, in fact, should not be strange, for historically in Asia religion has played a decisive role in the shaping of political ideals and institutions. Religions have lent ethical perspectives and principles less the political order should turn out to be a perversion of power. Secular and democratic ideals, therefore, stand in need of being rooted in the religious tradition and of being impregnated by ethical values from its resources. The ethical and religious void in these ideals and institutions have caused serious danger to the public life, allowing corruption and bribery to thrive in politics and bureaucracy.

Diverse and Polarized Tendencies: In the pursuit of dialogue on political and social questions, we should take into account the fact that there exist diverse and even polarized tendencies within one and the same religious tradition. Practically all Asian religions today manifest two strains-one open to universalism and re-interpretation, the other more withdrawn into tradition and underscoring the hedges and fences which mark off one's religion from the rest. Groups of this latter trend often determine the political course of a nation by exerting pressures on the government which for strategic reasons gravitates towards them and yields to their demands. A case in point is the situation in Indonesia.

Dialogue Directed to Fundamentalist Groups: Christian dialogue with other religionists has by and large overlooked the political context, and even if some political questions have been on the dialogue agenda, they have been discussed mostly with those groups and segments that represent the more universalistic and open trend in a religion. Such a dialogue is relatively easy. What is more difficult, but very important for the future is that our dialogue be directed to fundamentalistic groups. Though these groups are deeply biassed against Christianity, efforts to dialogue with them could become very fruitful in as much as they can, with their sharp critical sense, bring home to Christians, certain truths about themselves and lead them to discover their place and role in the Asian context.

### III. DIALOGUE AND THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND COSMIC VISION

The conclusion of the previous section leads us on to another question of great importance for the future of dialogue. The meeting of various images of the human person is ultimately a meeting of different world-visions.

It is generally recognized that the Judaeo-Christian tradition represents a strong anthropocentric vision while the rest of Asian religious traditions represent a cosmic vision. This point need not be elaborated here. However, it must be underlined that the Christian anthropocentrism invoked for support by modern science and technology is only the crust that has grown around a more sane Biblical core affirming the pre-eminence of the human person, his or her freedom, dignity and resemblance to God, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the person towards the whole creation. The anthropocentrism which is part of contemporary technocratic world and civilization is something which was set in motion more immediately by Humanism, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Anthropocentric Turned into Ego-Centrism: The tragedy is that the affirmation of the human person started with the humanistic tradition has ended up, paradoxically, in the negation of the person and the progressive destruction of the natural environment. What began as anthropocentric vision has turned into ego-centrism, individualism, and led to the emergence of the dangerous 'one-dimensional person'. The affirmation of complete autonomy for Humanity vis-a-vis nature, the over-selfconfidence and the passionate drive to realize anything simply because it is possible, with total disregard of its cost in human, social and environmental terms, all these have precipitated a crisis of survival and have brought Humanity to the brink of nuclear disaster.

Web of Relationships: The cosmic vision consists in the realization of the truth that the essence of reality is communion, harmony, inter-dependence, and that the human person is a part of this web of relationships which constitute reality as an organic whole. Ingrained in this cosmic or organic vision is also the truth that there is an intrinsic relationship between nature and the well-being of humanity.

A Clear Priority of the Cosmic Vision: The world and the Asian societies need to be redeemed from the crisis of survival into which anthropocentrism has thrown them. A just and righteous world-order can be no more a pious wish. It has become an imperative need. In these circumstances, it is not enough to speak about complementarity of the two visions - anthropocentric and cosmic; the situation warrants a clear priority of the cosmic vision over anthropocentrism in today's world.

A Liberative Role: The Asian religions can and ought to play a liberative role by presenting an alternative vision. Christianity in this context should enter into dialogue with these religions and join them in their task. In this dialogue Christianity can draw upon the Wis-

dom tradition of the Bible. The Wisdom tradition in many respects is closer to Asian religions and their vision. Having the experiential and the mysterious as its characteristic, Wisdom is able to relate and harmoniously blend the mystery of God, the mystery of humanity and the reality of the cosmos, and point the way to the maintenance of righteousness and righteous order.

#### IV. THE WIDER HORIZON OF CREATION-CENTERED THEOLOGY

Creation and Salvation: A dichotomy between creation and redemption or salvation, the latter identified with salvation - history, has crept into our theological thinking. A static idea of creation on the one hand and on the other a narrowing down of God's saving activity to a group of people, a nation of the past, underlie this dichotomy. The result is the subordination of creation to salvation focusing on the past with emphasis on the saving events of God rather than on the truth that God is one who saves. The expression of this tendency is to read the entire Bible under the leitmotif of salvation-history. This conception has resulted in devaluing creation as nothing more than a stage for the unfolding of the history of salvation or redemption. The Bible with its complex and variegated nature defies any casting of its content into a single mould of a linear salvation-history. This mould does not respect the didactical narratives, the Wisdom materials and the themes with which they are interwoven.

A Fight against Chaos: Today renowned scholars have convincingly shown that creation and the ordering of the world by God is the most fundamental element of faith and Israel's historical experience and events of salvation are the concretization or realization of the creative power of God. In fact, many of the salvific events are portrayed in the terms of the creation narratives, as a fight against chaos. Similarly at the root of O.T. Wisdom tradition lies, in fact, a theology of creation. For the order and righteousness (in Asian terms the dharma) which is at the heart of Biblical Wisdom is only a reflection of the original harmonious order of creation.

Common Effort Towards a Harmonious Order: Such an understanding of creation as comprehending within its range of expanse the historical events of salvation as well as Wisdom is bound to alter our conceptions about the relationship to other religions, peoples and cultures, and make us engage ourselves with them in a common effort towards the realization of a harmonious order in human life (satya), society and politics (dharma), an order which would be the original order of creation or the cosmic order (rta) which sustains the world. It is within the dynamism of God's creation and in the context of a growing and evolving world that God's saving events among peoples and nations are to be placed. In a way they are all part of God's creation. Therefore creation is most fundamental and universal, comprising within itself the birth, growth and prospering of everything-persons, nature, the world, the entire humanity.

God's Continuous Blessing: This perspective of creation will make us see

in the Bible not only the saving acts of God but equally God's activity of blessing for life and growth in all forms (Gen 1:22,28). While God's saving actions are extraordinary and do not make a continuous story, the blessing activity of God is continuous and sustained, and extends to all the nations of the earth. "By you shall all the families of the earth bless themselves" (Gen 12:3). God is then not only someone who saves from extraordinary situations of danger but also one who blesses. And this blessing is spoken of about individuals, families, nations, and every kind of living creature (Gen 1:22). Such a view of creation and the understanding of God's saving deeds in its light opens up new horizons and fresh perspectives for dialogue with other religions.

#### V. ASIAN THEOLOGICAL APPROACH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

A theology closer to the Asian vision of reality and capable of leading us into a new era of dialogue needs to be elaborated. Without presuming to do that let me point out some elements which I think, to be characteristic of the Asian approach to reality operating in threefold relationships; (i) the whole and the part; (ii) the universal and the particular; (iii) between contrary, or even contradictory, elements.

- (i) Reality in its Entirety: The Asian approach to reality is total, that is, it tries to know, experience and realize reality in its entirety. Hence in the understanding of any part of reality, the focus is on the ontological inter-relationship of the part to the whole. The web of relationship by which the whole reality is interconnected and by which it subsists is vital to the understanding of every part. This contrasts with an architectonic approach in which the parts are considered independent and having only a functional and external relationship to a mechanistically conceived whole. In the Asian ethos there is an understanding, a seeing, a certain immediacy with the whole reality in every knowing or understanding of any part of it.

Understanding by Intuition: This is an understanding by intuition into the whole reality, and it goes beyond ideological reflection and discursive thought. Hence progress in knowledge is not characterized as learning and expertise, namely the ability to analyze a particular segment or part of reality, but as wisdom, namely the capacity to relate the part to the whole and the whole to the part by a deeper understanding of the inner order and harmony binding them together. Here truth is not something to be possessed; it is something that appears and lets itself be seen progressively as we grow in wisdom.

- (ii) The Universal and Particular: Similarly, a right understanding of reality calls for a correct perception of the relationship between the universal and the particular. In the technological view of reality and a theology attendant on it, the universal is accorded pride of place, and the particular is considered as something peripheral, marginal and secondary. This has serious practical consequences. In the name of the universal, the particular can be obliterated, done away with. This is the logic of all imperialism,

political, economic and cultural. For example one particular culture would be presented as the universal culture in the face of which all other cultures have to bow down and surrender as happened in colonial times and continues to happen today through neo-colonialism.

The inherent tendency to conquer the particular by the universal manifests itself in the conquest of peoples, races, cultures in the name of a general "universal" culture, learning, technology, political system, ideology. An example is the extolling of the universal Church in such a way as to consider the local churches as nothing more than its extensions, overlooking thus their specific problems, struggles, cultures, experiences, etc.

Sensitive to the Particular: The Asian ethos is very attentive and sensitive to the particular, the concrete. Every particular is let live, respected, fostered for what it is. No attempt is made to reduce the particular to an abstraction, to ready-made categories of thought. This is the way of Asian pluralism which is part of its cognitive ethos. It contrasts with the logic of imperialism and authoritarianism which cannot tolerate the particular in its specificity, difference, colour and tone. The Asian approach to truth is not by abstraction nor through universals, but through the experience of plurality at all levels.

- (iii) Accepting Contradictions: The recognition of pluralism brings us face to face with the question of contradictions and conflicts which are part of our experience. The technological epistemology and the architectonic view are too quick to resolve these experiences by the affirmation of the principle of contradiction which excludes all that appear to contradict what is affirmed as the truth. The Asian pattern of thinking and way of life clearly demonstrate how the people here can co-exist with and accept what manifestly are incompatible thoughts, situations, experiences, etc. This is not due to any lack of rigour in thinking and logic. The subtleties and sophistication of some schools of Indian philosophy, for example are evidence enough. Behind the acceptance of contradictions lie two great realizations: (i) that reality encompasses the mystery of humankind, world and the Divine and that it cannot be fathomed by any single individual or group nor can it be encapsulated into any formula; (ii) that it is in-built into reality that it should bear in itself the opposites. This latter point is clearly evidenced by the Taoist principle of yin-yang, that is the constitution of reality by the opposites male and female, positive and negative, active and passive. Contraries in Asian view become complementary.

Though Asian Eyes: In conclusion: what does all this mean in terms of dialogue? The difficulties in dialogue are often due to the fact that the cognitive instruments and tools the partner employs are different. It is through them that one perceives the religious world of the other. We Asian Christians have been looking at other religions through the cognitive instruments developed in the West and supplied by it. Dialogue will take a new turn when we learn to look at Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, etc., through Asian eyes and with an Asian mind.

## VI. DIALOGUE AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Symbols, myths, stories, paradoxes, etc., are the favourite Asian language to give expression to truth. And they are the language of the Asian religions, too. In fact, the Indian tradition abounds in myths and symbols, the Chinese in paradoxes and the Japanese have recourse to aesthetic forms. The language of symbol, myth, etc., is capable of holding together the past and the present, the universal and the particular, elements of conflict and contradiction. It expresses profound intuitions about human life, society, the world and the Divine in a much more powerful way than what discursive reasoning and the language of logic are capable of. It suggests more than what is literal, for it is the key to unlock deeper levels and dimensions of reality.

Participants in the Truth: Symbolic and mythical language does not leave us cold "knowers" or dispassionate observers; it takes hold of us and leads us to the world it indicates and makes us participants in the truth it communicates, transforming us in the process; it is a language which leads to commitment. The symbol is the language of the spirit; it is an endless opening to the endless mystery.

Religion is the Core of Culture: In Asia no separation between culture and religion is possible. Religion is the core element of culture and the matrix for many social mores. From its vision, cultural forms take their configuration and draw their meaning. Entering into the world of symbols, myths, etc., is to enter into the culture of a people. Popular religiosity, ritual celebrations, etc., are impregnated by myths and stories, and it is through them that the people experience and express the divine, the human and the cosmos. They also express vividly their struggles, their aspirations, their hopes, joys and sorrows. No wonder then that sanctuaries and celebrations are associated with myths. Shrines fascinate the masses and draw huge crowds. Our dialogue should enter into this world of the peoples with their stories, myths, folklore and songs. In this way it will avoid being a structured dialogue of elites, often speaking an esoteric language and will strike deep roots among the people and speak their language. Dialogue will thus receive a new impetus from below.

Re-express Experience in Symbols: The Christian community must learn to re-express and re-formulate its experience in the language of symbols, paradoxes, aesthetic forms, etc. Such efforts may be resisted and looked at with apprehension, and this is quite natural. We have been accustomed to see the Christian message and moral ideals couched in a doctrinaire form and rigorous logical language. This form and language are controllable while the symbolic language may be feared and resisted as it may not give any kind of security or control. Christianity may need to submit its traditional language to a critical study within the Asian context.

Internal Cohesion: At the level of symbols, the religions have yet another important role. A society cannot be maintained by its external organization alone. The internal cohesion of a people, society or a nation can be generated and sustained only by symbols which become the point of unity and a force of integration. They give



solidity and stability to society by stimulating from within itself the necessary forces. In Asia, the encounter with technological modernity and the mingling of various ethnic races and groups (which is due to industrialization and urbanization), have caused a deep crisis and even a conflict of symbols, with great repercussions on society. Any amount of political and bureaucratic organization will not be able to restore a harmonious order within Asian societies unless a healing at the level of symbols takes place.

New and Innovative Symbols: The new experiences of Asian peoples at all levels - political, religious, social are such that they cannot be integrated and contained within the traditional symbolic system. The complexity of the situation presents a great challenge to the religions which have been the guardians of cultures and have given stability and legitimacy to societies. And this challenge is twofold. On the one hand, it is of fundamental importance that every religion re-interprets its own symbols and re-works constantly its interpretative framework so as to perceive and integrate new experiences and situations. This is possible because unlike signs and works, which tend to be rigid, symbols have an expansive potential, that is, they can grow in meaning and open us to wider horizons of reality. On the other hand, given the role of religion in culture and in the maintenance of the order of society through its symbolic language, the religions should individually and collectively create new and innovative symbols which will reflect new experiences and sustain the society in equality and justice.

#### SUMMARY

Contrary to all appearances, dialogue today is in fact gasping for breath. It is getting suffocated and constricted by the narrowness of the theological ambit in which it is moving. Fresh air is required for dialogue; vitalizing energies are to be injected into it. The horizons of dialogue need to be widened, starting from a change in the very location from where we approach the inter-relationship of religions. Religions have to meet at the arena of Asian socio-political realities. The contextualization of dialogue is fundamental. Breaking new grounds in dialogue would call for a fresh anthropology, a recognition of the priority of organic vision over anthropocentrism, the employing of an Asian world vision and the approach to truth through symbolic language. These are our challenges. The future of dialogue will depend on whether and how we face them.

Ref. Vidyajyoti Journal,  
4A Raj Nivas Marg, Delhi 11054.  
Vol L1 No. 10 October 1987.

- end -

sommaire de ce numero

(suite de la P.111)

deux chapitres généraux récents de congrégations missionnaires, où les pauvres ont été qualifiés non seulement comme objets, mais comme sujets de l'évangélisation. Il a fallu de longs débats pour que ce point de vue soit accepté par les capitulants de l'une des deux Congrégations.

"Le Missionnaire rentre dans son pays" a-t-on coutume de dire. Mais est-ce bien vrai? Les gens ont changé, la vie sociale et politique du pays ne sont plus les mêmes, les parents peuvent être morts, la famille dispersée... Où le missionnaire est-il vraiment "chez lui"? Maria Rieckelman et Jack Sullivan nous donnent quelques suggestions fort utiles pour tous ceux qui ont passé de longues années dans une situation missionnaire de culture différente.

Le dernier article examine la possibilité de nouvelles frontières dans le dialogue entre les religions. On ne peut pas éviter des problèmes théologiques complexes. La question fondamentale du dialogue doit être modifiée: au lieu de "Comment le Christianisme peut-il être en rapport avec d'autres religions?" il faudrait se demander "Quelle est la place du Christianisme dans un monde asiatique religieusement pluraliste?". L'article de Félix Wilfred a dû être réduit considérablement par manque de place. Le texte intégral, que nous recommandons, est disponible au Centre de Documentation de SEDOS.

Ce numéro se termine par des nouvelles et des annonces.

NEWS

Julienne de Wolf ICM. We are very sorry to announce the death of Sister Julienne in a car accident in San Antonio, Texas just before Easter. She was crossing the road with another ICM Sister when she was struck by a hit-and-run driver. Participants at the 1985 SEDOS Seminar at Villa Cavalletti on the topic JUSTICE AND EVANGELIZATION will recall Julienne's vital account of her ministry - first with the United Farm Workers in California and later with the desperately poor farmworkers of North Carolina. At the time of her death Julienne was helping to organise a new pastoral foundation among Mexican migrants in the 'colonias' of Brownsville, Texas. We offer our deep sympathy to the members of her congregation on her loss. May she rest in peace and may her spirit of dedication to the marginalized continue to be an inspiration to her sisters. Their support for Julienne, even when they could not actually share in her ministry, was a sustaining encouragement to her. (see SEDOS Bulletin 1985/Nos. 7 & 8 of 1st May, 1985).

EVANGELIZATION: THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNITY

There were over one hundred participants at the SEDOS Seminar on this topic held at Villa Cavalletti from 15th - 19th March, 1988. For the

first time some lay missionaries and representatives from the Commission for World Mission and Evangelization of the W.C.C., Geneva were among those who attended the Seminar. A report of the Seminar will appear in the next issue of SEDOS Bulletin.

#### A NIGERIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

A recent issue of THE AMBASSADOR, the interesting monthly magazine of the MISSIONARIES OF ST. PAUL, in Nigeria contains the news of the celebration of their first ten years. The idea of a Missionary Institute for Nigerians was first mooted by Cardinal Ekandem in 1976. The following year they began their preparations, on a national scale, for sending Nigerian missionaries out to Africa and beyond. That same year a letter from the Executive Director in the office of Black Ministry in the Archdiocese of New York, U.S.A., expressed the hope that the missionaries trained in St. Paul's would one day be sent to New York. The Society of St. Patrick (Kiltegan) has been associated with the staffing of the new seminary from its foundation. Some of the final year seminarians were appointed in 1987 to Texas, Liberia, and Cameroun. Those going to Texas were the first African priests ever to be appointed on ordination day to pastoral work in the United States - an interesting example of "the ebb and flow of the Gospel message". See Enrique Dussel's article in this issue of the SEDOS Bulletin (p.117).

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### COMING EVENTS

#### I

#### MY NEIGHBOUR'S FAITH AND MINE.

The third and final session on inter-faith dialogue. Facilitator, Michael Amaladoss, SJ.

April 28, 1988  
4.00 p.m. - 6.30 p.m.  
at the  
SVD Generalate

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