

25 years in mission 1964-1989

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MISSION: from Vatican II into the coming decade

General Assembly 1989

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NEWS

SEDOS NEW MEMBERS

MARIST SISTERS We welcome the Marist Sisters to membership of SEDOS. The Superior General is Sr. Bridget Burns. Their address is via Aurelia 292, 00165 Rome; (Tel. 633814).

DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH We welcome also the Daughters of Mary and Joseph (DMJ) to membership of SEDOS. The Superior General is Sr. Joan Roddy. Their address is via Rivarone 100, Int. 9; (Tel. 68.05.629).

COMING EVENTS

CHRISTIAN - MUSLIM DIALOGUE

AT SEDOS: DECEMBER 15, 16.00 hrs.

LOCAL CHURCH:

PRACTICES AND THEOLOGIES

SEDOS 1990 RESEARCH SEMINAR VILLA CAVALLETTI, March 20 - 24

RESOURCE PERSONS

IVONE GEBARA - BRAZIL

EFOE J. PENOUKOU - BURKINA FASO

TERESITA WEIND - USA

FELIX WILFRED - INDIA

SEDOS SECRETARIAT WILL REOPEN on JAN. 8, 1990

WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND GOD'S BLESSING IN THE NEW YEAR.

MISSION FROM VATICAN II INTO THE COMING DECADE

Michael Amaladoss, SJ

The Second Vatican Council inaugurated a paradigm shift in the theology of mission. One could schematize the change as a movement from 'the missions' to 'the mission' and then on to 'evangelization'. Before the Council one spoke of the missions as territories where the Church had not yet been firmly planted. So missionaries went out to do so. Mission was seen as Church extension.

The Council Searching for a theological foundation, the Council rooted mission in the Trinity. "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary", it said, "since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Ad Gentes, 2). The whole Church is on mission everywhere, though the concrete tasks might vary according to circumstances of time, space and need. Other documents of the Council also contributed perspectives that led to a development of the theology of mission in the succeeding decade. The document on other religions spoke of God as the common origin and end of all peoples. The document on mission referred to the 'seeds of the Word' in other religions. The Constitution on the Church in the modern world said that the salvific action of God reaches out to all peoples in ways unknown to us. It also pointed to the autonomy of the secular world with which the Church is called to dialogue. Decree on Religious Freedom upheld the primacy of conscience and the visibility and social nature of its pursuit of truth. The Constitution on the Church spoke of Church as the sacrament of unity of all peoples and the beginning of the Reign of God.

New Perspectives In the 25 years after the Council, experience in a post-colonial world, the awareness of being a world-Church and theological reflection have led to the emergence of new perspectives in mission theology and praxis. The SEDOS seminar on the Future of Mission saw inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and liberation as integral dimensions of mission. It also pointed to the growing importance of the local Churches in the process of mission. Inculturation is seen as the task not only of the younger Churches, but also of the older ones faced with secularization and modernity. One speaks of re-evangelization of a de-christianized society. A certain legitimacy is recognized in other religions in the plan of God, especially after the symbolic event of Assisi in October 1986, when the Pope came together with leaders of other religions to pray for peace. Inter-

religious dialogue focuses then not only on mutual understanding, but on a common experience of God and collaboration in the promotion and defence of common human and spiritual values. Liberation demands an option for the poor, a call to conversion of individuals and social groups and work for the change of unjust and oppressive structures. There has also been a growing awareness of mission in and to six continents. Every local Church is responsible for its own mission and co-responsible for the mission of all other local Churches. Mission ad gentes, called 'first proclamation' by Evangelii Nuntiandi, is now everywhere. Mission ad extra or 'foreign mission' is more and more seen as collaboration in mission.

A Paradigm Shift Reflecting on these new developments in the theory and praxis of mission, theologians have proposed a paradigm shift. The focus of mission is not the Church, but the Reign of God: the Church is indeed to be built up, but as the servant of God's Reign. The mystery of God's action, in Christ and the Spirit, reaches out to the whole world in ways unknown to us and the Church is called to serve this mystery in collaboration with all people of good will. The fulfillment of the plan of God is in the future and the Church, in company with others, is on pilgrimage. While the Reign of God will be fully realized only on the last day and will be God's gratuitous gift, it is also our task and we are called to contribute to its building up in history through creative development and through struggle for liberation from oppressive structures. The interplay of the freedoms of God and of the human person in the process of salvation is a factor for pluralism in history and in the world. Therefore the concrete task of mission in a particular situation has to be discerned carefully. Today, mission without mystery is oppressive.

A Different Point of View Looking back again at this history of the development of theology with regard to mission, in the context of contemporary experience, I am asking myself whether we do not need to take another step to meet the challenges of the next decade. Before the Council, the theology of mission was done by the missionary from his/her point of view. One needed to find meaning in what one was doing and this was done in the light of the vision of the world and of theology at that time. This was a view from the centre to the periphery. The Council and the post-conciliar period brought a welcome deepening and broadening of perspectives. But the approach was from above, from the Trinity, conceptual and abstract. Scholastic theologians delight in dealing with universal concepts. Mission is everywhere and every one is on mission. It is true that a greater attention is paid to the reality of the world: its cultures, religions and the poor. But when mission is everything, I think that it loses in focus what it gains in breath. This stage in the reflection has brought to us many new and rich elements. Perhaps it is now time to look at them from a different point of view.

I would like to specify this new point of view as looking from the periphery and from below. From the periphery: that is, as an observer from the Third World, the younger Churches, which in the eyes of many still represent objects of mission. I am also looking at the situation as an Indian. Someone from Africa, Latin America or elsewhere in Asia may look at it differently. From below: that is, approaching mission not conceptually, but questioning it from the experience of contemporary reality. In doing this I am only highlighting elements that are present

in the ongoing reflection on mission. For instance, when I consider mission as inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and liberation, I want to ask a lot of questions. Sharing them with you will be one way of evoking this new point of view.

Some Questions

Cultures Inculturation as an integral dimension of mission is described as the incarnation of the gospel in a particular culture. When a group encounters the gospel and changes its attitudes and manner of behaviour, this change finds expression in its way of life: its symbols and art, its spirituality and celebration, its social relationships. If the group is not prevented from doing so such cultural expression of the gospel is a natural, creative process. Conversion of this group of people is mission. But I do not see why their expression of the gospel in their own cultural forms should be considered mission. A local Church in trying to be itself is not doing mission. The many factors that prevent it from being itself are not mission problems. A missionary who comes from outside the culture may have difficulty in the necessary process of acculturation: learning the language, adapting to the living conditions, etc. These may be problems for the missionary. They are not problems for mission.

The gospel is on mission to a culture precisely when it is counter-cultural. When the gospel raises its prophetic voice against what is sinful and limited in a culture then it is doing mission. Such mission may suffer from over-inculturation. St. Paul was being a missionary when he proclaimed that in the risen Christ all were equal so that there were no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. But when he went on to exhort slaves to obey their masters or to forbid women to speak in the Church, he was being a practical man of his time, not a missionary.

Other Religions When we had a negative view of the other religions as a whole, though recognizing the presence of good and holy elements in them, then the other religions were objects of mission. They eventually had to be done away with. But the situation changes when we acknowledge a certain legitimacy in the other religions as elements in the plan of God. In a multi-religious society, people can live together in harmony only if they understand each other. But an inter-religious dialogue that is devoted to the mutual understanding and removal of prejudices, however necessary, does not seem to be mission. It should be the normal way of life. But religions do engage in mission when they challenge each other's limitations and lack of response to God. They are also doing mission when together they play a prophetic role in society in the promotion and defence of common human and spiritual values. Then they are acting as servants of God's own mission in the world.

The Poor To the poor the gospel comes as the good news of liberation. The Church is called to struggle for justice in the world taking the side of the poor. But the focus of the struggle for justice with the poor is to struggle for the change of unjust socioeconomic, political, cultural and even religious structures. One cannot change these sinful structures without converting the sinners who are responsible for them, because these structures are not impersonal. One can of course witness to Christian love through catering to the needs of the people and offering them development assistance. But it seems to me that

the real objects of mission in such a situation are the people responsible for the structures of oppression.

WHAT IS MISSION?

I feel, therefore, that in speaking of mission in a global way as inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and liberation we are losing its precise focus. It is true that everything we do can be relevant to the building up of the Reign of God. But what have we gained by making everything mission? I think that we have to rediscover mission as primarily prophecy. The Melbourne Mission Congress of the World Council of Churches said:

Proclamation is always linked to a specific situation and a specific moment in history. It is God's good news contrasted with the bad news of that specific situation.

I think that this is a good criterion for evaluation when we seek to determine what is mission in a particular situation. Mission is a call to conversion. When Jesus began his mission, he said: "The time is fulfilled, and the reign of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1,15) His teaching and his parables challenged his hearers to a decision. Even his miracles were not just acts of compassion, but symbolic acts that provoked reflection on his person and his message. He preached the gospel to the poor; but he also challenged the rich, the wise, the powerful. That is why he went to his death. Should we not recover this prophetic dynamism of mission?

Contemporary Challenges to Mission What are the sinful situations in the world today that demand the prophetic proclamation of the Gospel? For reasons of convenience, let me keep to the culture-religions-justice scheme, though we shall see how inter-twined they are. My aim is not to make an exhaustive list, but to point to a few highlights.

Cultural Sphere

From a cultural point of view, I have three concerns: inequality, consumerism and violence. Paul proclaimed the equality of all human beings in the risen Christ. But we are far from having realized it even within the Church community. In the world there is so much discrimination based on race, caste, sex, religion, nationality, colour, ethnicity, etc. Inequality is all the more painful and oppressive, because most human groups today proclaim the ideal of a democratic society based on the individual rights and dignity of every human person. Discrimination can take many subtle forms that are demeaning to the dignity of the person concerned.

One often hears about the secularization of modern culture. Secularization has a positive side to it in so far as it promotes a differentiation between the social institutions, like religion, politics, economics, culture, etc. In its negative aspects one speaks of the disappearance of religion and of the spread of unbelief. I think that the people have not become less religious, but they have no time and desire for the practice of religion. It is not an intellectual crisis of belief, but a moral crisis of desire. Science and technology can be used

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or abused. People have chosen to abuse them in the pursuit of pleasure and plenty. There is always the desire for more. Selfishness leads to individualism and to competition. Collective selfishness oppresses the poor. A materialistic attitude to life and the world leads to the erosion of human and spiritual values and eventually to alienation and meaninglessness.

Unbridled competition and alienation lead to violence. One does violence to oneself in the form of drugs in an effort to escape boredom and failure in the contest of life. Selfish pursuit of pleasure leads very easily to violence against others to meet one's own needs. Collectively this takes the form of war. The flourishing arms industry is an evidence of this ongoing violence in human society. A violent person has no respect for the other. Violence is an indication of the breakdown of community structures. It is the manifestation of the loss of hope. It is the fruit of a life without love. Humanity today also violates nature. The unbridled exploitation and plunder of nature ultimately leads to the destruction of nature itself, and with it, of humanity.

Religious Sphere

In the sphere of religion we are faced with two kinds of challenges: fundamentalism and communalism. Fundamentalism is the reaction of a person whose (religious) securities are threatened. It is one way of fighting alienation and loss of meaning. One holds on fanatically to the truths one has. One does not want to question them for fear of losing them and with them one's bearings in the moral world. Fundamental groups are found in all religions today. They tend to be aggressive proselytisers and intolerant even of their own co-religionists.

Communalists think that because they share the same religious belief they have the same economic and political interests. Communalism uses religious sentiment and emotion for political and economic ends. It is often inspired by a small elite in pursuit of their own power, but sways a whole multitude. In one sense, fundamentalism and communalism are not really religious problems. They have to be tackled at the social and political levels. But we could also counter them by the promotion of authentic religion, open to the world and to history, in dialogue with other believers and aware of its prophetic role in society and by encouraging the autonomy of the secular in its own sphere.

Justice Sphere

The promotion of justice poses a particular type of challenge to the very identity and self-awareness of the Church. On the one hand, the Church has to be involved in the social and political life of the people. On the other, the Church should keep its distance in order to be able to challenge the world prophetically. I do not think that making the Church the preserve of the clergy and assigning the world to the Laity will solve the problem. The Church as an institution, unlike Hinduism or Buddhism for example, enjoys a public presence and voice. At the same time its very institutional character may lead it to become self-defensive or to compromise, thus losing its prophetic voice. A strong foreign presence in the local Church also seems to inhibit prophecy.

Our option for the poor may sometimes lead us to concentrate only on economic poverty. For many people living poorly, unless they are in absolute misery, poverty may seem less of a problem than living without human dignity and freedom. Freedom can be denied in many different ways. What strikes our eyes, of course, is the lack of political freedom in totalitarian regimes of the right and of the left. But people can be enslaved in so many ways, even in the so called democratic societies: to money, to the machine, to bureaucracy, to prejudice, to ideology, to media-promoted disinformation. Promotion of inner and outer freedom so that people can be agents of their own transformation and growth is a real challenge today.

The Church claims to be the sacrament of the Reign of God. In the early Church there was an attempt to construct ideal communities, though there were difficulties as, for example, in Corinth. When the Church began to conform to the world, the monks and later also the religious took up the challenge of building model communities. They cannot be an adequate model because eventually one has to quit the world in some way, especially through the vow of chastity. Today one speaks of basic ecclesial communities. But unless the Church seeks to provide a model and a vision of an alternate community, not only at the basic level, but also at national and international levels, its witness will be less credible. We are not just called to be prophets, but the sacrament and beginning of the Reign of God.

A Holistic and Global View A further step in our process of reflection is to see these and other challenges to mission holistically and globally. A holistic approach would see how much these challenges are interconnected. We cannot transform any culture unless we dialogue with other religions that also animate the culture and unless we can change the concrete socio-economic and political context that conditions people's lives and attitudes. Inter-religious dialogue should lead to a common prophetic voice in the growth of both culture and the world. A true liberation from oppressive socio-economic and political structures could hardly be achieved unless the people change their world-views and attitudes and draw inspiration and motivation from true religion. Therefore all these challenges have to be faced in an organic manner.

Both because of the communications revolution and because of increasing economic and political inter-dependance the challenges of mission have taken on a global character. Religious pluralism is a reality everywhere. Inter-cultural contacts and influences are increasing, promoted by pervasive and rapid media communication. Though different cultures may react to science and technology differently, the impact and some of the problems may be common. At the economic and political level the problems of the poor in the Third World have their roots in the First and the best way of helping them, besides making them self-dependent, is to influence the decision-makers in the First World.

Cross-cultural Mission Mission today has, therefore, international dimensions. This internationality is not merely geographic. It has deeper theological roots: the universality of the plan of God and the catholicity of the Church. Meditating on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, both Paul and John discover the universal extent of the mystery - the plan that God revealed in Jesus. While Paul speaks of the cosmic Christ who was at the beginning and in whom

all things will be united at the end, John speaks of the Word in whom all things were made and who unites all peoples in the very life of the Trinity. The role of the Spirit in this process of unification is also stressed by both. Since the Council the Church has spoken of itself as the sacrament and servant of unity. Recent documents of the Church end with appeals for collaboration among all peoples of good will.

The universal dimensions of the plan of God and of the service of the Church takes concrete form in the catholicity of the Church. Catholicity is not mere geographical universality. It is not merely called to become incarnate in each culture becoming authentic local Churches. All the local Churches are called to become a community in pluralism - a communion. As the Constitution on the Church says:

In virtue of this catholicity, the several parts bring their own gifts to one another and to the whole Church, so that the whole and its several parts grow by the mutual sharing of all and by a common effort towards the fullness of unity.

International mission is not therefore a tactic for the better placement of resources and personnel. It is the expression and demand of the catholicity of the Church.

In the context of each local Church being responsible for its own mission and co-responsible for the mission of all the Churches, internationality will take the form of mutuality in mission. This gives us a new perspective on mission ad extra. I think that we should speak today of cross-cultural mission. In practice this will be the responsibility of some people who hear a special call for it. One could rapidly list a number of conditions that seem essential for their success. They should not only be sent, but also asked for and accepted. They would probably go for specific jobs that require specific skills. They have to acculturate themselves - that is learn the language, adapt oneself to a new way of life, adjust to the climate, etc. - in order to be effective. They have a special role of mediation between the local Churches. To the local Church that receives them they bring the riches of the cultural expression of the gospel of their own local Church. In turn they carry back to the Church that sent them the riches that have experienced in the Church where they are working. If we understand this subtle interplay of the local and the foreign, one can wonder whether a community that is completely foreign in a place is realy meaningful today, except in very special circumstances, to meet particular needs, for a particular time. Missionaries would go not only from the North to the South, but also from the South to the North.

Priorities If we look at mission in a global manner, there are needs and problems everywhere. Not only primary evangelization, but the ongoing challenge of the Gospel is needed everywhere. God may also inspire various people to different and particular tasks: work for human development, struggle for justice, cross-cultural mission, interreligious dialogue, etc. But if we consider the various challenges of mission today and seek to prioritize them, I think that the most urgent problem is the moral one of consumerism and its consequent exploitative and oppressive structures. Commerce becomes supreme and everything else religion, culture, politics, social relationships - becomes subservient to it. There is a loss of the sense of transcendence. People have no time for religion. They become slaves to machines. The discoveries of

science and the powers of technology are abused for selfish ends. The poor are becoming poorer. The facility of modern communications have made control and exploitation easier and faster. The concern for the common good and the attention to moral and spiritual values have broken down. An expanding individualism and competition undermine human relationships and community. Violence in all its forms is on the increase. Whole peoples are at the mercy of market forces.

The need of the time is for a spiritual humanism: humanism, so that people can become free and subjects of their own destiny; spiritual so that this destiny is inserted into the plan of God for the world.

Though this need for the gospel is everywhere, I think that it is particularly acute in the First World. As post-Christians their sensitivity to the challenges of the Gospel is blunted. From a global point of view the epi-centre and the key to the solution of most of the problems are in the First World. This is because of its economic and political and, in many places its cultural dominance due to the mass media. The elite of the First World also inspire and control, not to say corrupt, the economic and political elite of the Third. Therefore, if one can read the signs of the times and discern priorities, I wonder whether the privileged place and the most challenging for mission today is not the First World. Speaking to a group of Asians in April, 1947, Gandhi said:

If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth... The West today is pining for wisdom. It is despairing of a multiplication of Atom bombs... It is up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin - that is the heritage your teachers and my teachers have taught Asia.

I should specify that Gandhi included Jesus among the Teachers of Asia. Gandhi's proposal is not less relevant today even though, not only Asia, but all people of good will are called to carry this message today.

Where there is growing indifference to religion, where there is a moral crisis of values, where one finds the roots of contemporary unjust and oppressive structures, there is a priority for mission today and tomorrow. I wonder whether, in a world that is becoming increasingly a global village, a re-evangelization of the Christian world may not be a more credible witness today to the rest of the world. Such an effort would also lead us to re-examine the cultural and historical structures in which we carry the challenge of the Gospel in our mission ad extra, especially if they have not had much success at home.

Conclusion Let me recall briefly the points I have made, by way of conclusion. I have proposed that we rediscover the specificity and relevance of mission as prophecy. With this as a criterion, we can discern the contemporary challenges of mission in the realm of culture, religion and justice. I have made my own list. I have pointed to the global nature of these challenges and evoked the need for mutuality in mission. Both the plan of God for the world and the catholicity of the Church as communion demand that mission today be mutual and cross-cultural. Briefly analysing the signs of the times, I have suggested a

double, but inter-linked, priority. From the point of view of global challenges, the consumerist and commercial culture, backed up by economic and political structures demand our attention. From a geographical point of view, the First World seems to be the place that needs a prophetic voice more urgently.

The Church today is called to commit itself to an international moral movement of peoples. It is in pilgrimage towards the Reign of God in the company of all peoples of good will. It has to be true to its own identity as the witness of the good news of Jesus, of his death on the Cross and of his resurrection. It has also to hear the call to be the servant of unity in the world. While being a community rooted in Jesus, it needs to have open frontiers, ready to dialogue with everyone. Opting for the poor, it must prophetically confront the unjust oppressor. In humility it has to be sensitive to mystery of the action of God in the world. It should be open to the creative newness of the Spirit. Its horizon is God's own mission of universal reconciliation, when God will be with God's people. Then God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21,4)

NOTES

- 1. Your Kingdom Come, 198.
- 2. Lutem Gentium, 13.
- 3. <u>Communal Unity</u>, pp. 579-580, quoted in Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed), <u>Sources of Indian Tradition</u>, Vol. II (New York, Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 273-274.
- 4. See T. K. John, "The Pope's 'Pastoral Visit' to India: a Further Reflection", Vidyajyoti 51 (1987) 58 66, especially p. 59.

25 YEARS IN MISSION, 1964-1989

HISTORICAL NOTES

SEDOS began in a humble and tentative way in 1964 with the coming together of nine societies who decided they needed a permanent secretariat to continue their Ad-hoc meetings. They were the following: African Mission Society, whose Superior General, Fr. Henri Monde, was the moving spirit, Assumptionsits, Capuchins, Divine Word Missionaries, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Marianists, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Scheutists and White Fathers. The first General Assembly of Superiors General was held at the White Fathers Generalate on 1.10.64. Fr. Volker, Superior General of the White Fathers was confirmed as the President of the group, Fr. Monde of the African Mission Society - as Vice President and Fr. Forree, as Treasurer. On the completion of his term as Superior General in May 1967 Fr. Volker was succeeded by Fr. Schutte, Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries. He was responsible for commissioning an important Evaluation Report on the young organisation. This was carried out by Fr. Benjamin Tonna who later became the first Executive Secretary of SEDOS. It was Fr. Schutte who made available to SEDOS the spacious offices on the grounds of the Divine Word College which house the Secretariat to the present day. The generous gesture of the Divine Word missionaries has been of immense help to SEDOS down through the years.

Fr. Monde, Superior General of the African Missionary Society became President in January of 1969 when Fr. Schutte completed his term as Superior General. By that time there were 30 member Societies of Sisters, Brothers and priests.

The days following the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council were full of new hopes and questions. SEDOS grappled with these questions and organised a Theological Symposium to chart the path of mission in the post-Vatican period. Fr. Monde, in his address of welcome to the participants put the question bluntly:

It must be said, without equivocation, that the missionary institutes are preoccupied, worried and uncertain about the future of missions. This is not to indulge in pessimism. In a changing world which daily poses new problems, it is perfectly normal that the missionary world also should ask questions about its own function in this rapid and often radical evolution.

In effect the symposium's agenda became narrowed down to two central questions both of which were uppermost in the minds of missionaries: the precise value of non-christian religions as roads to salvation; the place of development work in missionary activity.

The 1970 Symposium dealt mainly with the "Why" of missions. Twelve years later another key event occurred in the history of SEDOS - the 1981 RESEARCH SEMINAR ON THE FUTURE OF MISSION. It dealt rather with the "How" of mission. The approximately one hundred participants were divided equally between resource persons and Superiors General of the SEDOS missionary Institutes. They agreed unanimously on an AGENDA FOR FUTURE PLANNING, STUDY AND RESEARCH IN MISSION. Fr. Gabriele Ferrari, Superior General of the Xaverian Missionaries and President of SEDOS at this Research Seminar, looking back to this Seminar writes:

"The ideas which emerged from it may now be found disseminated in the constitutions of many missionary and "non-missionary" institutes. SEDOS is and has been an extraordinary catalyst of the missionary energy of the Institutes and Orders engaged in Mission, a valid pointer which eight years after the seminar demonstrates the actuality of the intuitions of that event."

Looking back over the past 25 years there are certain aspects of SEDOS which seem to describe well its spirit. Gabriele Ferrari describes them as follows:

"If I had to sythesize briefly what the word SEDOS evokes in my spirit some years after the termination of my office I think I could summarize it in a few words:

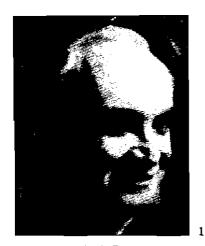
The pleasure of common research, the freedom to express and communicate to others one's thoughts about the hopes and fears for our mission, the joy of being able to express these truths in which I believe with all my heart".

We share with you in the following pages reflections from some of the past Presidents, Vice Presidents and Executive Secretaries who, were deeply involved in the work of SEDOS over the years. They comment on the "signs of the times" as they impacted on the work of SEDOS in its commitment to keep abreast of the changing aspects of mission.

THE EARLY YEARS

When I was called to serve in SEDOS in 1966, I understood the opportunity as an invitation to explore new ways in the evolving situations of the mid-sixties. I had just been through the powerful Vatican II experience as Director of the Centrum Coordinationis Communicationum de Concilio. I also belonged to a group of sociologists who were trying to apply their expertise to Church work. Now I would try to harness sociology to apply Vatican II to the Missions.

By 1975, when I had finished my years with SEDOS I had become convinced of the hopeless gap between human resources and the saving enterprise. I had learnt that the world would not be saved by plans drafted by using sociology or some other social science to activate Vatican II theology and policy



Benjamin Tonna Executive Secretary 1966-75

documents. I had experienced that this world was already being saved and was blessed by a very particular plan - a plan prepared by its own very special Saviour. I could help only if I joined His saving effort.

As I strove to do that I realized that sociology could help me locate and begin to read signs of the unfolding patterns of the Lord's plan of salvation. This happened to me when SEDOS became involved with China. Here was practically one-third of the human race apparently closed to missions. Mao Tse-tung was saving China, and here we were unable to do anything about it. At the same time we were becoming increasingly and painfully aware, thanks to the Council, that the Church was called to be existentially cross cultural. A crucial expression of this experience would be the China Missions. I remember that things came to a head, at least for me, when I was conducting a retreat for Maryknoll Missionaries in Hong Kong and I had to share with them my faith that God must have plans for China and that, already, He must be acting on them. We could expect to see some visible results of His work if we observed more closely what was happening around us. We could also seek to interpret what was happening as signs pointing to patterns of God's own way of saving China.

At that point the whole SEDOS documentation service took a turn which reflected a deeper view of reality. We began looking at the reports, statements and studies we had collected in light of the question: could the experiences and ideas they expressed be signs also of the way the Lord was activating His plans? Could patterns of these plans begin to emerge if we collected enough sign-laden facts? Here my sociology provided fresh help. It did not, of course, help me plan the salvation of the world but it did help me understand how the world was being saved. If I could share these findings with missionaries, I would be helping them work with the Lord in a creative response to the Lord's mandate in Mark: "Go...the Lord continued to work with them throughout

and confirm the message through the signs which accompanied them" Mk 16,20. Theology also became more helpful. Thanks to the Incarnation all aspects of the human condition could be considered as potential "loci theologici", arenas for God's saving power to act and, by implication, potential locations for signs of His action. Our problem was one of deciding where to start.

Major World Trends

We began by analyzing major world trends from this particular perspective. We soon became involved with United Nations agencies and N.G.O.'s. And when we decided that a specific trend was of special in terest to missionaries, we would try to discern what was really taking place there. This happened for example, when we zeroed in on "Third World" urbanization and mission to the Cities. We tried to disentangle the patterns of salvation from what we saw developing there.

There were other world trends which we began to consider as particularly sign-prone. One was the exponential growth of the population in the mission countries, its concentration in a few megalopolises, and its increasing pressure on resources. Another sign of the times, was the independence movements in the southern hemisphere and the concomitant State nationalization of education, health and social services. Missionaries were heavily involved in this latter development and the crucial question became: "shall we adjust our own institutions or shall we serve in the public sector?"

In the sixties socio-economic development was still considered the key to the future of the emerging independent States. Analyzing this trend we discovered that, between us, we, the members of SEDOS could count on the largest single group of workers serving in the developing countries. We were asked to document the fact - and to read it as a sign - when we hosted an international conference on the contribution of Christians to the development of the newly emerging nations.

While the development trend did not produce the expected results, nation-building in the mission countries, however, began to gather momentum. We saw this again as a sign, inviting us to take a catholic view of Christ's Church seriously. We went back frequently to Ricci and to De Nobili in an effort to find out how to inculturate the gospel message in different situations.

But we did not restrict our search for signs to the area of the actual content and implications of these trends. We began to ask grass-root missionaries about their reactions to them. We patiently collected their experiences and their ideas, assuming that the Lord would also be acting on the same trends through them.

Our favourite hunting ground for signs soon became the missionary condition itself. How were missionaries at the grass-roots level reacting to the rapidly evolving situations generated by the population explosion, by rapid urbanization, socio-economic development, nation building and nationalization? What were they striving for and hoping to achieve? We became very curious not only about how they were interpreting their traditional roles but also about what they were inventing as a response to the realities they were facing.

I can recall my excitement when we began to realize that the experiences and ideas which we had patiently gathered from them tended to converge on certain patterns. One of these was the building of small Christian communities in Africa and South America. We were receiving reports of independent but analogous experiences of the phenomenon from all kinds of places. Once we caught the signal, we strove to follow it up by searching for similar patterns elsewhere.

It did not take us long to realize that the Church as Communio, proclaimed in Lumen Gentium, was emerging - right in the missions - through the phenomenon of small ecclesial communities. We began to encourage missionaries to steer in that direction. On the way, we read and followed the signs of the coming of the local churches and of the emergence of local theologies - often the result of a faith response to local situations, as happened with liberation theology.

Another pattern which we began to read as a sign was that of a comprehensive lay involvement. When we discovered missionaries desperately saving on their meagre allowances in order to finance training and full-time work for catechists we realized we had to move in this direction. We asked missionaries to consider building up lay catechist corps and to promote catechesis in its adult form - training for full Christian discipleship. Here it was the "implantatio" of Ad Gentes which, we learned, was coming to life. Lay involvement could not stop here. It had to grapple with justice and liberation issues. This was how the contemporary Church was coming to be, defacto, Light to the World, Lumen Gentium, by coming to terms existentially with the values of the Kingdom.

By the time I left SEDOS, in 1975, the Church had already focused on evangelization through its 1974 Synod. When Evangelii Nuntiandi was published, in 1975, we could take it as a confirmation that we had read the signs well: inculturation was the way the Incarnate Lord was saving our world.

Benjamin Tonna is at present parish priest of his native town of Rabat in the Republic of Malta. He is co-director with Brian P. Hall of the Omega Institute of the University of Santa Clara and author of Gospel for the Cities.

EXPANDING CONTACTS



Joan Delaney, MM Executive Secretary 1976-80

One of the earliest SEDOS seminars I recall was on "The Ecumenical Aspects of Mission". This brought me into contact with the Secretariat for Christian Unity. Later the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC approached SEDOS and requested Roman Catholic involvement in the preparation for the CWME Melbourne Conference (1980). The theme was "Your Will Be Done". There were SEDOS sponsored seminars, and meetings and a prayer service undertaken by members of SEDOS both before and after the Conference. My appointment in 1984 as the Roman Catholic consultant on Mission to CWME by the Secretariat for Christian Unity was related to and grew out of this involvement with ecumenism in SEDOS.

Inculturation was one of the more popular topics in the 1976-80 period. Mission in Europe and the place of returning missionaries also preoccupied many of the members. A SEDOS Medical

Sub-Committee ran a series of three lectures each year on topics such as natural family planning and primary health care. Sr. Francis Webster wrote a fascinating account of her attendance at the WHO meeting on primary health care held in the USSR. A series of meetings on South Africa helped to overcome the prejudice against those outside South Africa discussing South Africa, an attitude which seems incredible from the present point in time. At a joint EDUC-SEDOS meeting we had a discussion with some of the staff of the World Bank. They informed us that it was their first meeting with a religious group.

The role of women was only a minor topic of consideration in those days, yet it was taken for granted that the SEDOS Executive Committee would be made up of 50% men and 50% women. Considering that two thirds of the membership at the time came from men's Societies, I always regarded this as a very positive step.

China, Vietnam and the Middle East stand out in my mind as areas about which it was difficult to obtain information. They were topics on which Bulletin articles occasioned negative reactions. At least it proved the Bulletins were read!

The end of my term co-incided with the first steps in the planning of the <u>SEDOS Research Seminar</u> of 1981. "Mission in Dialogue" the account of the Seminar published by Orbis Books, was edited by two members of the Executive Committee - Father Joe Lang, MM and Sr. Mary Motte, FMM. This remains a valuable addition to missiological literature and did much to make SEDOS better known.

My time at SEDOS was an invaluable learning experience not just in knowledge gained but in witnessing what can be achieved by dedication and cooperation. This was evident in the faithful work of the staff, the unfailing support of Fr. Timmermans and Fr. Ferrari the two SEDOS Presidents with whom I collaborated and the members of the Executive Committee as well as the outstanding generosity of the SEDOS members.

Joan Delaney went to work at the Ishvani Kendra Documentation Centre in Poona, India. She is presently working in Geneva as Vatican Representative to the Commission for World Mission and Evangelization of the World Council.

TOWARD THE SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR 1981

My three years as President of SEDOS were among the richest and most interesting in my missionary experience. Not only do I believe I took no time away from my Institute but I gained definite advantages both for myself and my work as Superior General.

The three-years of my presidency were marked by the preparation and celebration of an event which was to direct the future course of SEDOS and its Member Institutes for a long time to come. I refer to the ten-day Seminar which was held near Rome, at Villa Cavalletti, in March 1981. Much time was given to its preparation, to the choice of participants, to the study and development of the texts. I still remember with pleasure the Executive Committee meetings and those of the Steering Committee; the way we studied the Seminar themes in-depth and the hope and en-



Gabriele Ferran, SX President 1980-82

thusiasm with which we worked. The time for these meetings was always taken from other engagements and from the little free time we had but it was given with joy to the cause of mission. The support of the Member Institutes was unfailingly whole-hearted.

We all felt that a new step in the history of mission was about to be set in motion. The questions that had preoccupied us since the 1971 SEDOS Seminar were changing and we were ready to explore new ones. It was now, the "how" rather than the "why" of mission to which we had to find an answer.

The 1981 Seminar was, in itself, an extraordinary experience of universality and missionary ecumenism. I have attended two Bishops' Synods and other ecclesiastical meetings, but none had the strength of that Seminar. The ideas which emerged from it may now be found disseminated in the constitutions of many missionary and non-missionary Institutes. I, in my capacity as President of SEDOS, often presented the themes resulting from the Seminar to missionary institutes in connection with their planning efforts.

SEDOS is and has been an extraordinary catalyst for missionary energy of the Institutes and Orders engaged in mission and a sign of their collaboration which could be increased. Eight years after the

Seminar, the intuitions that emerged there still prove valid. Inculturation, liberation, dialogue and communion are ways open to everyone but which have not yet been fully explored. They are raised at every meeting on mission, but SEDOS in contrast with other organizations has taken, them seriously.

If I had to synthesize briefly what the word SEDOS evokes in my spirit some years after the termination of my office, I think I could summarize it in a few words: the pleasure of common research, the freedom to express and communicate one's hopes and fears for mission and the joy of being able to express those truths in which I believe with all my might.

<u>Gabriele Ferrari</u> completed twelve years as Superior General of the Xaverian Missionaries early in 1989. He is now spending a sabbatical year at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, USA.

IMPLEMENTING THE SEMINAR



Henry Heekeren, SVD President 1983-85

The "signs of the times", as seen by the members of SEDOS and by the Executive Committee during the years of my presidency (1983-85), are best reflected in the Seminars on Mission which were held at Villa Cavalletti. The three Seminars which I describe here were only links in a chain of many relevant topics treated by SEDOS over the 25 years of its service to the universal mission of the Church.

In March 1983 our theme was "Dialogue in Mission". With the help of experts, and using a pastoral and experiential approach, the numerous participants began to see more clearly some basic criteria for authentic dialogue with other religions and traditions and to appreciate their importance in contemporary missionary enterprise. We realized that in proclaiming the good news of God's love in Christ, we must search for God's presence among all peoples, in a spirit of real

dialogue at all levels of life. We became aware that this demands more humility and readiness to listen and to learn. This is imperative not only for us as missionaries but for all members of the Church.

In 1984, three years prior to the Synod on the Laity, our Seminar was on "Ministries in a Dynamic Local Church". We felt the urgency of listening to those who are leading us into the reality of new ministries, especially in the young Churches of the South and East, through their discovery of a new role and identity in the Church today. We became more acutely aware that a new definition of ministry is needed and that the relationship of new ministries to the traditional ones has to be clarified further. We felt that in this field Religious and Missionary Institutes should make their contribution daringly since they were

seen as often as being at home more quickly with new and prophetic models of Church and ministry.

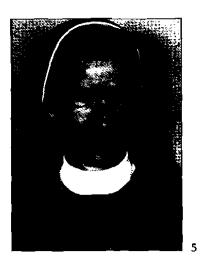
We considered the "sign of the times" in "Justice and Evangelization", the theme chosen for the Seminar in 1985. Justice was seen more clearly as an integral part of evangelization, - its horizontal dimension. Our conviction grew that in a world deeply scarred by injustice and inhuman living conditions, our faith calls us to recognize the presence of Christ in the poor and oppressed. We realized that this demands first our own conversion, and letting ourselves be evangelized by the poor and oppressed. Courageous and more incisive action on their behalf was seen as a must.

The outcome of the issues dealt with by SEDOS over the years has helped my own Society to fulfill its missionary task in a more enlightened and committed way. From the steadily growing membership of SEDOS, among other signs, I dare to conclude that the same may be said of the other Institutes who are members of SEDOS.

<u>Henry Heekeren</u> completed twelve years as Superior General of the Divine Word Missionaries in 1988. He is at present at the Mother House of the Society in Steyl, Holland where he is setting up a renewal centre based on scripture and the spirituality of their founder Arnold Janssen.

MISSION IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD

My own association with SEDOS began early in my ten years stay in Rome from 1978 to 1988, at a time when my life at the service of Mission was very interwoven with Church meetings such as Commission VI, Council of XVIII, SECAM, MAC, etc... all of which were addressing themselves to burning issues. Jacques LeClerq in his book Standing Under the Sun speaking about encounters, or as we might say, "meetings", reminds us that : "One does not write a thesis on an encounter, one witnesses it." SEDOS offered many opportunities to witness encounters, to listen to opinions at times provocative and disturbing, but also very necessary to safeguard against complacency.



Marciana O'Keefe, OLA Vice President 1983-85

From 1983 - 1985 I had the pleasure of serving SEDOS as Vice-President and of being

involved in discerning areas of common interest deserving of research and ongoing reflection over this period. Our thoughts had been sharpened on the whole area of FUTURE MISSION and an appropriate Spirituality. This in turn called for sharing on Preparation and Formation for Future Mission covering such aspects as:

- Awareness of Marxism;
- The importance of Inter-Religious Dialogue;
- Involvement in the Human Rights struggle;
- Experience in the Development of Non-Institutional Ministries.

In addition to Seminars of short and long duration there were meetings and one-day sessions to cover areas of specific interest to certain Congregations ... Sudan, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Guatemala These were opportunities to share confidential matters and sharpen our understanding of current happenings, policies and orientations.

Attempts were made to answer such questions as: Who are the missionaries of the future? This led us to look more closely at the whole area of MINISTRY ... How best to cope with situations of conflict?, with questions of Pastoral Presence, of Leadership, of the Underprivileged, of Rural Areas, and of Basic Christian Communities - all in places as far apart as Brazil and Uganda.

Conscious of the very pluralistic nature of the society in which our various missionary services were being lived and anxious to be more authentic builders of God's Reign, we made space in our 'tent' for Muslims, Buddhists and Traditional Believers, aware that 'the seeds of the Word' have been scattered throughout the great religions of the world and that only honest dialogue faithful to the Word can help us to recover them.

I believe that our Inter-Institutional sharing at this level brought us nearer to having a global vision of our world, its trends its needs, the challenging role which our co-missionaries and co-workers were being called upon to play and a greater sensitivity to the reality of the emerging Local Churches. It gave us a better sense of direction as we worked through re-drafting our Constitutions and re-vitalising our apostolic dynamism. It helped us to look with honest humility at our world where the sins of injustice, apartheid, violence and disrespect for the dignity of men and women were so strongly evident. It made us ask again the questions:

What new model of Church should we be helping to build? What should we do to collaborate better in the Inculturation of the Gospel in our fields of service? Why are the so-called Sects proliferating in all the Continents? How can we begin to play our part concretely in the New Era of Evangelisation?

These questions and many others continued to give food for thought, conversion and even collaborative action.

Marciana O'Keefe is collaborating with and serving Women Religious in Africa. "My present work is to be available to spend time with any Nigerian Religious Congregations who request my services. It is a beautiful, though demanding experience, giving and receiving as I pass longer or shorter periods helping with Chapters, Constitutions, seminars or just reflecting with Sisters and Superiors on the multiple questions which touch their lives of service. Presently the Conference of Women Religious of Nigeria is celebrating its Silver Jubilee and has taken the courageous decision to found an Institute for Formators."

FACING NEW CHALLENGES

It is not easy to separate the signs of the times of 1986-1988 from those of the years preceding and those following. Like all signs of life the moment of appearance is often unnoticed, growth is slow and unobtrusive, the moment of recognition may be sudden but more often it is gradual.

However, there is no doubt in my mind that the themes of the seminars, especially the annual prolonged seminars of spring, were chosen in response to the recognition of certain signs of the times as being important and significant to the mission of the Church and that of missionary institutes. There was, and is, a keen sense of the need to understand their challenge and to respond with awareness and without alienation. Such response requires that the members be well informed. "Informants" were sought and found



Helen McLaughlin, RSCJ President 1986-88

informed. "Informants" were sought and found - the best possible - who were researchers on each theme/sign that was recognized as a change-maker of our existing paradigms.

In 1986 the seminar, THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIES, highlighted the development of contextual theologies, emerging from reflection on the lived experience of the peoples of various nations, regions, continents.

In 1987, the seminar having the theme, LAITY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH followed the Synod on the <u>Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World 20 Years after Vatican II</u>. Our understanding of the role of the laity as co-workers and collaborators was deepened and enlarged. The seminar dealt with the ideal and the reality, as did the Synod. This seminar, held in March at Villa Cavalletti, was of particular interest to me as I was able to relate its content to all that I had heard on this theme at the Synod itself which I had attended as an auditor, in my role as President of the UISG. As I wrote in the SEDOS Bulletin of November 15, 1987, the aim of the Synod was to keep alive the positive Conciliar experience of Vatican II. I believe that it did, and I also believe that this SEDOS session (as well as all others) was another step on this same journey of self-understanding and renewal.

In 1988 the annual live-in Seminar had as its theme EVANGELIZATION: CHALLENGE OF MODERNITY. Among other aspects, we attended to technology as a dominant and secularizing force in our society, our culture, our consciousness. Its impact on Evangelization was a sign of the times that all present had concretely encountered, and we were encouraged and affirmed by proposals and processes for fruitful response to its challenges. We were reminded too that alert dialogue between the church and modern culture is a fundamental condition for keeping alive the timeless message of Jesus Christ. I believe that the work of SEDOS does just that.

For that reason we celebrate with gratitude this 25th Anniversary of sensitive reading of the signs of the times, and of the energetic

pursuit of those persons who, by writing or speaking, can highlight their significance and educate us to respond with hope that is grounded in faith, and expectations that are grounded in truth.

<u>Helen McLaughlin</u> was re-elected Superior General of the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Their Generalate is here in Rome where she resides. She is also a President of the Union of Superiors General of Women Religious UISG.

A PARADIGM SHIFT IN MISSION

The year 1989 has already been called 'historical'. It has been highlighted by extraordinary events; explosive events have impressed an incredible acceleration on history, and through them God, the God of Our Lord Jesus Christ, has shattered establishments that seemed everlasting and has launched His people towards new ventures of evangelization, liberation, justice and solidarity.

This is the 1989 of the Silver Jubilee of SEDOS, born in the "60s" when the missionary world was shaken by other events no less upsetting, such as the end of colonialism, the independence of Asia and Africa, the growth of the local Churches and the establishing of new links between the Church and the modern world through Vatican II.



Francesco Pierli, MCCJ
President

Some even said their Requiem for the missions; some missionaries were confused and frightened and chose an early retirement. Then, as now in 1989, the Lord "was coming as a thief in the night" taking everybody by surprise. History, then moving in slow gear, suddenly engaged top gear, making the whole Church and the missionary world giddy.

SEDOS was inspired by the Holy Spirit and was born to help missionaries to find again their proper place in the new historical world situation and in the Church, while keeping faith with their original charisma and yet in touch with the new era. It was urgent for them to rediscover their identity and justify their vocation in order that they continue being valid means in the hands of God for the coming of the Reign and also for finding new ways and methods of evangelization and the total liberation of men and women.

I entered the large family of SEDOS in 1981, when I took part in the "Research Seminar on the Future of Mission". I was just back from Africa, still enthusiastic about my work there. The contact with missionaries, men and women, from all continents opened my eyes and helped me re-read my missionary experience. I was thus set on a renewal path of profound sharing that is still going on.

SEDOS with its three-day seminars, one-day meetings, the Bulletin of Information and Documentation Centre, offers a very valid means of this ongoing renewal.

The year 1989, or even the year 2000, does not set me reeling. In communion with all men and women missionaries, particularly those that share SEDOS, I hope, and want, to be not simply a spectator, but an inspired and persevering actor for the coming of the Kingdom in this tangled modern world of ours.

I wish SEDOS many years of service in the promotion of missionary fellowship and I urge it to continue along the renewal path so that through a renewed vision, method, enthusiasm and availability, all who choose to identify with the missions, may be ever more ready to spend themselves wholly for the coming of a "new heaven and a new earth".

<u>Francesco Pierli</u> is the present Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries and President of SEDOS.

PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Photographs 1 - 7 appear in the text of the article)



ANNUAL REPORT to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 years in the service of mission is a time for giving thanks and rejoicing, evaluating the past and looking to the future. Over the years many people have given of their time and talents, their energy and goodwill to SEDOS. We have prayed, planned, worked, shared together, overcome difficulties and enjoyed successes. If anything has been achieved it is grace and blessing for in truth we do not build the Kingdom. That is God's work. We give thanks to God for inviting us to participate in it. For what has been achieved we give thanks, for what has been insufficient we acknowledge our inadequacy. In that spirit we submit the Annual Report for the 25th year. It covers the period December 1, 1988 to November 30, 1989.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following members constituted your Executive Committee during 1989:

President : Francesco Pierli, Superior General of the Comboni

Missionaries (MCCJ). Elected Dec. 1985.

Vice-President : Mary Slaven, Superior General of the Holy Family of

Bordeaux Sisters (SFB). Elected Dec. 1988.

Treasurer : Sean Fagan, Secretary General of the Society of Mary

(SM). Elected Dec. 1988.

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Michael Amaladoss, Margaret Loftus, Carlos Pape, Patricia Stowers,	Society of Jesus (SJ). Sisters of Notre Dame (SND). Society of the Divine Word (SVD). Missionary Marist Sisters (SMSM).	Nov. 1983 Dec. 1984 Nov. 1986 Dec. 1988

Executive Secretary : Bill Jenkinson, Congregation of the Holy

Spirit (CSSp). Appointed July 1980.

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Associate Executive Secretary: Helene O'Sullivan, Maryknoll Sister (MM).

Appointed Jan. 1986.

At the General Assembly of December 1988 Sr. Mary Slaven and Sr. Patricia Stowers joined the Board for the first time. At the 1989 General Assembly Sr. Margaret Loftus will resign as she completes her appointment as a member of the coordinating team of her Congregation during the course of the coming year. Fr. Michael Amaladoss is completing two three-year terms and Fr. Carlos Pape completes one three-year term. Elections will be held to fill these three places at the coming General Assembly.

Your Committee met almost monthly throughout the year. Attendance was invariably one hundred per cent of those present in Rome at the time of the meetings. All members showed a consistent commitment to the work of the Committee.

SEDOS MEMBERSHIP

Five new Member Institutes joined SEDOS during the year. Your Executive Committee approved the following applications:

- MISSIONARIES OF OUR LADY OF SALETTE (MLS), Pza. Madonna de la Salette, 00152 Rome; Tel. 530451. (Executive Committee Meeting, January 10, 1989; Minute 89/7)
- CONSOLATA SISTERS (ISMC), Corso Allamano 137, Grugliasco, Torino; Tel. (011) 703703. (Executive Committee Meeting, January 10, 1989; Minute 89/7)
- INSTITUTO BEATAE MARIAE VIRGINIS (IBMV), via Nomentana 250, 00162 Rome; Tel. 8380712. (Executive Committee Meeting, February 15, 1989; Min. 89/16)
- MARIST BROTHERS (FMS), Pza. M. Champagnat 2, 00144 Rome; Tel. 5924456. (Executive Committee Meeting, March 20, 1989; Minute 89/33)
- SOEURS DE LA SAINTE UNION (SUSC), viale Aurelio Saffi 28, 00152 Rome; Tel. 5810387. (Executive Committee Meeting, October 24, 1989; Minute 89/67)

An application for membership has also been received from the MARIST SISTERS.

We welcome these Societies to membership of SEDOS and look forward to a fruitful collaboration with them.

The Secretariate Staff remains unchanged. Patricia Cosgrave is Secretary and Antigone Lloyd has responsibility for collating and mailing the SEDOS Bulletin and for assisting in the Documentation Centre. Both Patricia and Antigone are committed to their responsibilities and give of their best to the work of the Secretariate. Philippa Wooldrige continues on a part-time basis.

Sr. Guadalupe de Leon, SSpS., came to help voluntarily at the Secretariate in October '89 as a result of our appeal for help. We are most grateful to the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit for their generosity. Sr. Guadalupe is continuing a long tradition. She is from the same society as Sr. Agnetta who worked voluntarily in SEDOS for many years. There is further good news. The Ursuline Sisters have volunteered the help of one of their sisters who will be coming to Rome in February 1990. She will help with translation work. They too are following a long tradition of support for and help in the Secretariat. As the outreach of the Secretariate grows we look forward to the help of volunteers for specific projects and developments.

SEDOS SEMINARS 1988 - 89

- i. PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION: WOMEN AND MEN Matilda Handl of the Benedictine Missionary

 Sisters and Paul van Parijs of the Scheut Missionaries shared the presentation of this topic at the 1988 General Assembly in the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The session was very well attended. Many of the participants recall Sister Matilda's visual aidsapillow and a pillar, and the way in which she and Paul alternated their presentations as a team. SEDOS Bulletin 89/No.1, Pp. 3-26, contains the text of the conference. A number of members requested that SEDOS arrange for further opportunities to follow up the very rich material presented by the speakers on this topic. Two meetings were held in response to these requests.
- ii. EVANGELIZATION AND POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

 Burkina Faso, India and Ireland spoke from their varied backgrounds to the theme of the Seminar held in Villa Cavalletti from April 11-15, 1989. The seminar dealt with the place of popular religiosity in the life and culture of different peoples with its enduring qualities, its authentic values, its symbolism and closeness to nature. A distinction was made between the "cosmic" (popular) religions and the "meta-cosmic" religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam. How do the two types of religion relate? Is one better than the other? Can conversion take place from one to the other without the culture of the people being destroyed?

How have missionaries dealt with popular religiosity in the past? And today - are the same errors being continued? Is popular religiosity found in all continents and among all peoples? These and many other questions were dealt with at the seminar which was extremely well attended. Virtually all the evaluations at the conclusion of the seminar ranked it very good or excellent. The Report is in SEDOS Bulletin. 89/No.5, Pp. 143-182.

iii. DECISION-MAKING IN INTER-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES This one-day seminar was held at the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on November 2, 1989. It was very well attended - reflecting the interest of SEDOS members in the topic. Four speakers shared their experiences of intercultural

decision-making. They came from Japan, USA, Ghana and France and their experiences covered an international formation programme, a general chapter meeting, the working of a general council and the preparation of a new Rule of Life, all in international societies involved in mission. SEDOS Bulletin 89/No.10 contains an account of the Seminar.

SPECIAL MEETINGS/CONFERENCES

- i. DOING THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA Fr. Albert Nolan, OP., gave this conference to an overflow audience at the Brothers of the Christian Schools on March 8, 1989. His thesis Black Theology, the contextualised theology of South Africa today is an explicit, articulate and scholarly reflection upon the Christian significance of black suffering and oppression. Fr. Nolan described the context which makes this theology the only valid theology for South Africans today. His book GOD IN SOUTH AFRICA: The Challenge of the Gospel, was presented at the meeting. (Published simultaneously by David Philip, Cape Town & Johannesburg; Wm. B. Erdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mambo Press, Gweru and CIIR, London; 1988).
- ii. <u>LAY ASSOCIATES IN MISSION</u> Fr. Mike Doyle, CSSp., Vicar General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) presided at a well attended meeting in the SVD College on May 2, 1989. Members shared information on the various forms of lay associates of missionary societies. We plan to hold a further session on this topic.

Fr. Dirk Rapol, CICM., a member of the research team of the Scheut Missionaries prepared a 62 page study (with a 28 page Appendix) on Lay Associates. This valuable study was made available to SEDOS members in English and French versions. Some copies are still available at SEDOS Secretariat.

- February 21, and March 9, 1989 at the SVD Generalate in response to requests made at the 1988 General Assembly. Members wanted to share experiences and further reflections on the conferences of Matilda Handl, OSB, and Paul van Parijs, CICM, at the seminar on PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION: WOMEN AND MEN. Those attending were asked to submit brief resumés of their contributions for later inclusion in SEDOS Bulletin. Fr. Sean Fagan facilitated both meetings. Matilda Handl, OSB, Finbarr Murphy, FSC, and Paul van Parijs, CICM, made short presentations at the meetings.
- iv. PEDAGOGIES FOR THE NON-POOR Bob Evans and Alice Frazer Evans, a married couple, conducted a full-day workshop on this theme at the SVD College on June 26, 1989. The myth that audiences are not forthcoming for events in Rome at this time of year was proved to be unfounded! Eighty members took part in the workshop which included a case-study and lasted from 8.30 am. to 6.15 pm. It was voted a most interesting session. Bob and Alice are the authors or co-authors of a number of books on this and related topics. Copies of their books, made available that day, all sold like hot-cakes, a comment on the appreciation of the participants and their interest in the day's proceedings. We hope to have further wordshops with Bob and Alice.

- v. MISSIONARIES IN PERU fr. Robert Plasker, CSC., conducted an "update" meeting on the situation of missionaries in Peru. A small group of members having personnel there, shared their information on the situation and their hopes for the future. These were meagre! All agreed on the difficult situation. No one could propose an overall analysis of what is happening nor an agreed strategy for missionary activity there at present but meeting to share experiences was supportive.
- vi. HAITI The Haiti group continued to meet at regular intervals during the year under the leadership of the Scheut missionary, Jan Hanssens a member of their General Council who worked in Haiti for many years. The group of fourteen signed a joint letter to the Conference of Major Superiors of Haiti assuring them of the support of the Haiti group of SEDOS members and their appreciation of the Conference's efforts in the difficult Haitian situation. The letter also assured the Conference of the willingness of the Haiti group in Rome to help the Conference if requested.

vii. WCC WORLD CONFERENCE ON MISSION AND EVANGELISM San Antonio, Texas, July 1989.

SEDOS collaborated closely with the

Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in the preparation for and the follow-up to this meeting. Margaret Loftus of the Sisters of Notre Dame and a member of your SEDOS Executive Committee was one of those who addressed the Ecumenical Prayer Service held at St. Paul's Episcopalian Church on May 6, 1989, (SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 21, No. 6 of June 15 has the text of her address).

Patricia Stowers, Superior General of the Marist Missionary Sisters, also a member of your Executive Committee was a speaker at the "follow-up" meeting organised by SEDOS and the Secretariat for Christian Unity at the Brothers of the Christian Schools on June 23, 1989. Fr. John Mutiso-Mbinda of the Secretariat, Sr. Emerentiana Cooney, SMSM, Fr. Jan Lenssen, M.Afr. and Fr. John Sherieda of the Secretariat for Dialogue with Other Religions were the other speakers. The meeting enabled members to appreciate the context, content, process and personal experiences of the San Antonio Conference.

Patricia Stowers, also gave an interesting account of the Conference to Commission XVIII, a joint group of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Unions of Major Superiors in Rome.

viii. "PLOWSHARES" ORIENTATION MEETING Six SEDOS members met with a group of 30 professors, presidents and members of governing boards of theological schools and seminaries from the United States of America on June 1st, at the Missionaries of La Salette Generalate. They were on their way to an "insertion experience" in Southern Africa and were led by Bob Evans of PLOWSHARES. The SEDOS members helped to orientate the group as part of their preparation for this experience. On both sides the exchange was well prepared, friendly, frank and thought-provoking.

It is the belief of the PLOWSHARES organisation that a lived experience of insertion in a situation of poverty, oppression or marginalization, when well prepared and reflected upon, has lasting effects

in producing a fundamental change of attitude in those who take part in the experience. There is well researched evidence to substantiate this claim. Your Executive Committee supports the programme.

ix. HEALTH CARE FOR THE POOR

Patricia Stowers, SMSM, a member of the SEDOS Executive has agreed to become the Chairperson of the Ad-hoc Committee which will plan and convoke the meeting on Health Care for the Poor during the coming year.

SEDOS BULLETIN

We continue to receive many letters of affirmation for the Bulletin. We now print over 1.100 copies per issue. Supporting letters come from near and far - Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Nepal, Tanzania, Trinidad, USA - to mention only a few, - and from Europe and Rome. A number of member societies send copies to a large selection of their Regional or Provincial Superiors: Maryknoll, SVD, Scheut missionaries, Jesuits, Marists, Spiritans. A copy goes to each of the 87 missions in Sierra Leone through the Conference of Religious Superiors. The address system is now computerised. A further increase in mailing costs has been announced in Italy which may mean an increase in the cost of the Bulletin.

SEDOS BULLETIN INDEX 1979 - 1988

Readers of SEDOS Bulletin have long commented on the absence of a comprehensive INDEX for the Bulletin. This lacuna has now been filled in an excellent way by $\underline{\text{Fr. John TRA, SVD}}$, who has completed a ten year author and subject INDEX of the Bulletin for this 25th Anniversary Year. The INDEX is an extremely useful tool for readers of the Bulletin and we recommend it highly.

(Tra, John A. <u>SEDOS Bulletin Index 1979-1988</u>. Rome: SEDOS Secretariat, 1989; XXV, 371 pp., 20 cm. Available: SEDOS Secretariat, via dei Verbiti, 1, 00154 Rome. ITL. 10.000 (\$7.50) Postage \$2.50 outside Europe).

THE CHALLENGE OF MISSION TODAY

A Book for the SEDOS Silver Jubilee

The Executive Committee decided at its January 1989 meeting to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of SEDOS by publishing a paperback book on the challenges of mission today. This book would contain a selection of the best conferences given at SEDOS Seminars since the 1981 Reseach Seminar. Orbis Books have agreed to publish the book. In effect it will outline some of the important trends in mission theology as reflected in the SEDOS membership during the past ten years. The book

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will contain an important contribution by Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ, on the challenges of mission today. Bob Schreiter, CPPS, of the Chicago Theological Union is writing the Preface. The SEDOS Executive Secretaries are editing the book. The Executive Committee is the Editorial Advisory Board. Preparation of the manuscript is nearing completion.

SEDOS DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

There has been a considerable increase in the use of the Centre. Students preparing theses and members of General Councils preparing visits overseas specially have used the Centre increasingly during the past year. Many requests for specific information have been handled and advice given on research material. A selection of useful documentation in the Centre was published in the SEDOS Bulletin. This included studies carried out by SEDOS members on General Chapters, Planning Provincial Priorities, Guidelines for Evaluating Ministry, Corporate Stance, Lay Mission Associates etc. The requests for copies went far beyond our expectation. Information is now obtainable quickly due to the re-organisation of the centre which is virtually complete. Sr. Helene O'Sullivan is always available to advise researchers and has been of great assistance to those using the Centre.

The computer programme designed specially for the Centre is working very well. Some member societies are investigating the use of this programme for their own documentation centres - a move which could lead to much more efficient sharing of information in the not too distant future. Members are welcome to come and see how our centre is organised and to use our computer programme if they find it suitable to their needs.

IDOC Documentation Centre sponsors an annual one-month course for documentalists from grassroots documentation centres all over the world. Each year they visit our centre and are impressed by the overall organisation which they find they can use as an excellent model. We had the same expression of appreciation for the organisation of our centre from IAMS representatives last year. We would be happy to share the organisation model with SEDOS members.

ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Sister Helene O'Sullivan of the Maryknoll missionaries completes her second two year contract as Associate Executive Secretary with SEDOS in December 1989. The SEDOS President wrote to the Superior General of the Maryknoll Sisters asking that Sister Helene stay on till the end of this academic year. The request was approved and we are glad that Helene will be with us until July of 1990. Sister has made a profound contribution to SEDOS from the day she arrived. We are all extremely sorry that she is leaving. She returns to Hong Kong where she worked for many years. We will have an occasion to say 'goodbye' later but at this, her last General Assembly with us, we record our deep appreciation

for all that she has done during those four years and for her professional expertise. Her generosity in giving her time and talents and her cheerful spontaneity have marked the SEDOS Secretariat.

We have circulated to all the women member societies of SEDOS a job specification for her replacement. We ask those members to give very serious consideration to making available someone of Sister Helene's competency to replace her when she leaves us in July 1990.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

1.11.1988 - 31.10.1989

We are grateful to our members for their prompt and generous payment of the annual fees. The end of the financial year sees us with a modest credit balance on the income and expenditure account.

Incomes 1989

Fees Interest Bulletin Sales Index Sales Royalties	98,980.000 6,587.918 8,338.505 155.000 89.125
	114,156.548
Expenses	
Operating Expenses Bulletin and Index Personnel	21,912.064 24,615.725 67,317.500
	113,845.289
Surplus Exchange Gains	311.259 4,867.495
Total Surplus	5,178.754

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

COVENANTING

Covenanting in the Old Testament meant a commitment to do something for the Lord, e.g. a tithe of one's earning or possessions, a commitment to a certain way of life. Your Executive Committee wishes us to reflect on this concept of Covenanting as it affects our membership.

A number of respected friends have expressed their appreciation of SEDOS over the years. Because its membership includes almost all the international institutes involved in trans-cultural mission they rightly see it as an organisation of enormous resources and expertise. SEDOS which is composed of 72 Institutes with approximately a quarter of a million men and women influences the vision, articulation, agenda and implementation of mission worldwide.

In SEDOS Seminars, grassroots missionaries, theologians and lay men and women from the different continents are given an international forum for sharing their experiences, theologies and world views. The leaderships of the SEDOS institutes attending these seminars have the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from one another.

The 1981 Research Seminar and the resultant Agenda for Future Planning, Study and Research in Mission gave clear directions and emphasized the central role of the local Church. Every year since then SEDOS has held a major residential seminar as well as 2 one-day seminars. At these seminars we have explored the themes that arose from the Agenda or that have been suggested by members at the Annual General Assemblies. During and after these seminars there is a tangible and felt sense of unity and fundamental agreement on basic issues while at the same time there is vigorous debate and discussion.

Our friends, including colleagues in other Communions, who are involved in shaping the future vision and policies of their own Churches and their societies have asked us how SEDOS and its institutes envision the future of mission. How are we planning to shape and implement our common vision in dialogue with the local churches and at the service of the local churches? How are we collaborating with each other to make an ever greater impact in the areas of inculturation, dialogue and liberation etc? Does the same unity of vision and goals that mark the leadership level of SEDOS members exist in each institute and among the institutes? Most of the SEDOS members that we have talked with agree that it is through Provincial and local leadership, working in and with the local church and encouraged by the central leadership of their congregations that new initiatives and directions in mission will emerge and be implemented.

The concept of Covenanting suggests to us a more demanding and purposeful commitment by SEDOS Members to deepen and broaden the collaboration and unity within our Institutes and among our institutes in the service of mission. Covenanting is about "follow-through", practical action.

Your Executive Committee dealt with this issue at its meetings in July and September of this year and came to the following decisions:

In order to facilitate Covenanting in SEDOS:

- (1) The principal conferences at the three major SEDOS Seminars each year will be translated into Spanish, Italian and French. A copy of each of these translations will be sent to each Generalate for duplication and dissemination to their members.
- (2) At the Villa Cavalletti SEDOS Seminar a group of 3 to 4 participants will be elected to draw up a simple and realistic plan for sharing and implementing the results of the seminar at the grass-root level of membership. The aim is not to produce a common statement but to agree on a strategy to disseminate and encourage discussion, debates and interchange on the Seminar Report.
- (3) Covenanting among SEDOS Members will be put on the Agenda of the 1989 Annual General Assembly. (Minutes 89/55 and 89/59).

In order to implement the first proposal of the Executive Committee, some member Societies have already volunteered to translate the Reports of the three Seminars into Italian and Spanish. The text of Michael Amaladoss' conference at this Annual General Assembly has in fact been translated into French, Italian and Spanish.

Some possible ways to facilitate collaboration among Member Institutes might include the following:

Last year a number of Institutes held meetings here in Rome for Formators, new Provincials and J & P Coordinators. A number of inter-chapter meetings were also held. Would members think it worthwhile to notify SEDOS that they are planning such meetings in the following two or three years and ask to be notified if other Institutes were planning the same. If 2 or 3 Members were doing so they might get together to select the dates so as to have some days overlap when they could all be together to share insights, resource persons, common planning on a regional basis etc. If this were not feasible then perhaps an Institute that was holding such a meeting here in Rome might extend an invitation to other SEDOS Institutes to send a representative to the meeting or for part of the meeting.

LOCAL CHURCH

SEDOS continues to grow in membership. Over seventy Institutes now belong to the SEDOS group and there are signs that the membership will continue to grow.

Local Churches increasingly acknowledge their responsibility for mission and increasingly we find that institutes of men and women interested in mission look to SEDOS for information and guidance on how they can respond to this "new" development. It is not really new. It was the contextual background to the 1981 Research Seminar. Many years ago "Ius Commissionis" was abrogated. It entrusted specific mission areas or territories to particular missionary institutes, but with its passing, responsibility for mission fell to the local Churches. But new patterns of relationships between local Churches and missionary institutes and between the institutes themselves have barely emerged.

We think that future directions for SEDOS will surely include these three:

- 1. Developing these new patterns of relationships between mission institutes and local Churches;
- Sharing increasingly our expertise and our experiences of mis sion situations in order to make as useful and valid a contribution as possible to local Churches in their missionary responsibilities. This sharing will lead us to increased covenanting on specific projects and areas;
- 3. Having examined the "why" of mission in 1969, and the "how" of mission in 1981, we may may well concentrate in these opening years of the coming decade on the "where" of mission today.

Helene O'Sullivan, MM ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Helene O'Sullivan

SEDOS

William Jenkinson, CSSp EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Bill Gentemson

SEDOS

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