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JOYOUS CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS

"When they arrive in cities, Recife for instance, they look for somewhere to live. Often the wife is pregnant. They end up by building miserable hovels - you might say sub-hovels - where no one else wants to live, nearly always in the swamps. And there is no ox or donkey, but there is a pig and chickens sometimes. That's the crib, the living crib... At Christmas, naturally, I celebrate Mass in various churches. But I also like to say Mass in one of these living cribs.

Why should I go on pilgrimage to Bethlehem, to the historic birthplace of Christ when I see Jesus being born here, physically every moment of the day? He's called Gabriela, Maria, Francisco, Antonio. But he or she is the Christ. Oh how blind we are, how deaf we are! How hard it is to grasp that the gospel is still going on". (Archbishop Helder Camera).



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### IN THIS ISSUE:

The main feature of this issue is the Report of the recent SEDOS Seminar on RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AS A MISSION IMPERATIVE. Notes on the speakers will be found with their texts in this Report.

Sr. MILLICENT FRANCIS of AGRIMISSIONO gave a short introduction to the theme illustrated by a typical example of an ill-conceived development project.

Fr. JOHN MUTISO commented on the video THE POLITICS OF HUNGER IN KENYA - parts of which were projected at the Seminar. He illustrated how the ruthless pursuit of profits affects the lives and land ownership of local small farmers. Deterioration of the land follows on long-term "one crop" development (in this case - pineapples) and on the use of pesticides.

Fr. Mutiso also outlined details of co-operation between his Vatican Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity and The World Council of Churches in preparing the WCC Conference on JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION which will take place in 1990 in SEOUL.

FR. BERNARD PRZEWOZNY reminded his audience that alarm signals about serious ecological damage go back to the beginning of this century but it has taken recent discoveries and disasters to alert people to the danger of doing irreparable damage to the earth.

Blessed Sacrament Sisters in Australia reflect on the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, broken for the poor - sacrament of the integrity of creation.

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## INTEGRITY OF CREATION: A MISSIONARY IMPERATIVE

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Bernard Przewozny, O.F.M. Conv.

### INTRODUCTION

The Ultimate Problem: The world and humanity are at risk from the environmental crisis created by the industrial revolution unleashed two hundred years ago. Alarming signals of this danger reach us from all directions: industrial accidents which release various pollutants into the environment, depletion of the ozone layer, loss of biological diversity, urbanization, and so on. Environmental problems are rightly perceived as pervasive of all facets of human activity. It is becoming more and more clear that, in a certain but real sense, the environmental crisis which humankind must face and solve is the ultimate problem. On the other hand, it is also clear that an all-embracing institutional structure capable of dealing with the crisis - to ensure the correct identification of its causes and to implement effective remedies - does not yet exist. As the participants at last year's Study Week on "A MODERN APPROACH TO THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT", organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, pointed out, difficulties inherent in the very analysis of the risk are further exacerbated by its complexity and by the widespread uncertainty about its precise nature.

Many factors are involved in perpetuating and aggravating the environmental crisis in which we find ourselves: the global interdependence of development and underdevelopment, the negative cultural values of consumerism, social factors, demographics, - each one of these elements, and many others, would have to be examined in detail in order to acquire even a simple idea of the extent to which the integrity of creation is endangered.

A christian definition of integrity of creation must also include the kind of reconciliation of humankind within the biosphere which is described by the New Testament: human beings can become new creatures (Gal 6:15), and can continually be changed into Christ's likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). Integrity of creation must therefore be based on the truth that a dynamic new order has already begun and now waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God... because creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom 8:19,21).

Six Explosions. Wa Kalembe Malu of the Pontifical Academy recently pointed out that in the last forty years, as never before in history, we have been facing six different kinds of explosions:

- the nuclear explosion of matter;
- the explosion of life in demographic expansion and in the prolongation of life;

- the explosion of scientific and technological knowledge;
- the explosion of intelligence or of the application of knowledge to society;
- the explosion caused by insufficient participation in management decisions concerning the use of intelligence and scientific research;
- and, finally, hunger.

All six explosions, as accelerated processes endemic to the last generation, augment the environmental crisis and render difficult its solution. In one generation, we have passed from light generated by fossil fuels to light produced by nuclear energy, from the rifle to nuclear missiles, from mail delivered on horseback in some parts of the world to intercontinental communications via satellites, from simple animal husbandry and breeding to genetic engineering. And, scientists tell us, there is no end to what else humankind may invent or do in the next generation. But we have not matured nor are we maturing rapidly enough in our domination and use of what science and technology make available to us. We can, therefore, safely say that scientific and economic development does not always produce full human development.

### 1. SOME STATISTICS

It is estimated that some 35,000 vegetal and animal species will be lost by the year 2,000.

Tropical forests are shrinking by 11 million hectares per year. For example, some 30,718 hectares of forests were damaged in Europe in 1986 alone.

An estimated 26 billion tons of topsoil on croplands is lost annually in excess of new soil formation.

Some 6 million hectares of new desert are formed annually by land mismanagement.

Underground water tables are falling in parts of Africa, China, India, and North America as demand for water rises above aquifer recharge rates. Some 50 pesticides contaminate groundwater in 32 American states. In 1980, some 140 acidified lakes devoid of fish were found in the Canadian province of Ontario.

Some 2,500 U.S. toxic waste sites need cleaning up. The extent of toxic contamination worldwide is unknown.

1.7 billion people lack access to clean water, and 1.2 billion to adequate sanitation. Every year 60 million persons in developing countries must be offered the possibility to earn a livelihood.

A person in an industrial country consumes far more and places far greater pressure on natural resources than an additional person in the developing world.

### 2. PERCEPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

The first warnings of the growing environmental catastrophe came from scientists; the first public outcry was emotional, apocalyptic, and, at times, ideologically inspired. Various organizations - both governmental and private - have contributed to our awareness of the extent, complexity and seriousness of the environmental crisis. In this

regard, we should mention some of the organizations: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the World Wildlife Fund (now, World Wide Fund for Nature), the Club of Rome, etc.

On the negative side, it should be noted that in many cases, even today conservationist organizations tend to decry the effects rather than the causes of environmental degradation. Furthermore, they are often oriented toward single issues (the protection of endangered species) or point to single causes of the environmental disaster (demographic expansion).

Some of the initial outcry was tainted by an antiscientific and even antihuman mentality. The human being, it seemed, had become the only destructive element in the biosphere. So-called natural disasters and calamities were considered to be benign. That nature's 'violence' more than human activity has destroyed countless species in the biosphere was forgotten. Many suggested, and some still do, that humankind should return to a primitive agricultural past.

At best, these reactions implied that the model of humankind's relation to the environment needed revision; at worst, they denied the human being's innate and distinctive creative ability. It should also be noted that, because of the interdependence which exists among all entities in the biosphere, it is almost impossible to distinguish between 'nature' modified by human activity and 'nature' in its so-called pure state. Furthermore, to return to a primitive, 'uncontaminated', past is not only impractical, if not impossible, but even harmful. For example, properly farmed soil is subject to rapid degradation only when human beings abandon it. In other words, ecological sound use of soil is good ecology. And, with the The Gubbio Document, written by environmentalists and Franciscans for the 1982 International 'TERRA MATER' Seminar, we can say that 'technology, one of the most distinctive expressions of humankind and of human creativity, is not harmful as such but that it can satisfy human needs only if used in a way which respects human dignity and the natural processes of Planet Earth'.

The First Statements of the Church to show an awareness of the problem date back to the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, GAUDIUM ET SPES, promulgated in 1965. In Part I, Chapter III, 'Human Activity in the World', the constitution defends scientific and technological progress (# 34) but insists on the regulation of human activity: 'Here then is the norm of human activity - to harmonize with the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God's will and design, and to enable persons as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfill their total vocation' (# 35).

In 1971, in his Apostolic Letter OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS, Paul VI wrote rather forcefully that 'by an ill-considered exploitation of nature humanity risks destroying it and becomes in turn the victim of this degradation' (# 21). Furthermore, he noted that 'Flight from the land, industrial growth, continual demographic expansion and the attraction of urban centers bring about concentrations of population, the extent of which is difficult to imagine' (# 8). Paul VI paid particular attention to urbanization: 'Urbanization, undoubtedly an irreversible stage in the development of human societies, confronts us with difficult problems. How are we to master its growth, regulate its organization, and successfully accomplish its animation for the good of all?' (# 10).

John Paul II, in his first Encyclical REDEMPTOR HOMINIS (1979; # 8. 15, 16) and in his most recent one, SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS (1987; # 34), and in numerous discourses, has taken to heart humankind's need to improve its relation to the environment. Not only the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity but also several episcopal conferences, among them the Conference of the Dominican Republic, have addressed the problem.

The concern of the World Council of Churches for the environment has become clear since its Sixth Assembly, held in Vancouver in 1983. Some of its earlier documents also show an awareness of the problem.

### 3. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The environmental catastrophe is multi-dimensional. Some problems are worldwide or global; others are related to particular geographic or climatic conditions, development, habitat, and so on. The causes of environmental degradation, as we suggested in the introduction, are legion and their interdependence is not clearly understood or easily manageable. Let us illustrate some of them.

a. Regional Problems. Today, many countries experience great difficulty in solving environmental problems on their own. This is partly due to transboundary problems, such as acid rain and the management of international river systems. In some cases, individual countries may have little or no control over what is or will be exported to their territories by the atmosphere, water, or land. Nevertheless, their forests, surface and ground waters, soil, and even the health of their populations are thus exposed to grave risks. Furthermore, countries may not possess the economic or political strength to protect themselves against such damage.

Some examples of these problems can be readily cited. When the British noted that emissions from chimneys at steel mills were polluting the immediate countryside, they built taller chimneys. But, then the Swedes complained about tree and soil damage caused by acid rain which was produced by fumes from British chimneys. To clean up the pollution of the Rhine required the cooperation of the countries through which it flows. It is encouraging to note that corrective measures of this sort are increasing. The Mediterranean Action Plan to save the sea has been established within the framework of the political realities of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Basin.

b. Global Problems. Beyond the rising concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>, which may lead to the greenhouse effect, and the depletion of the ozone layer, the general pollution of the environment by chemical substances is a serious concern. Chemicals present a risk to living organisms and may also create global problems such as climate change. Once a risk is characterized, it should be managed. Some of the appropriate measures may require the setting of standards for effluent streams, development of 'clean technologies', testing of new chemicals prior to marketing, restriction of exports of hazardous chemicals, waste minimization and waste detoxification, prevention and mitigation of chemical accidents, etc. The scientists are confident that the problem is manageable if appropriate action is taken. The MONTREAL PROTOCOL of 1987 to protect the ozone layer is an important step in such global management of the ecological problem.

c. Biological Diversity. The conclusions of the 1987 Study Week of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on 'A MODERN APPROACH TO THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT' remind us that the unsustainable and destructive use of the land and other common resources is driving a high proportion of the world's species of plants, animals and microorganisms into extinction. Now, since human societies are based almost entirely on their ability to utilize other species for their own benefit, the irreversible depletion of the earth's biological diversity is extremely serious. Some species are important sources of medicines. For example, certain plants possess medicinal qualities which may help cure leukemia. Thus, depletion of biological diversity is a great loss from the economic, aesthetic, moral and scientific points of view, and will greatly limit future human potential.

It should be noted that the current deforestation of the Amazon is harming the soil, endangering the earth's ability to produce oxygen, destroying native populations and their rights to ethnic and cultural identity, and depleting one of the earth's biologically richest areas.

d. Economic Problems. The management of the environment is also an economic problem. According to the document Gubbio 1987: TOWARD THE THIRD MILLENNIUM, prepared for the Second International 'TERRA MATER' Seminar, the economic growth of human communities must [sooner or later] find an insurmountable limit in the capacity of the endurance and regeneration of environmental resources'. An essential condition to environmental protection, therefore, is a more equitable sharing of capital and natural resources, that is, a globally more just economic system.

The international debt has been shown to contribute to environmental destruction. Thus, one of the more difficult adjustments that humankind will have to make is the following: sooner or later, it must recognize that income is an insufficient indicator of progress. Furthermore, whole countries will have to accept the costs that the defence of the environment involves. When they do, such costs may even provoke lesser rates of growth or, indeed, a decrease of income. But a drastic reduction of these costs can be achieved by investing in the research and development of new technologies, which, from the initial phases of their planning, should be oriented toward the conservation of the environment.

The production system must, therefore, be subjected to the common sense rule that it cannot produce substances or be involved in manufacturing processes whose non-hazardous nature to health and the environment has not been previously proved. Finally, if basic needs are to be satisfied everywhere in the world, then certain lifestyles in the more affluent parts of the world must be reconsidered in view of a more equitable enjoyment of goods by all populations.

e. Development and Underdevelopment. As John Paul II pointed out in his Encyclical SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS, the environmental issue is bound up with the nature of development or progress. Since natural resources are limited and since they belong to all of humankind, then development cannot be unlimited or without social obligation according to the moral demands of solidarity and social justice.

For a number of years now, environmentalists have been trying to define progress. Last year, they invited an interreligious group

[Catholics (represented by Franciscans), Greek Orthodox, Waldensians, Buddhists, Hindus] to help them formulate a new concept of progress. The document of that Seminar, Gubbio 1987: TOWARD THE THIRD MILLENNIUM, states: 'We must, first of all, distinguish between material and spiritual progress, safeguarding nonetheless the constant tendency toward their dynamic equilibrium. Indeed, should not material progress have as its goal spiritual growth? In fact, history teaches us that merely material progress can carry us far from spiritual progress, reducing itself to egocentrism, conflict, conquest, exploitation, profiteering and discrimination. Merely material progress, destructive as it is of the man-nature relation, ends up destroying itself.'

Progress, therefore, should be understood in an integral sense, that is, in relation to all human values in their environmental context, avoiding the subordination of those values only to political and economic needs. In this vision of progress, even if it requires noteworthy self-denial and great discipline, men and women rediscover themselves as the simple administrator and custodian of the goods entrusted to them and regain their freedom from the slavery of greed. We are therefore convinced that it is necessary to form people according to this meaning of true progress.

Progress should not impede openness to an absolute future which transcends the history of humankind. The future depends on a new consciousness, culture and formation, capable of creating a new appreciation of nature as the place where we live our religious experiences... We cannot forget that the environment belongs also to future generations and not only to the present inhabitants of the planet. Contemporary consumerism, by wasting natural resources and human energies without any justification whatsoever, closes the doors to a better future. OUR COMMON FUTURE of The Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, does not disagree with this statement.

f. Moral and Cultural Problems. The solution to the environmental problem is not merely scientific, technical, political or economic; it is both a moral and a cultural issue.

Some of the moral issues are already implicit in what we have been saying so far. Allow me to cite SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS: 'When it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity... A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization - three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development' (# 34). Furthermore, sin and structures of sin must be overcome so that 'interdependence... be transformed into solidarity, based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. That which human industry produces through the processing of raw materials, with the contribution of work, must serve equally for the good of all' (# 39).

To illustrate that the solution to the environmental problem is a cultural issue, intimately related to development, allow me to cite the example of the Kung Bushman of the Kalahari desert in Botswana. According to reliable anthropological studies, these gatherers and hunters



work only two and a half days a week in order to maintain a satisfying level of livelihood. They are able to do so because of the influence of their mythologies, social institutions and rituals, and because of their precise knowledge of the environment, animals and plants, on which their survival depends. By contrast, it is interesting to note that many people from the industrialized world who have ventured into that desert, after working with the most sophisticated technologies for weeks without end, soon grew tired and abandoned it.

René Dubos described such cultural contrasts rather well when he wrote: 'In present parlance, a society is civilized when it is affluent enough to move its outhouses indoors, to do away with physical effort, to heat and cool its homes with electric power, and to own more automobiles, freezers, telephones, and gadgets for leisure time than it really needs or can enjoy. Gentle behavior, humane laws, limitations of war, a high level of purpose and conduct have disappeared from the concept.'

I remember how a professor of moral theology commented on President Johnson's declaration of war against poverty. 'That's an unjust war,' my colleague observed. 'The poor don't have the means to defend themselves!' By this he meant that the poor cannot defend their cultural values against the greed and wastefulness of an affluent and consumer society, a model frequently and uncritically used as a yardstick of what the poor should desire to become.

g. Demographic Expansion. Demographic expansion is often cited as the main cause of environmental degradation. Although OUR COMMON FUTURE tends to point to demographic expansion as one of the most serious causes, it does admit that 'the population issue is not solely about numbers. And poverty and resource degradation can exist on thinly populated lands, such as the drylands and the tropical forests. People are the ultimate resource' (p.95). John Paul II summarized this very well in his SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS: 'Just as it is incorrect to say that such difficulties [viz development] stem solely from demographic growth, neither is it proved that all demographic growth is incompatible with orderly development' (# 25).

We should look upon demographic expansion primarily as a cultural and moral issue and only secondarily as a matter of statistics. Since people are the ultimate resource, then especially in matters of human reproduction their human dignity should be respected. It is unfortunate, therefore, that under psychological pressure, induced by statistical studies concerning an imminent collapse of economic and material well-being, only technological solutions are offered to demographic expansion. As a criticism of such an approach, we should firmly assert that the environmental crisis is not going to be solved by weakening the responsibility of human beings, but this is exactly what is achieved by enticing people to adopt facile - mostly technological - solutions in matters of human reproduction.

Again, John Paul II needs no apologetic defence from us for the following statement in his most recent encyclical: 'It is very alarming to see governments in many countries launching systematic campaigns against birth, contrary not only to the cultural and religious identity

of the countries themselves but also contrary to the nature of true development. It often happens that these campaigns are the result of pressure and financing coming from abroad, and in some cases they are made a condition for the granting of financial and economic aid and assistance. In any event, there is an absolute lack of respect for the freedom of choice of the parties involved, men and women often subjected to intolerable pressures, including economic ones, in order to force them to submit to this new form of oppression. It is the poorest populations which suffer such mistreatment, and this sometimes leads to a tendency towards a form of racism, or the promotion of certain equally racist forms of eugenics' (# 25).

Recent studies have pointed out that 'population pressure' is not always at the root of environmental problems. It does not play a leading role in determining the instability of ecosystems, but it plays a role as an aggravating factor in catastrophic situations, the roots of which can be found elsewhere. This means that population pressure has been often used as a 'scapegoat' to distract attention from a serious analysis of socioeconomic and political conditions in many parts of the world. Although this does not mean that population pressure is not becoming a serious problem, other demographic factors should not be ignored. For example, in some parts of the world, populations are aging; in others populations are distributed in areas where their access to necessary resources for quality of life is minimal or limited (cf. R.V. Garcia and P. Spitz, DROUGHT AND MAN, vol. 3, THE ROOTS OF CATASTROPHE, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986).

One should be cautious in evaluating statistics about the earth's global carrying capacity or limit in sustaining population growth. According to The GLOBAL 2000 REPORT, issued in 1980 by the American Department of State, the world population should reach 10 billion by the year 2030 and should come close to 30 billion by the end of the twenty-first century. What these statistics fail to consider are many other factors. Let us illustrate these by citing three examples.

First, very few countries in the developing world (four, in fact) have the population density of Holland and Belgium.

Second, 3,000 years ago, Egypt suffered from famine when its population could not have exceeded a million. Today, Egypt has a population close to 50 million and it is self-sufficient as far as food production is concerned. We can therefore say that population expansion does not, per se, lead to famine or to environmental degradation. Countries have become food self-sufficient because they have implemented techniques which permit them to produce more food, to conserve it better and to distribute it more efficiently, and, again, none of these three elements need be destructive of the environment.

Third, the population of Canada is maintained stable or increases slightly. The increase is primarily due to immigration rather than to the national birthrate. Although its present population is slightly above 26 million, it should not be forgotten that Canada can sustain a population of 300 million within a one-hundred-mile strip along the American border, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that, if Canada were to welcome 275 million immigrants within a short period of time, it would undermine its economic, social, cultural and even political institution.

#### 4. THE ROLE OF RELIGION

The study of the religious and cultural roots of the contemporary ecological crisis began in a polemical vein with the address delivered by Lynn White, Jr., to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in December 26, 1966. In 1973, the late Arnold J. Toynbee continued the polemics. Both criticized the Judeo-Christian understanding of the Genesis account of human dominion... over every living thing that moves upon the earth (1:28).

According to White, although admittedly modern technology and modern science are distinctively occidental, their use has been marked both by Judeo-Christian monotheism, which desacralizes nature, and by the uncontrolled dominion over all creatures enunciated in Genesis. Thus, 'by destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.' In Toynbee's words, 'God had created the world; the world was his to do what he liked with [it]; he had chosen to license Adam and Eve to do what they liked with it; and their license was not canceled by the Fall... monotheism, as enunciated in the Book of Genesis, has removed the age-old restraint that was once placed on human greed by awe. Humanity's greedy impulse to exploit nature used to be held in check by pious worship of nature. This primitive inhibition has been removed by the rise and spread of monotheism. Moreover, the monotheistic disrespect for nature has survived the weakening of the belief in monotheism in the ex-monotheistic part of the world, and it has invaded that major portion of the world in which monotheism has never been established.'

As many have noted, this kind of search for an alternative model of nature - in this case, primitive animism - is inspired by a false and hypocritical effort to blame not just monotheistic religions in general but Christianity in particular for the ecological disaster. It hides the fact that the mistreatment of the environment is just as severe, if not more so, in those parts of the world where the native populations are not Christian, as in Japan and Thailand, or where Christianity has been proscribed by atheistic and/or totalitarian systems.

More recently, environmentalists have come to admit that Christianity can contribute through its theological, scientific and cultural heritage to the solution of the environmental problem. This October 22, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences concluded its study week on 'AGRICULTURE AND QUALITY OF LIFE: NEW GLOBAL TRENDS'. The participants agreed that the technologies already exist to conquer hunger within the next twenty years, provided that the proper economic, political and cultural measures are implemented. As far as the cultural measures are concerned, they paid particular attention to education in agricultural areas of the developing countries. Some of their remarks are worth sharing with you.

Convinced that religion has a vital role to play in education and in creating a new model of development, progress and human solidarity, they praised missionaries for their ability to build and conduct educational, medical and cultural facilities in Third World countries. At the same time, however, they felt obliged to point out that not all missionaries are versed even in simple agricultural practices and techniques. Thus, the participants in the Study Week proposed that, since missionaries exercise in many areas of developing countries a socially

significant influence, their professional formation should include basic agricultural principles, practices and techniques, all of which ought to be communicated to the populations in which they work in total respect for local needs and values.

It should be noted that the introduction of simple technologies into certain areas of the developing countries can mean the difference between life and death. Furthermore, only education can lead to that kind of increase in agricultural productivity which will be ecologically sound, economically viable, socially acceptable and politically feasible.

Personally, I would like to suggest that missionaries in Third World countries have the enviable possibility of developing and implementing a new model of humankind's relation to the environment and natural resources. They can form an ecologically sound cultural model to offset the abuses of a consumer society.

### CONCLUSION

Many more specific issues could be considered, among them the following:

- the negative economic and cultural effects on developing countries of subsidized farming especially in North America and in the European Economic Community;
- the high cost and, therefore, inaccessibility to developing countries of research, development and marketing of biotechnologies;
- uncontrolled use of technology for immediate economic growth, with little or no consideration for the planet's resources and their possible renewal;
- the use by developing countries of fertilizers banned in the developed world;
- destruction of cultures and environments (e.g., Amazonia) in the name of ill-defined progress;
- income inequalities between workers in rural and urban centers;
- the exclusive preoccupation with the present without any regard for the future quality of life;
- a spirituality of work;
- the priority of moral values over technological advances;
- synthesis between culture and faith;
- ecumenical and/or interreligious dialogue concerning the goals of scientific research and the environmental consequences of its technological application;
- justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

As a Franciscan, I cannot ignore the personalized relationship that St. Francis established with all creatures. In his Canticle of the Sun, he called all creatures his brothers and sisters. He did this for three reasons: they share with humankind a common origin and therefore the same God or Parent; they share with it the gift of existence and the same destiny; and, they are symbols and bearers of Christ. In other words, creatures are our brothers and sisters because they are God's gifts and signs of God's providential and reconciling love: to God alone do they belong, they bear God's likeness, and in God's name Earth feeds us. Francis gladly recognized his duty to reciprocate divine love with

love and praise, not only in the name of creatures but with and through them.

For St. Francis, work was a God-given grace to be exercised in the spirit of faith and devotion to which every temporal consideration must be subordinate. All human activity in the biosphere must therefore lead to a mutual enrichment of human beings and other creatures.

Our symbiosis with nature reminds us that we are microcosms that 'incorporate' the world within themselves. How we understand our relation to the world will depend on our self-understanding; and, how we understand our stewardship over all creatures will depend on our self-mastery.

In the thirteenth century, St. Bonaventure exhorted the readers of his *ITINERARIUM MENTIS IN DEUM*: 'Open your eyes...; alert the ears of your spirit, unlock your lips, and apply your heart that you may see, hear, praise, love, and adore, magnify, and honor your God in every creature, lest perchance the entire universe rise against you. For because of this, the whole world shall fight against the unwise'.

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(BERNARDO PRZEWOZNY, OFM. Conv. A member of the Friars Minor Conventual, he is a tenured member of the Pontifical Theological Faculty of St. Bonaventure. 47 years old. Canadian Citizen of Polish origin. Teaches Christology and taught Theological Anthropology at St. Anthony-on-Hudson, Rensselaer, New York, from 1971-1977. Called back to Rome in 1977. Since 1981 has been following the ecological crisis and environmental degradation in the name of the Minister General of OFM Conv., and since 1985 in the name of the Franciscan group of Ministers General:- OFM, OFM Conv., OFM Cap. and TOR. He was instrumental in having the Ministers General establish the Franciscan Centre for Environmental Studies in Rome at Via della Serafico).

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## INTEGRITY OF CREATION - A MISSIONARY IMPERATIVE IN KENYA

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Fr. John Mutiso-Mbinda

### "THE STORY OF KAMAU"

*"My name is Kamau. I come from a parish in a fast growing industrial town in Kenya. I work as a casual labourer in a multinational pineapple- growing and processing corporation. I feel I am merely used as a "farm hand". The farm features bulldozers, irrigation schemes, tractors, transport system for products, assembly lines, and a marketing system. I am too simple and helpless before such a sophisticated western economic system. I am more preoccupied with the problem of how to survive during the off-season. I cannot worry about the effects of fertilizers, pesticides and polythene that are ploughed into the land each year in return for a rich harvest. I sometimes wonder who eats all the pineapples that I produce when I do not even have enough calories per day. I cannot afford to pay the school fees for my children. I have no place to go to because my father's land was taken by the government".*

The story of Kamau is an important one as it can be multiplied all over the country. However it is only the tip of the iceberg because it touches on so many other issues that lead to the destruction of creation and blatant infringement of human rights.

I come from a society where we live within an integrated religious worldview. There is a wholeness that holds all created reality together. Everything created by God in this traditional worldview rests, as it were, on inter-linked pillars. The interrelatedness within the entire creation is such that, to interfere with one aspect will soon or later affect other parts of creation.

Moreover, we believe that God in creating, has made all creation sacred. And so is our land. The Agikuyu of Kenya believe very strongly in a myth that describes how God gave the first Gikuyu parents the land to the South and West of Mt. Kenya. For them land is a deeply embedded value. To take away land from them is equivalent to taking away their livelihood - their source of life, their very life. So one could understand why they chose to fight for their God-given right during the struggle for independence. During the 10-year-war for independence 1952-1962, many Gikuyu families were destabilized and taken into forced camps. Consequently many had lost their land by the time independence came in 1963.

It was about this time that a giant pineapple growing and processing corporation arrived in Kenya and bought about 10 hectares of land. Before the arrival of the foreign company, the Kenyan Government had started a 'small holder' scheme for pineapple growing through which farmers were encouraged to plant pineapples on their land and sell them commercially. However the giant company succeeded in pressurizing the government into selling out the scheme, getting a most favourable lease of land and monopoly rights for all pineapple products in the country. Farmers in the area were bought out and lost their precious land. They joined the other millions of landless people in the towns and cities.

The exploitation of human beings and nature was the main cause of the situation.

In 1975 a veteran Kenyan politician spoke up in parliament and said: "A small but powerful group, a greedy self-seeking élite in the form of politicians, civil servants and business men, has steadily but very surely monopolized the fruits of independence to the exclusion of the majority of people. We do not want a Kenya of 10 millionaires and 10 million beggars!". A few days later Kariuki was dead. His mouth had been silenced with a bullet.

Kenya has a land mass of about 582.644 square kilometers but only 20% of the land is arable. The rest is mostly infertile, semi-arid land in the North Eastern and North Western parts where most of Kenya's nomads graze their cattle moving freely from one part to the next. About 30% of the arable land in the most fertile area belongs to giant companies and some rich individuals for agri-business. Millions of small-scale farmers occupy the less productive areas of Kenya struggling each season to grow their staple foods: maize, beans, vegetable, and some fruits.

70% of Kenya's foreign income comes from agri-business - coffee, tea, sisal. The giant foreign companies have influenced the agricultural policies of the country as well as the styles of work. Rural small farmers are now using all sorts of fertilizers and pesticides for increased production yields but these have long-term negative consequences on the environment. Accidents to human life caused by the wrong use of some of the agricultural chemicals, due to ignorance, are continually increasing.

A Western development model loaded with anti-life values has invaded a society that once lived with an integrated worldview. This is shattering all the basic human values and breaking down the harmony that existed between human beings and the environment. We have not yet reached the levels of pollution of rivers and lakes in Europe and North America, but since there are no legal pollution controls, companies can do what they want with their industrial toxic wastes.

Some rural subsistence farmers, driven to mere survival levels of existence opt to go into other forms of finding money to buy food and other essential commodities. The cutting down of trees for burning charcoal is a wide-spread business sometimes organized by rich business people who export the charcoal to Arab countries for fuel. The result is bare landscapes which are prone to soil erosion when the rain comes. Water levels are gradually drying up and affecting millions of people who already do not have adequate drinkable water.

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He is Co-Secretary of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches; this body is responsible for the Preparatory Group for the 1990 WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES WORLD CONVOCATION ON JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JCIP).

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COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)  
IN 'JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION' PROGRAMME

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Fr. John Mutiso-Mbinda

The initiative came from the Sixth Assembly of the WCC at Vancouver in 1983. At the 1985 joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity was asked to investigate the possibility of Catholic participation in this programme.

In October 1986, the WCC organized an international consultation at Glion, Switzerland in an attempt to clarify the nature and objectives of the initiative. Six Roman Catholic observers were present and made a valuable contribution at this consultation.

Then in January 1987, the Central Committee of the WCC decided to send an official invitation to the Catholic Church, through the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity, requesting that the Catholic Church be a "co-invitor" for a World Convocation on JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION in 1990.

The Secretariate immediately began to work in close collaboration with the Pontifical Commission, 'IUSTITIA ET PAX' in order to understand the nature and objective of the proposal as well as the implications for the Catholic Church. After careful study of the initiative by both dicasteries, and after due consultation with competent authorities, a reply to the WCC was made in December.

In his letter to Dr. Emilio Castro, General Secretary of the WCC, His Eminence Cardinal Willebrands pointed out that the Catholic Church hoped to collaborate significantly in the project because the concerns of justice, peace and the integrity of creation must be the concerns of us all. However, because the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches are, by nature, two different organisms, this has created a difficulty in accepting to be one of the co-invitors. Thus the Secretariate has spelled out clearly the acceptable mode in which the Catholic Church will collaborate in the initiative.

The ecumenical collaboration in the preparations leading to the World Convocation in 1990 currently involve working closely with the WCC desk on JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION. In April 1988 Professor Patrick de Laubier and Mr. Nicholas Buttet were appointed by the Catholic Church to work with the WCC-JPIC desk while maintaining close contact with both the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Commission IUSTITIA ET PAX.

About the same time, the Catholic Church appointed five official representatives on the 30 member Preparatory Group for the JPIC World Convocation which is now planned to take place in Seoul 1990.

Since 1986, the Catholic Church was interested in this programme and through the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Commission IUSTITIA ET PAX followed its developments right from



the very beginning. Three official Catholic observers attended the initial informal Consultation on JPIC which took place in Geneva, March, 3-5 1986.

It was not until November 1986 that the first International Consultation on JPIC took place in Glion, Switzerland to examine the nature of the JPIC programme and to begin the initial description of the various issues entailed. Six official Roman Catholic observers were present at the Glion meeting, two of them presenting papers.

In the same spirit of ecumenical collaboration and dialogue, the Catholic Church sent four representatives to the Second International Consultation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation which took place at Granvollen, Norway, February 25 - March 3, 1988. At this meeting one of the Catholic theologians presented a Roman Catholic perspective on JPIC based on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical SOLICITUD REI SOCIALIS. This presentation aroused much interest in the Encyclical among the 40 participants and the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity was asked by the WCC to send copies of the Encyclical to each of the participants. The Roman Catholic contribution at this consultation was very much appreciated.

As the preparations continue the Catholic Church will be invited to a number of meetings to work on the basic document on which the World Consultation will be based.

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## ECOLOGY OR THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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Millicent Francis

Ecology and environment are words that we hear often today so it is good to be clear what we mean by them. The simple dictionary meaning of the word ecology is "The branch of biology dealing with relations between organisms and their environment" -- the key word is "relations", ecology deals with the relations between various organisms and elements.

And the dictionary meaning of the word environment is "the sum of the external influences affecting an organism". Here again the key word is the "sum". Not just one influence but the sum of them which is greater than the individual parts. And the organisms are every living thing from the tiniest worm or ant and the finest seed or leaf, the smallest new-born baby to the giant red-woods, the great whales, the fattest, tallest, strongest human beings. And all these organisms are influenced by external elements:

- the rays of the sun and the different temperatures they create on land or water or plants;
- the wind - its speed, the type of dust it carries and where it deposits this dust;
- the soil - whether it is soft or sticky or hard and whether the top-soil is 6 inches deep as in the tropics, or 18 inches deep as in temperate climates;
- the rain - when it falls, how much, the angle at which it falls; at a sharp angle it can ruin a whole field of beans, but not of tomatoes; if falling straight down it can ruin the tomatoes, but not the beans;
- the landscape - high-land, rolling land, flat land.

All these go to make the sum of environment which influences us and goes to make up the preoccupation of the world today under the title ECOLOGY or INTEGRITY OF CREATION. In the now famous Brundtland report, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, published under the title "OUR COMMON FUTURE", we read:

Various global crises have seized public concern, particularly over the past decade. These are not separate crises: an environmental crisis, a development crisis, an energy crisis, a food crisis. They are all one".

This is a preoccupation which touches AGRIMISSION closely because it is integrally linked with agriculture. But is there any reason why you, members of missionary religious orders should hear about these things which you certainly once learnt at school?

Well, if your mission work in any way touches the development of people, you are vitally involved. The development crisis, the food crisis, the ecology crisis, the energy crisis -- they are not separate crises, they are all one. Missionary orders often undertake development projects, big ones or small ones, every one of these projects includes the elements and organisms that we have spoken of. Do we seriously

consider the relations between all these elements and organisms before we undertake our projects?

Let me give you just one example of a development project, a big one, which is disastrous.

### BRAZIL: THE POLONOROESTE PROJECT

The place is The State of Rondonia in North Western Brazil which is about the size of West Germany.

The Polonoroeste Project was called by the Brazilian government "The biggest land reform ever tried" when it was initiated in 1982.

The World Bank lent nearly half a billion dollars for the project, and more than half of this went to pave a new Highway called Highway 364.

The World Bank had consulted experts. The reports of these experts warned them that the soils would not support the projected agricultural use of the land.

They also warned that the government agency charged with protecting the Amerindians was not capable of doing the job.

But the Bank went ahead with the project anyway. Why?

More than 200,000 migrants arrived from their homes in the southern temperate zones over the newly-paved highway. They were poor peasants now promised land and a chance to make a decent living.

But only one fifth of these received lots from the Federal land agency.

Even these fortunate ones found poor tropical soils, unsuitable for the agriculture they had known in their temperate-zone homes.

They cleared the tropical forest, planted for a year or two and watched their crops fail.

The further afield the women had to look for firewood, the larger was the area cleared of plants and opened to wind and rain which eroded the land...

The greater the erosion, the smaller the agricultural production, the greater the hunger, the more need to burn the forest:

The cycle of migrations continued with ever greater destruction of the forest and rapid deterioration of the shallow soil uncovered by the burning.

In four years 80% of the migrants had sold their lands and left to cut down the forest trees in search of a living. They moved on to forest reserves, Amerindian lands or into the next state to repeat the destructive process in other locations.

They were forced to sell their land to cattle ranchers or speculators and to work at subsistence wages for these speculators. The most unfortunate ones find themselves literally enslaved to large landholders.

Poverty and sickness, the death of child-bearing women, promiscuity and migration spawned an increasing number of abandoned children. What future have they?

Deforestation is increasing explosively in Rondonia. According to recent calculations, if it continues to increase at present rates, the

entire state will be denuded within a few years. Untold numbers of species of plants and animals will become extinct as the forest disappears.

The plants and animals die; what will the people eat?

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Adapted from: Bankrolling Disasters, Sierra Club, Public Affairs, 730  
Polk Street, San Francisco, CA 94109, U.S.A. September  
1986.

*(Millicent Francis is a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart. An Indian citizen Millicent came to Rome to work in the English section of the Vatican Radio. Since 1981 she has been Executive Secretary of AGRIMISSIO whose aim is to help the poorest farmers in rural areas to grow more food. AGRIMISSIO was founded by the first Permanent Observer of the Holy see to FAO with which it works in close collaboration).*

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## REFLECTIONS ON THE EUCHARIST IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

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### PREAMBLE:

We believe we live in a critical stage of the Church's evolution, that we are part of what has been called a "pivotal generation", which will have far-reaching consequences for coming generations of Christians for the next two hundred years. Old forms are passing away, new forms of Church life and ministry, and whole new approaches to life, are emerging. Old life patterns, work, and securities are gone. We believe in a process way of life, rather than a static one. We believe we must evolve willingly and consciously to a new stage of human and church life, or perish.

### STATEMENT:

With the above in mind, here at Newtown, we make the fullness of the mystery of the Eucharist the centre of our life: we try to tease out the strands of the fullness of that mystery, and explore and live them as we are able: e.g.

\* Bread broken for the poor - we try to live closer to the poor and stand with the poor, and make friends with individuals and groups of marginated people. To enable some of us to be more actively engaged in this and other areas, others work at regular jobs - which in themselves are ministries -; hence our ministries vary in expression, but there is an overall corporate ministry: different parts making up the whole.

\* Bread broken for all: the risen Jesus encompasses both male and female. We pursue the rights, dignity and equality of women in a patriarchal society and Church.

\* Sacrament of unity and reconciliation: we offer hospitality to all kinds of people, sometimes bringing together people who could or would never otherwise meet or appreciate each other. We work at unity with one another in the Community, because we value each other as people, and we value an atmosphere of peace, unity and harmony in the house as a help to those who visit us.

\* Sacrament of justice: we pray for justice in known unjust situations, we act where appropriate, against unjust situations and systems, we educate ourselves and others about justice as a central biblical requirement.

\* Sacrament of peace: we educate ourselves and others to our best abilities about world peace, we pray for world peace, we act where appropriate for the values of peace in our own country - especially where our country's actions have global consequences; we hope for and work towards peace of the heart and spirit in ourselves and others.

\* Sacrament of love/gift of self: Jesus' gift of self is model for our own as we are called out of ourselves by community life and apostolate: apostolate within and outside of the house. We act as support group for many individuals and some groups.

\* Food for the journey: our prayer before the sacrament exposed alone - and in community (quite often extended community) - and common celebration of Eucharist gives us nourishment for the journey, as we reflect on and break the Word and the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist.

\* Sacrament of death/resurrection: unexpected events, risk-taking, unexpected people and demands call us continually to personal deaths, which in turn lead on to unexpected forms of resurrection, often with a spiraling effect.

\* Sacrament of celebration of the People of God: in our Eucharistic celebrations we witness to the fact that life is good; we celebrate the poetry of God's action in our life in the midst of a fearful world threatened by destruction.

\* Sacrament of freedom and fullness of life: we value interdependency in a shared vision situation, and human and religious maturity. We believe that the right and duty of each one to take personal responsibility for her own life is imperative for spiritual growth.

\* Sacrament of hope: we live in a culture that is estranged from its roots, its basic traditions, and which is without hope. The Eucharist rekindles our memory of the saving actions of God in history, thereby summoning us to radical hope.

We look to the future while keeping from the past what is helpful. This is a seminal time for us: we believe the community of today must be as different from that of the past, as the Exodus was from being in Egypt.

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Ref. A group of Blessed Sacrament Sisters, Australia.

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## POPULAR PIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

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Dr. Hans-Jürgen Prien

In contrast to the process of secularization observed in Europe since the Age of Enlightenment, in Latin America today there is an explosion of religiosity. This is expressed in a wide spectrum of forms mainly divided into four areas:

1. Organized ecclesiastical communitarian religiosity in the Roman Catholic Church, the historical churches of missionary Protestantism, the Pentecostal churches, new sects of United States' origin, the religious "multi-national" movements like the "Evangelism in Depth" and "Church Growth", and the mass evangelist organizations of Billy Graham and Luis Palau.

2. Two great streams of religiosity can be distinguished in the churches: on the one hand a traditional-fundamentalist and a fundamental-evangelical stream in the Catholic and Protestant churches respectively, and a progressive-liberating stream on the other.

3. Popular piety: this is the matter that concerns us especially in this article. It is practiced in the church of the majority, namely, in the Roman Catholic Church.

4. Non-Christian religiosity: this is either deeply rooted or recently organized being of Amerindian, Afro-American or spiritistic origin or a syncretism derived from these.

The formation of such a wide panorama cannot be explained without taking into account the successes of the Spanish conquest, of missionary work, and of the whole colonial era.

### FORMS OF RELIGIOSITY IN THE COLONIAL ERA

Medieval European Background of Popular Piety: The beginnings of the American mission date

from the pre-Reformation times so that there is a direct connection with popular medieval religiosity bearing an Iberian stamp. The Council of Trent did not curtail the popular piety that was so much criticized by the Reformers: it rather dogmatized a dichotomy in Catholic worship. On the one hand, a rigid formalism of the official religion with the suppression of the vernacular languages, on the other hand, an almost unlimited freedom for popular piety. Since the Mass was celebrated in Latin (a language unknown to the popular masses) the public interest was focused on the visible aspects of the rites and even on the marginal elements such as baptismal salt, angels over the altars, reception of ashes on Ash Wednesday, etc. These still are very important for new converts because very often they feel themselves repudiated by the circumstances that go hand in hand with the mission.

Conquest - Mission - Hispanization: The Spanish conquest was a life and death struggle between different civilizations. Iberian messianism (the result of the close union between Christianity and Iberian society and culture) did not permit a peaceful coexistence with the local Latin American culture. Indigenous culture and religion was totally condemned as diabolical manifestations; the

conquerors robbed the Indios of their identity so that they were considered as sub-human beings until they adopted the foreign civilization and religion. As a result, there followed what Oscar Lewis calls "culture of poverty", an alienation of the indigenous people in their own country.

Instrument of Expansionist Policies: Under the sway of the royal patronage the Church could not free itself from its role as instrument of the expansionist policies of the Iberian Kingdoms, which, according to the medieval mentality, was interpreted as an expansion of the 'regnum christianum.' Furthermore, it was a question of domination of the American territory and of its population by means of the 'potestas temporalis' of the Iberian crowns and of its subordination under the 'potestas spiritualis' of the 'regnum christianum', that is, integration into the church by means of evangelization. The medieval model of the 'corpus christianum' and thus of Christianity determined missionary methods giving more priority to the creation of a Christian environment than to individual conversions.

No Mission Accommodation: In the eyes of the Iberians of the Renaissance, the indigenous cultures seemed to be under the domination of the devil who was simultaneously fomenting heresy through the Reformers in Europe. This purely negative connection hampered any form of mission accommodation. They never thought of presenting the gospel as the fulfillment of the aspirations of the native population but rather for the most part practiced a strategy of 'tabula rasa.' The Spanish refused to practice accommodation in important matters and left key terms in Latin or Spanish rather than translating them - terms like Dios, Apóstoles, Yglesia, Misa, Sanctus Spiritus - because they feared that these words could provoke dangerous associations. At the same time, they adapted the rites which assumed a disproportionate importance in indigenous piety and which split up into different forms.

#### POPULAR PIETY AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Popular piety was not, as such, a social problem in the colonial era, even the elite practiced forms of it. Nevertheless, according to the studies of Bastide and Hoornaert one should distinguish between the "patriarchal Catholicism" of the masters which had no liberating function but rather legitimized the 'status quo' and the "popular piety" which expressed the devotion of the masses who were considered no more as people than the slaves of antiquity. The difference between both forms of religiosity cannot be completely systematized since many features of patriarchal Catholicism and popular piety stem from the same medieval source.

Patriarchal Catholicism: The division between the religion of the masters and of the subjects is manifested in a worship where the royal chapel, the church, or the naves were reserved for the patriarchal classes.

In the countryside we can observe a purely assistencial Catholicism with priests principally dependent on the big property owners. It did not matter if the liturgy was understood by the participants. Hoornaert



concludes that patriarchal Catholicism formed a syncretism between Iberian Catholicism on the one hand and the milieu of the slave society in Brazil and the society of the *encomienda* in Spanish America respectively, on the other.

The Monarchy and Popular Religion: Saúl Trinidad and others have demonstrated that the monarchs beginning with Ferdinand and Isabella were venerated as earthly manifestations of Christ the King. And Christ, too, was identified with the "small Ferdinands": landlords, officials of the Crown, etc. When Christ is occasionally represented in images as a celestial monarch wearing the crown of Castile it serves as a buttress for these terrestrial vicars, representatives and oppressors who adorned themselves with the title of benefactors. Colonial art engaged even the angels to legitimize Spanish domination by devising the "angel with a shotgun", an invention of the missionary baroque style of the New World. Patriarchal Catholicism manifested itself in activities of a triumphal church, showy ceremonies, festive concerts, and exaggerated rhetoric; no thought was given to creating in the neophytes confidence in that God who in Jesus was dedicated to the humble and unfortunate. By means of baroque art it was preached to the faithful that the saints were not only special dispensers of grace but also proof of the sanctity of the Church as such.

Marian Devotion: Furthermore, Marian devotion was utilized to legitimize a warlike form of Catholicism in the tradition of the Crusades. Thus the second church constructed in Salvador Bahia in 1555 was dedicated to "Nossa Senhora de la Vitória" after a battle against the Indians won by Alvaro de Castro. Just as "Nuestra Señora del Rosario" records the victory of the Battle of Lepanto against the Turks (1572), the mountain chapel of Guarape in the outskirts of Recife records that in the victorious battle waged by Commandant Francisco Barreto in 1656 over the Dutch, "Nossa Senhora de los Prazeres" fought on the side of the Portuguese against the heretics.

Canonization Policy: Then again the policy of canonization in Rome favoured the promoting of an apolitical medieval religiosity transplanted to the New World without relation to the problems of a missionary church in a colonial setting. Thus, in 1676 Rosa de Santa Maria of Lima (1584-1617) was declared one of the first two American saints. Francisco Solano OFM (1546-1616), as an ascetic, mystic and wonder-worker, belonged to the same devotional type. As a Franciscan, he was a great representative of the mission of peace but he was not interested in the earthly future of his neophytes or their human rights like the Dominicans Bartolomé de Las Casas, Antonio de Montesinos and Pedro de Córdoba or the bishops Vasco de Quiroga and Antonio Valdivieso. These latter, even if they died as martyrs, up to today have not been declared saints. Luis Beltrán OP (1526-1581), the Apostle of Colombia, was declared a saint in 1671 together with Santa Rosa de Lima because he represented the same type of devotion as Francisco Solano and not because, as a friend of Las Casas, he protested against the oppressive institution of the '*encomienda*' and preferred to leave the mission and return to Spain rather than tolerate such an abuse of the gospel.

### ASPECTS OF POPULAR CATHOLICISM

In a system of subservience which embraces all areas of life including religion, popular Catholicism performs an important compensatory function for the oppressed masses. This can be seen in the strong faith in divine providence which is both an expression of a magical world vision of the Middle Ages as well as of animistic fear characteristic of Indios and Afro-Americans. Patriarchal Catholicism exploited this faith by suggesting that it was not the Spaniards and Portuguese who were acting in the New World but God working through them so that they were not responsible for the sub-human conditions. Among the subject people the same faith produced fatalism and conformism thus resulting in both cases in a dangerous dichotomy between devotion and ethics. At the same time this world vision manifests a convincing coherence and satisfactorily explains the successes of life. History consists of a series of vows and payment through vows. Everything is miraculous: grace, success, victory or punishment by God (disgrace). The miracle demonstrates holiness, punishment sin.

Internalizing a Conformist Ethic: The oppressed masses also look for compensation for their miserable plight before numerous images and statues which express Christian suffering: Christ dressed in red with the cross over his shoulders, Our Lady of Dolours, St. Sebastian riddled with arrows, St. Francis with the wounds of Christ, etc. This iconolatry betrays a vicious circle: on the one hand, the images sublimate one's own suffering and make it bearable; on the other hand, they internalize a conformist ethic which serves to maintain the unjust status quo. In other words, the oppressed people themselves prolong their suffering.

The Gospel Transformed into Social Reforms: These problems of popular Catholicism cannot be eliminated by a catechesis which is dogmatically orthodox. Only if the gospel is transformed into social reforms can the faithful reinterpret the religious data and look for new forms of devotion as is done, for example, by ecclesiastical basic communities. In this context certain aspects of Marian devotion must also be seen as playing a compensatory role for the oppressed. The most famous miraculous images bear indigenous features and their origins can be traced back to devotional experiences of natives, for example, "N.S. de Guadalupe" in Mexico, "N.S. de Copacabana" in Bolivia or the "Virgen de los milagros" in Paraguay. As Hoornaert has pointed out, the legend of Guadalupe demands a revision of the traditional understanding of mission.

Popular Catholicism venerates a complete pantheon of saviours, virgins, and saints. And there is no lack of places where miraculous images have been transformed into local deities just like in native ancestral traditions. God, Christ, Mary, and the saints are seen in one line, differing only in degrees of power. They are believed to be present in their images, forming a little piece of heaven on earth, to be a materialization of the saint. This explains the desire for physical contact which reminds us of the magic of contact. I will refrain from giving examples how religious feasts perform a compensatory function.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PRESENT

If as recently as 1969 the Argentine military government under General Onganía dedicated Argentina to the Immaculate Conception with a pilgrimage to the Marian sanctuary in Luján, it shows the continuation of patriarchal Catholicism up to today. This is true also of the gigantic constructions of new basilicas to N.S. de Guadalupe in Mexico and "Nossa Senhora Aparecida" in Brazil built by help of government money. The reason is that they are expressions of popular piety in the service of an ecclesial triumphalism and, in contrast with liberation theology, perform the function of confirming the status quo.

The permanence of popular Catholicism need not be proved. But it is a diffused form of devotion which predisposes the popular masses for all kinds of devotion not only Christian but also spiritistic and even political messianism. The exclusion of the Christianity of the Reformation from America, the lack of evangelization in every generation as well as the lack of credibility in the official Church have certainly contributed to form a vast panorama of popular religiosity as we find it today in Latin America.

As we have already briefly sketched, popular piety cannot be judged by its orthodoxy but with liberation theology we can affirm that a Christianity completely orthodox is still no genuine Christianity in so far as it tolerates situations of slavery, exploitation, and oppression and that the manifestations of popular piety very often have a causal connection with such conditions. In view of the fact that the economic and political systems of Europe and the United States impede the liberation and the integral development of the Latin American peoples, religiosity is not only a problem of the Latin Americans but also of Christians in the North.

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Ref. Verbum SVD, Vol 27, #1, 1986, Pp.35-42.

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CHRISTOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE ANCIENT  
MEXICAN-CHRISTIAN POPULAR PIETY IN MODERN MEXICO

Richard Nebel

THE COLONIAL ERA

With the dissolution of the Aztec social order and the conquering of the Indios by the Europeans a new culture, the merger of two worlds, saw the light of day; these were the European and the conquered Mexican worlds. A Jesus cult, stemming from the sacrifice tradition of the Pre-Columbians and the tradition of the Spanish popular piety, spread throughout Mexico. It was characterized by customs ensuring earthly prosperity (countryside processions), eternal salvation (shrines), festive customs (Corpus Christi processions), communicative customs (Posadas, etc.) and commemorative customs (Holy Week, et.).

Because of their long tradition of penance, self-sacrifice and submission to the immutability of the will of the gods, the people were particularly capable of embracing the passion and death of Jesus. A sacrificial death on the cross was no "scandalum crucis" for them; it was something familiar: it ensured salvation and deliverance. Thus, crosses, crucifixes, and representations of Jesus as a victim used by Spanish missionaries and represented by artists touched off emotional responses binding the Mexicans to the new religion.

Just as the Aztec cult of sacrifice served to keep the rulers in power, so did the cultivation of the sacrificial Jesus sustain the colonial structure: the conquered, the Indio, the poor, patiently accepted the "god-willed" fate of subjugation. The Spanish colonial power or the political power of the independent Mexico, who up to the beginning of the 20th century fought for supremacy in the country, both consciously and unconsciously encouraged this kind of Jesus piety, which one could justifiably call "the opium of the people".

It is important to understand that, from the viewpoint of the Christian Church, monotheism was never properly understood and the veneration of the "Cristo Sacrificado" so dramatically fostered had weakened their awareness of the Resurrection.

JESUS CHRIST IN THE MEXICAN FOLK PIETY:

Faith in Jesus Christ and its manifestation in the popular piety of present-day Mexico in the form of a variety of cults is a "Mexicanized" faith fed from various sources: from old Mexican religions and from the elements of a Christianity of Spanish religious traditions and popular piety (lavish festivities, theatrical performances, long processions as in Holy Week etc. In this country of 80 million people this old Mexican-Spanish veneration of Jesus Christ manifests itself in the most varied cults and syncretisms by a "culture of poverty" representing some 59 ethnic groups and most of the Mestizoes - only partly Christianized by the Catholic Church.

There is a chain of association and partly also of identification between Jesus Christ and the ancient Mexican gods (Huitzilopochtli, Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcóatl, Tláloc, Xipe Totec, etc.). Cf. for example the

sequence of thought: Jesus Christ - sun-Huitzilopochtli - light - conqueror (devil - moon - Tezcatlipoca - darkness - vanquished).

There is also a chain of association and even identification between Jesus Christ and natural elements (sun, stars, vegetation). As a supernatural being Jesus Christ performs certain functions among the guardian saints or nature spirits. Cf. for example "El Señor del Pozo" (guarantor of good harvests), "El Cristo de la Columna" (liberator from witchery), etc. Jesus Christ is also a "divine creature" of "secondary importance" just like other saints. The representation of the different stations of the cross are venerated as different "saints" to which, at various times and circumstances, according to the motto "do, ut des" offerings are brought. Cf. for example "El Señor de las Maravillas", "El Cristo Yacente", "El Cristo de la Consolación".

The Mexican Face of Christ - as gruesomely represented in most Mexican churches and during the feasts and processions especially during Holy Week - is the face of the tortured, dying, and sacrificed man and Son of God. It seems that the sacrificed Mexican Jesus suffers a death that does not culminate in the Resurrection, despite the fact that the Christian faith is essentially anchored in the Easter happening. The Mexicans are still waiting, as it were, for the message of the "angelus interpres", the revelation of the paschal victory. The Jesus Christ piety reflects anthropological, religious, and social tensions and conflicts resulting from the clash of old Mexican and Spanish cultures displaying as common denominator, the holy blood of the sacrifice.

Both in faith and worship the degradation of the suffering people is reflected: according to O.Paz the Mexican venerates "the bloody, humiliated Christ beaten by the soldiers and condemned by the judges, because they see in him the image of their own destiny", the destiny of persecuted and crucified people: his way of the cross characterized by debasement, oppression, and contempt.

This Jesus-cult (that is, of the tortured Jesus) together with the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the "Consolatrix of the oppressed" (cf. the popular piety of the oppressed people at the time of the overlordship of the Aztecs) plays a very important role in Mexican popular piety for the self-awareness and identity of the poor and marginalized. The almost unbelievable ability to identify with the tortured and sacrificed Jesus (which finds expression in realistic imitations of the sacrifice of Jesus) is reinforced by the worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe which serves as a compensation. The Mexican is "the suffering child" of the "consoling mother", the Morenita of Tepeyac.

Legitimize the Social Pyramid: This veneration of the suffering Jesus was and is used by the authorities of the country to legitimize their control, and misused for the exploitation of the people. The "cosmic order" is reflected in the social order: it is easy to recognize from the order of the "social pyramid" of the Aztecs and Mayas, the colonial society and the society of modern Mexico.

Those in the upper strata determine what those beneath believe and do. The most powerful castes of the Aztecs became the most powerful castes of the colonial system and these in turn the most powerful castes of modern Mexico. The mighty forms were replaced but the masks remain.

Any criticism of Mexico must begin with criticism of this pyramid.

### TOWARDS MEXICAN CHRISTOLOGY

The faith and veneration of Jesus Christ by many Mexicans is first and foremost a "Jesusology" desired by the ruling powers and humbly accepted by the people: it is a mysticism of the cross and passion of the earthly Jesus, occasionally steeped in the reminiscence of the ancient Mexican idol cult. It is a court of appeal (the people find their origin protected, feel "at home") against the dominating civilizing reality. It becomes another medium for the articulation and realization of meaning (it becomes "naturalized" through the religious forms of devotion which developed in popular Catholicity itself and which endures without clerical assistance).

Such worship has a liberating effect, it creates new perspectives and becomes a basis for the harmonization of developing tension and crisis situations. Such a Jesus piety has a double mechanism: it is a sanctuary and asylum for Mexicans "orphaned" and abandoned by their gods giving them a new place in the universe; on the other hand, it lessens popular criticism against their oppressors. From this point of view such a kind of Jesus piety, consciously or unconsciously propagated and still so propagated today, could justifiably be considered as "opium of the people".

Ideas and representations of Jesus Christ as "Christ the King", "Lord of the World", "Majesty", etc. never had or have any special meaning for the masses of the people; neither do the representations of Jesus as "Liberator", "Guerrillero", or "Destroyer" of his cross favoured by the muralists or "revolutionaries". At least not yet... The "whole" Jesus Christ, immolated and risen, corrects the mysticism of the old Mexican-Spanish piety and "sacrifice mentality" which moves a large part of the Mexican population to identify its suffering passively with the suffering of Jesus on the cross (cf. the Documents of the Third Latin American Bishops' Conference in Puebla, 1979, and the "Plan Orgánico de Trabajo Pastoral" of the Mexican Bishops' Conference, 1983-1985).

From the viewpoint of European theology Christology (-the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ of faith; *vere homo et vere deus*) in Mexico is "incomplete". It lacks essential elements rediscovered in modern times and propagated by liberation theology, "the church of the poor", the re-evaluation of popular piety and wisdom in Mexico (and other countries of Latin America): it also lacks soteriology (death - resurrection - salvation - parousia), ecclesiology, and the historical, cosmological, pneumatological, ontological, functional dimensions of christology.

In the days of the ancient Mexican empires and Spanish domination there was a dichotomy between the official religion of the ruling classes and that of the subordinate masses. This is true also today in modern Mexico (Tezcatlipoca - Quetzalcóatl; Virgen de los Remedios - Virgen de Guadalupe; Santo Tomás - Santiago "Mataindigenas", etc.). Opposition and renewal movements, sparked off both by "scholars" and by simple people, arose in every period of Mexican history against the

officially propagated religion: B.de las Casas: JUSTICE AND HUMAN DIGNITY OF THE OPPRESSED; Jacobo de Dacia: ORDINATION OF THE "INDIOS FOR THE CREATION OF AN AUTOCHTHONOUS "MEXICAN" CHURCH; Francisco Javier Clavijero: REVALUATION OF THE AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CULTURE.

An Arsenal of Liberating Symbols. Whereas popular piety, and "Christ piety" in particular, is opposed by a "Theology of Secularization" in the name of technical and scientific rationalization and liberating socio-economic rationality and appropriated by the right wing ideologies as a symbol for the maintenance of the "status quo", it is nowadays regarded by liberation theology rather as an arsenal of liberating symbols and liberating forms of expression of the poor and persecuted.

According to this theology the socio-critical function manifests itself:

- a) as a corrective to institutionalized power,
- b) as an instrument to express opposition,
- c) as a promise of a society worthy of human beings.

The "Jesus piety", - soul of evangelized Mexico, heart of Mexican culture and expression of the religious identity of the Mexican people as a whole, plays a decisive part in this socio-critical function.

### POPULAR CHRISTOLOGY

Jesus Christ, as liberator from the power of evil, as redeemer and reconciler with God, is similarly Lord of History who takes up the cause of the poor. His life, suffering, death and resurrection are witnesses to this. The power and saving actions of Jesus Christ are not only eschatological facts but have concrete historical relevance already. The liberating and redeeming Jesus Christ has a political, social, and cultural dimension. The "crucified people" sees itself in the sacrificed Jesus Christ. But it also knows that it dies with Christ and rises with him (Rom. 6), that it participates in the saving work of Jesus in the service of the neighbour in solidarity and in the liberation of the persecuted. Thus, a "popular christology" in modern Mexico must include: faith in God as a good father and good mother who hears the cry of the people, who feels its pain and who sends his son as "Temaquitziani in Teixlamachtiani", as "liberator of men and women who gives them face and dignity".

Since the Second Vatican Council and the Latin American Bishops' Conferences in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979) in particular the beginnings of an autochthonous Christian Church can be noticed in Mexico (indigenization, inculturation, incarnation). Specialists in the subject (Sergio Méndez Arceo, Samuel Ruiz, Enrique Dussel and others) point out new ways for a metanoia of the Church and a liberation of men and women in Mexico, give it a socio-economic and theological "basis" and concrete expression in so-called "basic communities".

Conclusion: I would suggest, in conclusion, that the following would be beneficial to the people and Christianity of Mexico: an autochthonous Mexican christology which takes the special realities of Mexico into account, not based on the imitation of European theology and christology but using it as a basis for a critical analysis of

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Toltecáyotl (the culture and religious heritage of Toltec and Aztec origin of ancient Mexico), of the popular piety and wisdom accumulated over centuries, and of the social and material needs of the different peoples and religions of Mexico.

- end -

Ref. Verbum SVD, Vol.27, No.1, 1986 pp. 43-51

Dr. Nebel is presently Catholic Theologian at the University of Bayreuth. He has had extensive experience in Latin America, especially Mexico.

See also SEDOS Bulletin 88/No.8 (September 15, 1988), 283-292; and 88/No.9 (October 15, 1988) 318-325 for other relevant contributions in preparation for the Seminar on POPULAR RELIGIOSITY AND EVANGELIZATION.



Continued from Page 362.

In preparation for the April, 1989 Villa Cavalletti Meeting on Evangelization and Popular Religiosity we are including excerpts from articles on Popular religiosity in Latin America and Mexico. The historical origins of popular religiosity and its social functions are examined. Popular piety is nowadays regarded by liberation theology as an arsenal of liberating symbols and liberatory forms of expression of the poor and the persecuted.

**CORRIGENDUM**. Please note:

The November SEDOS Bulletin should have been numbered 88/No.10 - not 88/No. 9.

**NEWS :**

**CONGRATULATIONS** to SEDOS members recently elected to the position of Superior General at their General Chapters:

BRIAN O'DONNELL, OH., of the ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF GOD (HOSPITALIERS/FATE BENE FRATELLI).

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**BOOK NOTES**

Gilbert, Doug SMA and Zacharias, Marge OSF. COME FOLLOW ME: PROCESS OF THE LAYPERSON IN CROSSCULTURAL MISSION; U.S. Catholic Mission Assoc. 3029 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017, 1988. Pp.32, \$2.50.

This booklet is a remarkably complete and very concise "map" of the various processes involved in the calling, preparing, sending and re-entry of laypersons in cross-cultural mission. Many mission societies collaborated in the making of this booklet. We recommend it to SEDOS members.

AGENCIES FOR PROJECT ASSISTANCE (Pierre Aubin, MSC and George Cotter, MM, 1988), 3rd ed., is an updated and expanded directory for overseas projects. It profiles 284 international agencies which support small scale projects in developing nations. It also offers a detailed 'how-to' for project application and proposal writing. 340pp. A Spanish edition also available January, 1989. Prepayment required. Send \$US50.00 (fifty) per copy (postage/airmail abroad incl.) to: MISSION PROJECT SERVICE, One Haven Plaza #25A, New York, NY 10009 212-533-6286.

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APPENDIX I

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