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**SEDOS Research Seminar, May 1991**

## **PROPHETIC MISSION IN A CHANGING WORLD**

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## SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue of SEDOS Bulletin contains the texts of the conferences given by the resource persons at the SEDOS Research Seminar on Mission held at Villa Cavalletti, Frascati, from May 19-24, 1991.

The theme of this seminar originated in the keynote address given by Michael Amaladoss, SJ., at the Silver Jubilee SEDOS Seminar in December 1989.

The key issue which emerged from that address provided the focus for this seminar:

"No one who looks at the world today can ignore the problems posed by modernity, the impact of science, industrialisation and urbanisation, rapid and mass communication, exploitative economic and trade structures manifested in such problems as international debt, consumerism, secularisation, dechristianization.

From a global point of view the epicentre 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 élite of the First World also inspire and control, not to say corrupt, the economic and political élite of the Third World. If one reads the signs of the times and discerns priorities, one wonders whether the

privileged place and the most challenging for mission today is not the First World."

The resource persons spoke from their own experiences, - Edwina Gateley as founder and member of the Volunteer Missionary Movement and later her experience on the streets of Chicago where she shared the personal stories and tragedies of women in prostitution and became more deeply aware of the patterns of structural abuse and oppression of women; - J. Bryan Hehir from his experience at parish, university and bishops' conference staff level from which he presented an historical, analytical and theological critique of U.S. society and the impact of U.S. policies on the Third World. The two speakers complemented each other and combined to present a stimulating commentary on Fr. Amaladoss' question.

Participants at the seminar were challenged to apply to their own situation as members of transnational societies in a transnational church the analysis presented by the speakers from one First World situation.

There was an overflow attendance at this SEDOS Research Seminar. The assessments of the participants indicated an overwhelming approval of the theme chosen and of the speakers, to whom we express once again our thanks and appreciation.

## SEMINAR SPEAKERS

FR. J. BRYAN HEHIR is a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston. His education was at St. John's Seminary (Boston) where he earned a B.A. (Philosophy) and M. Div. (Theology), and then at Harvard University where he earned a Th.D., specializing in Ethics and International Politics.

Since 1973 Fr. Hehir has worked on the staff of the U.S. Bishops Conference, working on social policy and primarily foreign policy issues. He was the staff director of the Bishops' Committee which drafted the pastoral letter on peace in 1983 and was an advisor to the committee which drafted the letter on the economy in 1986. He has served as an advisor to the U.S. Bishops at the Synod of 1974 and at the Extraordinary Synod in 1985. He is presently Counselor for Social Policy at the episcopal conference.

Fr. Hehir teaches full-time at Georgetown University where he is Professor of Ethics and International Politics. His published writings appear in journals and books on Foreign Policy and on Catholic Social Ethics.

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EDWINA GATELEY is English. As a young woman she worked in Uganda as a teacher and lay missionary. Following on her experiences there she initiated the idea of a lay missionary organisation and in 1969 founded the Volunteer Missionary Movement, with its headquarters in Mill Hill, London. She later moved to Chicago where she took a Master's Degree in Theological studies.

She spent nine months in an Illinois hermitage, an experience which led to her undertaking a ministry to women in prostitution in Chicago and the founding of Genesis House for women formerly in prostitution.

She wrote *Psalms of a Laywoman*, now in its 4th printing, and more recently *I Hear A Seed Growing* which Rosemary Haughton has compared with the writings of Julian of Norwich.

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## I. SOCIAL MINISTRY IN A 'FIRST WORLD' SETTING

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J. Bryan Hehir

I understand your invitation to me to speak at this seminar is rooted in the keynote address that Fr. Amaladosso gave last year at the 25th Anniversary Assembly of SEDOS. At the end of his address he argued that he saw the 'First World' as a kind of primary place where evangelization and re-christianisation needed to be carried out. His argument about why the 'First World' was important was for two reasons.

1) The 'First World' is a place where choices are made that affect the entire world. If one is concerned about justice and peace issues in the developing world, increasingly one sees in an interdependent world, that the choices made in the industrialised societies of the 'First World' have an enormous impact.

2) The 'First World' is a specific challenge to us because there we find cultures that are in need of second evangelization, cultures that have Christian roots and Christian history but where the question of the role of Christian faith is in a very different position today to what it was in the past. As I understood it, I was invited because I do my work in one first world country - the United States - and have done it there all my life as a priest.

The ministry of justice and peace, from the specific setting of a first world country as the United States,

has a twofold sense: one deals with the religious foundation of this question - how the church sees its role in society; the other deals with the society itself.

### Perspectives

I have been a priest in the U.S. for 25 years and during that time my work has always involved me in three things simultaneously.

**Teaching.** I have been a teacher, a professor of both Catholic social efforts and international politics, first in the Seminary at Boston and then in the University at Georgetown where I teach in the Foreign Service School. This school is specifically dedicated to people who are going to work in international relations, people who will go into places like the State Department, international organizations and international business.

**Public Policy.** Secondly my work has been in public policy, the church's public role in the United States. I have worked with the Bishops' Conference for the past eighteen years and I have experienced the way in which the Conference in the United States relates to bishops' conferences in other countries.

We have had direct bilateral relationships, for example with the bishops' conferences of almost every

country in Latin America; with Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zaire, Kenya in Africa; with the Philippines and South Korea in Asia, and with bishops conference all over eastern Europe.

Also, very importantly, we have had the experience of contact with missionaries, primarily from the United States. They have consciously developed the art of speaking back to the church in the United States about situations in which they work, and in which U.S. policy is directly affecting the situation. This has been an ongoing and very fruitful experience.

Parish ministry. Thirdly, I have always stayed in a parish. The kinds of issues raised in Fr. Amaladoss' talk last year, about the role of technology and the effects of this complex technologic communication framework in an industrial democracy, are the kinds of issues that surfaced in the parishes where I have been. The first six years of my life as a priest were in a parish outside Boston where literally everybody worked in what we call the research and development industry. I was in discussion groups where every single person had a degree from MIT. All were engineers from MIT and worked in medical technology or the defence industry.

During the last seventeen years in Washington I have been in a parish that spans an enormous range of people. They work in the Congress, the World Bank, the IMF or in the U.S. Government, often at very high levels.

Across the street from our rectory is a community of 2,000 to 2,500 people, most of whom are undocumented immigrants from Central America. Further along the street is an East Asian community which came to the U.S. ten years before the Cen-

tral American community. In the public school district where our parish is, 26 languages are spoken in a ten square mile area.

I will try now to provide a framework or overview of the ministry of justice and peace in one first world country, namely the United States. I will examine the challenges that the characteristics of that culture pose for the church and the role of the church in the society of the United States.

My lecture will have three parts. First, I want to look at the signs of the times or the setting for the church in the United States and the characteristics of the society that one must address. Secondly, I will look at the social place of the church in the United States. Thirdly I will return to Fr. Amaladoss's theme of the relationship of the faith and justice dimension as one engages in social ministry.

# I THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES. THE SOCIAL SETTING OF THE CHURCH'S WORK IN THE U.S.

I identify four characteristics of the U.S. Church. In summary form they are the following. It is a church that lives with a secular state; in a pluralistic society; in a capitalist economy; in a post cold-war world.

None of these four characteristics is obviously religious. They are the kinds of things that *Gaudium et Spes* calls Signs of the Times - factual characteristics of the society that the church must first understand and then try to respond to in light of a vision of the Gospel. Each one of these characteristics poses very specific kinds of challenges to the work of justice and peace.

## 1. A SECULAR STATE

I am addressing here the question of church/state relations in the United States. In the history of the Catholic Church and its teaching, church/state relations have always had a significant impact on society. We have paid a lot of attention to what church-state relationships ought to be. The secular state in the United States grew out of the eighteenth century situation, a contemporary event for the Catholic Church! Indeed one could argue that Catholicism has had a difficult time knowing what to do with this contemporary secular state. Every time we confront it we struggle.

At a talk which I gave this semester on the Catholic Church and the politics of Europe, the group remarked on the developments in Eastern Europe today. How, for example, will the church in Poland deal, not with opposition to Communism but with a secular society where abortion is the subject of debate as it is in the Polish legislature today? Confronting a secular state poses certain problems and questions and it also poses certain opportunities; the key is to know what the opportunities are as well as what the problems are.

In the United States the secular state is seen in the church/state relationship found in the first amendment to the constitution. Sometimes called the separation of church and state, essentially what it means is this: in a secular state religious communities will face neither discrimination nor any favouritism. There will be neither discrimination because you are religious nor will there be any special favouritism because you are religious. The implication is therefore that the church is free to witness to what it believes in but it will get no special help.

A religious community may be

deeply convinced that its truth is absolutely necessary for society and for the people in it but there will be no special status accorded to that conviction in the society as a whole. One way to think about the challenge of a secular state is that you are left on your own to be as good as you can be but also to fall on your face. There is no special help, no special discrimination.

Catholic teaching had a hard time coming to grips with the secular state. From the middle of the nineteenth century until Vatican II Catholic teaching about the secular state said essentially 'we wish it did not exist, and the most we can say for it in moral terms is that we will tolerate it.' That changed with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. In the Council's *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatus Humanae* there was an affirmation in principle of the acceptance of the secular state. It was legitimate for the church to relate to the secular state.

Let me emphasise at the outset that when you deal with a secular state whether you are for example, trying to influence its policies on human rights in Central America or on whether there ought to be health insurance, or on change in the legislation on abortion, you go into that discussion along with many other people and you get no special help. So the question is how convincing you are on your own. That is the first challenge.

## 2. A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

The second challenge is that we live in a pluralistic society. Pluralism is really the product of a secular state. A state that is committed to protecting the religious freedom of everyone, including the religious freedom of atheists produces a pluralistic society. Secondly, a state like the United States, is what I will call, a limited state, that

is to say a state that has several restrictions on it. There are other significant social actors besides the state in the society. Pluralism is a product of the secular and limited state. American society has three kinds of pluralism: religious - a plurality of faiths; intellectual - a plurality of ideas; and thirdly, social - a pluralism of power in the society.

### Religious Pluralism

Let us examine for a moment these three levels of pluralism. Religious pluralism means that in a society like the United States there is a presumption that, on the basic questions of life, people fundamentally do not agree. The society is organised on the basis that people do not agree, for example on such important and meaningful questions in life as - What is the nature of the human person?, What is the destiny of the human person?, What is the moral response to issues as different as medical ethics, abortion and genetics, nuclear war, human rights and economic justice? The presumption is that people disagree on these and the function of the secular state is to protect everybody's right to disagree.

In order to set a moral direction for the society it is necessary to find some common ground among these differing groups on what constitutes the right, the good and the just. People start from very different points of view, sometimes ultimately very contradictory points of view.

Many of you will know more than I do about the following example. In recent years at the Bishops' Conference we had a lot of involvement in US/Chile, US/Philippines, US/Korean relations. It was always fascinating for me to watch the role that a Cardinal Kim, a Cardinal Sin or a Cardinal Silva played in the society. No American bishop could ever conceive of playing that kind of

role. They might wish they could, but the idea that they would exercise the kind of leverage those cardinals used is out of the question.

The American Civil Liberties Union in the United States is designed to make sure that religion does not get its head very far above the ground. If a U.S. Bishop ever tried to be a Kim, Sin or Silva there is no question that the American Civil Liberties Union would have us in court the next morning! Religious pluralism means that you may be passionately convinced of the moral rectitude of a policy but you have to convince others who start from diametrically opposed points of view.

### Intellectual Pluralism

Secondly, there is intellectual pluralism. The society treasures with a passion the notion that there is no single answer to a problem, and it therefore purposely fosters a multiplicity of answers to a problem. Consequently a fairly relative view of truth operates in the public discussions. The questions again for the church are - How do you even get your voice raised? How do you capture the attention of society no matter what you want to tell them? There are multiple ideas coming from multiple institutions addressing the same question. This, I think, is not unrelated to Fr. Amadadoss' point last year where he talked about the way in which faith can be marginalised in the industrialised society. It can be reduced to a private choice. Everybody has a right to their own private "God".

There is no automatic acceptance that by asking the church you will find answers to questions about the public direction the society will take on its human rights policy, its position on trade with the developing world, its position on abortion... The church is one voice among many. The question is how you get into the discussion, how you influence people

who start from diametrically different viewpoints religiously, and how you compete with other sources of ideas in the society. In the university world of our society for example there are indeed many Catholic universities but they are not the only players or even the major players.

### Social Pluralism

Finally, there is social pluralism. The state does not control all issues. There are several sources exercising power on society. Trying to deal with American foreign policy as it affects Central America, or Africa, the Philippines or Korea, does not mean focusing attention only on the state or the U.S. Government. U.S. corporations too, have an enormous impact on all of these societies and they are different entities from the state or government. Last week, for example, at the American Bishops' conference we had discussions with the Mexican bishops on the proposed free trade agreement between Mexico and the United States. We want to work with the U.S. government and to address it on that issue, but, the people setting up the 'Maquilladores' just over the border are private corporations in the United States. If we want to deal with living and working conditions in the 'Maquilladores' we have to deal with those corporations.

Engaging in justice and peace ministry means having to put up with these three kinds of pluralism, and each one poses a different problem. The economy is regarded as a distinct sector from the political sector. Take for example the Pope's most recent encyclical where he says the market is a legitimate way to think about things economically but that the market should be surrounded by what he calls a juridical structure, a framework of law and policy to limit the market. But there is an enormous debate in our society about how much the market should be limited and we have people who think

it should not be limited at all! We have to fight to get the point established which he takes for granted.

There is a real opportunity however, in structured pluralism because the church is one of the sources of institutional presence in the society. Religious communities have a major role in American society through education and health care. New York City which is in enormous crisis, both financial and otherwise, in terms of its educational system has just carried out a major study which says the most effective educational institution in the City is the Roman Catholic Church.

Yet the reality is that as the report of this major study is being published the church is being forced to close schools because there is no money. And there will be no money from the state. There is no Cardinal Silva relationship in New York! No matter how valuable those schools are, no matter how well they educate, there will be no state funds because it is a secular state with a pluralist society, and the pluralism is religious, intellectual and social.

### 3. A CAPITALIST ECONOMY

Thirdly, it is a capitalist economy, meaning by that, a market-oriented economy in which the market has its own law and the economy is regarded as a distinct sector outside the political sector, - a discription accepted in the Pope's recent encyclical. The relationship between the political sector and the market is a point of major debate. When the Pope says there should be a juridical structure surrounding the market, we must be aware that the consensus that the State ought to set that juridical framework is much more solid in European societies which are also market economies, than it is in the United States.

In the United States, particularly

now after the 1980's the argument is that the more freedom there is for the market the better. We have low taxes in comparison with European societies; we have less regulation of the market; we have a kind of free-wheeling capitalism. It is not a nineteenth century capitalism but it would be an enormous struggle, for example, to implement in the United States, what the Germans call the social market economy.

The significance of the capitalist society is twofold, not only regarding what it does in terms of the US economy but also what it does in terms of the developing world, the major international institutions and the international society as a whole.

The most recent encyclical is interesting in its consideration of how the church plays its social role. The style of Catholic teaching for most of the last hundred years has been to say there are two dominant models of how the world is organised socially and economically. The models are liberal capitalism and Marxist socialism. The Church does not really like either, so it does a critique of both. The Church's role was not so much to set up a third way, although that was debated for a while, but primarily to do a critique of how these two different orders could be reshaped.

Free market. Effectively that kind of framework has collapsed and we are left with a very dominant conception of the free market argument. This is found in the encyclical. Some of my friends in the United States are overjoyed when the Pope says that the market is the answer, but of course he does not say that. He says it is part of the answer and then he talks about the moral limits of the market. He talks about its utility and also about the moral limits to it.

There is a whole new discussion about how to set moral limits to the

market, particularly evident at the international level. It is one thing to establish a juridical framework that sets limits and directs the market when dealing with domestic society, but it is much more complicated when it is a question of setting-up that juridical framework for the market internationally.

Consumerism. Finally there is what one might call the culture of capitalism. This does not so much concern the technical rules of the market but the question of consumerism which Father Amaladoss raised last year and which the Pope continually refers to.

The culture of capitalism is not so much a matter of the inner workings of capitalism but rather the kind of ideas which circulate in the society about what constitutes the good life in philosophical terms. What kind of limits do you set on human desire and demand, both for the welfare of individuals and society? What kind of limits do you set on the use of resources or the environment? These are cultural questions.

The Church in the United States has two kinds of roles on the capitalist question; one deals with setting the framework for the market domestically, and cooperating with others to set it internationally; the second deals with the culture of capitalism symbolised at the personal level by consumerism.

#### 4. POST COLD-WAR WORLD

People who teach international affairs in the United States recognised the significance of the Pope's most recent encyclical. It contains a chapter on the year 1989. Everyone recognises that in 1989/90 we have passed what I call a "fault-mark," a fundamental divide in world affairs. There have been other moments like this in the past; the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 set the course of the

nation state system for the following three hundred years; the Congress of Vienna in 1815 set the direction of Europe for a hundred years; 1945 opened up the cold-war history.

An outstanding historian of the cold-war, not a Catholic nor having anything to do with the Church, writing in 1990 describes it as follows:

We now stand at one of those rare moments in history when the normal constraints that bind us fall away. Now we have the chance to set the direction for the next several decades. The combined effect of changes in the Soviet Union, changes in Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, the integration of Western Europe and what all of that means in terms of the developing world, - that is the set of questions that are on the table for this coming decade.

It simply cannot go on the way we have been used to. That world order is gone. What will take its place is entirely open to determine. The Pope's encyclical - *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, in 1987, was trying to grapple with this question. The world for the previous fifty years had been a bipolar world concerned in terms of East and West. The dominant issue right now for U.S. policy is the debate about the future. Both of the Pope's encyclicals have attracted enormous attention, if not necessarily agreement. He has found a way into the centre of that circle where, even in the face of a plurality of ideas, people may not agree but they do not think they can ignore this kind of voice.

## II

### THE CHURCH AS SOCIAL INSTITUTION

I want to look now at the role of the church in the United States, to set an overview rather than deal in detail with the Church as social

institution. This is something that I think we do not do well. As Catholics we tend to think of the church as a mystery of faith, a community of belief and worship, and at times as a problem! But we hardly ever analyse the church as a social institution. My secular and political-science friends do not think about it as an object of faith or as a worshipping community. They are fascinated by it as a social institution. What makes it interesting to many people, is that it is at one and the same time, and always at one and the same time, a trans-national community, a national institution and a local community.

Trans-national actor. What we call in theological terms, "the universality of the church", is the fact that, from a political point of view the church is a trans-national actor. There are lots of such actors in the world today. They may be based in one place or present in several places. They may have a trained core of personnel, a sophisticated communications system and a single guiding philosophy, - General Motors, Philips Petroleum, or Missionary Religious Societies. Trans-national actors have a very major effect on how the world functions. The Catholic Church was a trans-national actor long before General Motors ever came on the scene but we seldom think about the church in that way.

National institution. The Church is always a national institution. Within a country it takes on a national character. The development of the notion of the local church and particularly the bishops' conferences since Vatican II have given the local church more and more visibility. In our experience, no single bishop in the U.S. could have written either the letter on nuclear war or the letter on the economy. No single bishop or cardinal in a country would ever have the kind of

impact which the Conference of the bishops of that country have when they address the whole country.

**Local community.** Throughout the 80's whether in the Philippines, Korea or Central America, local churches within nations were addressing the nations. So the church while being always a national institution is also ultimately a local community. It lives and breathes where people are born, die, marry, raise their families, do their work, struggle with their existence.

There are very few institutions in the world that have that kind of simultaneous presence. The U.N. is a trans-national organisation but it has very few local roots. There are lots of local, interesting communities of prayer, worship, thought, organisation, but they find it hard to influence the national level, much less the international level. And there are many national institutions that are very chauvinistic - that simply do not want to deal with the rest of the world. The Roman Catholic Church as a social institution is present in those three ways all the time. We simply take it for granted. And the Chairman of the board of G.M. does not get to speak from St. Peter's Square when he wants to make a point!

I do not know where all the participants in this seminar work, but I do know it would not be easy for another institution to put together the range of experience that is in this conference hall. General Motors does not have it. You are in twice as many places as is General Motors; you live with people at a different level of existence; you know their lives differently.

#### A 'Post-Immigrant' Church - At the Centre

The standard definition of the church in the United States is that

we are a post-immigrant community. This is true but no longer adequate. It is true that the history of Catholicism in the United States from the middle of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century is the story of a community that has brought large numbers of immigrants from the edge into the centre of American society. Most American religious vocations probably came from those kinds of families. But there is a way in which the church is present at the centre of society, present where those choices are made that Fr. Amaladoss talked about last year.

In the Congress which is the Legislative Body of the United States, Catholics outnumber all other religious communities two to one and usually three to one. Secondly, in the corporate world, that other centre of power made up of banking and other corporations, Catholic chief executive officers outnumber those from any other religious community in the country. Twenty years ago that would have been inconceivable. Thirdly the Church has been in the Union Movement all its life - twenty years ago that would have been conceivable. Fourthly it is in the university and higher education world in a way it never was before, not necessarily in terms of excellence, but there.

Catholics have moved into the centre, where, for good or for ill the choices are made in American society. The U.S. bishops produced a document last year on the third world debt. This was an effort to address U.S. policy on this issue and as part of the effort we went to New York and met with the Presidents and Vice Presidents of all the major banks. They were almost all Catholics. It was like a meeting of what we used to call the Holy Name Society except in a somewhat different setting! They had read the Pope's argument and they knew what we were about. They had read their financial

accounts and there was no question of the bishops telling them what they should do. It was rather like Paul in Athens. 'We will hear you out,' is what the Athenians said.

When we were preparing the letter on nuclear power, 80% of the Generals - four out of the five Chiefs of Staff were Catholic.

#### A Newly Immigrant Urban Church - At the Edge

The standard description of the church as post-immigrant must be revised in two ways. Firstly, it is a newly immigrant church. The immigrants do not now come from Eastern, Southern and Northern Europe but from Central and South America and from East Asia. The twenty-six languages in my public school district are part of that reality.

Secondly, it is a persistently urban church, that is to say Catholicism is tied to cities in the United States and urban communities are the communities where the most devastation takes place in terms of human life. The old social questions, housing, health-care and nutrition that have been with us for thirty years are now combined with what I call the new social questions like drugs, Aids and violence, I am told that in New York City 27% of the hospital beds are for AIDS patients and that is in a country that has no national medical insurance.

This is the social challenge for the church in the United States - it is now a church both at the centre and at the edge. Because it is post-immigrant it is at the centre; because it is newly-immigrant and persistently urban it is at the edge of society. People who are at the edge of society seldom know people at the centre, and people who are at the centre have a hard time remembering the edge.

#### A Two-fold Challenge

The first challenge is religious. We need to read Corinthians I frequently and see how Paul reprimands the new Christians. They met for the Eucharist and ate different suppers because the church was divided socially. There is a church at the centre and at the edge in the United States today. We must not become two churches, but it is easy to do so.

Secondly, there is a social challenge. There is a pervasive fear in American society today among both liberals and conservatives, that the society will split dramatically over the next ten years into two different societies living in one country.

The United States is now in the third industrial revolution, the world of computers and high technology. That kind of society needs a certain education to enable it to function. It is the dominant society and it will move into the third industrial revolution. But a percentage of the society will become increasingly incapable of functioning in that situation and increasingly incapable of getting a job. It will be unable to deal with the requirements of a highly post-industrial society. So there is a fear that society will be split irrevocably and the church, situated in both communities, at the centre and the edge, is at the very heart of the problem.

### III FAITH AND JUSTICE: THE PROPHETIC CHALLENGE

Let me return to Father Amaladoss' conference. As I read him what struck me was the double challenge in the secular society in which I work.

How does the church, in the precise sense of the term, deal with its prophetic ministry on justice and peace issues? How does the church deal with the religious question in a society, in which religion is simply not a presumption that can be taken for granted? It is my impression that in many parts of Africa, Asia or Latin America, where you work in mission, there may be enormous human problems but the religious grounding of the society can be taken for granted. The situations we face however, in a first world society, are those Karl Rahner considered. He believed that one conversion, one really true religious conversion in a highly industrialized secular society is much more of an achievement than converting a whole town in the Middle Ages when the whole dynamic of society was built on the presumption of faith. Our society is not built on that presumption.

There is no danger that we are going to be persecuted. The danger is that we do not make sense to people.

Sons or daughters have no faith because their parents have no faith. A woman columnist of a national newspaper said to me 'I am not against it; I just do not have it, and never have. It has never been part of my life.' This was in an interview on the nuclear weapons question when the discussion turned to the faith of her son. Catholics live in that atmosphere. Faith is not a presumption. It must be an achievement.

My view is that a credible social ministry has to be combined with what I call 'qualitative pastoral care'. We cannot split the church into the sacramental church and the social church, into the pastoral church and the prophetic church. There has to

be an integrated approach where one addresses the religious question and integrates the social as part of that religious question.

Father Amaladoss' talk last year stressed two important truths:

- the first world is important because choices made there have consequences all around the world.
- those choices are being made in a society in which re-evangelization has to take place.

Reading him I thought again about *Gaudium et Spes*. One part addresses the social ministry of the church, and in that part comes the whole section on atheism.

Of all the problems *Gaudium et Spes* deals with, it considers atheism as the most important problem the church faces. I do not know if that is true everywhere in the world. Neither do I mean to say that Americans are atheists. They certainly do not think about themselves that way at all. Practically all of them say they are religious but in the United States context that has a certain kind of meaning.

In the secular state, in a pluralistic society, in a capitalist economy and in a post-cold war world an effective social ministry for the church demands an integral coming together of a qualitative pastoral presence responding to the religious issue, and an effective social presence responding to the justice and peace issue.

The challenge in the 90's for us is how this is done in the particular church of the United States, a church which is in a specific social setting, namely a developed, industrialized democracy of the first world, and a church which is at the centre and at the edge of society.

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## II. THE PROPHETIC CHALLENGE OF RELIGION AND POLITICS

### A CASE STUDY: THE U.S. BISHOPS IN THE 1980'S

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Yesterday I provided a framework for understanding the Church in the United States in the light of certain characteristics of its culture. In today's conference I will specify that reflection by presenting a case study arising from the work of the bishops of the United States. The bishops are of course, only one part of the U.S. Church but they are the part I work with most directly.

During the 1980's the bishops tried to address four public issues that can generally be called justice and peace issues:

1. nuclear policy and the question of nuclear weapons;
2. the economy, principally the economy in the United States but also how that economy affects others;
3. Central America and U.S. policy towards Central America;
4. the abortion question.

On these four issues the U.S. Catholic Bishops had a very definite position. It was highly public and created much debate within society and within the Church. My concern will not be to analyze the four issues in detail but to reflect on the experience of what happens when one part of the church, and only one part, becomes involved in such issues in the kind of society I described earlier - a society with a secular state, a pluralistic culture and a capitalist economy. Add to that the influential position of the United States internationally in the world.

I will begin with some reflections on the theme of religion and politics today; I will then look at the four issues and I will close with some reflections on how to move from issues to questions and themes.

#### I RELIGION AND POLITICS: GENERAL THEMES

Here I will discuss two points: religion and politics internationally and then the role of religion and politics in this our U.S. case study.

#### RELIGION AND POLITICS INTERNATIONALLY

##### Rise of the Religious Factor

I spend a good part of my life in teaching and studying the straightforward secular discipline of international relations. Part of my teaching at Georgetown University is to prepare people, many of whom are not Catholic, for a professional career in international relations. My work in that field, as we emerge from the 1980's and enter the 90's, makes really clear the rising significance of the religious factor in world politics. People who have no religious conviction at all, or no specific interest in religion in their personal or professional lives, have been forced to consider the role of religion in the world. It is not possible to arrive at

an adequate empirical understanding of a whole series of international issues today without taking into consideration the role of faith in peoples lives and the role of religious communities and institutions in world affairs.

There are three examples from the 1980's that make this point clear. I cannot analyse them in any detail here. You, with your international experience are in a position to know them better than me.

**Latin America.** One simply cannot understand the politics of what has happened in Latin America over the last 20 years apart from the Catholic Church which confronted military authoritarian governments of the right.

**Eastern Europe.** A very different reality prevailed in Eastern Europe where the Church confronted governments of the left. Timothy Garton Ash, a young scholar at Oxford who specialises in Eastern Europe is generally regarded in the United States as the most perceptive analyst of what happened in Eastern Europe in 1989. He has chronicled each of the revolutions. He knows people throughout Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary and has maintained contact with them throughout the 1980's and so when the upheaval came he used this enormous fund of information to interpret events.

In January of 1990 Ash wrote a reflective article on what had happened in 1989 opening his article with the statement, "Communism died in Eastern Europe in 1989." He then proceeded to ask when did communism begin to die. He located it in one place - the first visit of the Pope to Poland. He contends that this was the beginning of the death of the whole system because Solidarity in Poland was the first successful opposition to communism in Europe. Solidarity organised and

faced down the communist system. Without it none of the other movements could have existed in Eastern Europe. And without the Pope there would not have been Solidarity.

Ash is an example of a secular analyst whose views are universally respected and who roots the whole question in one religious figure. The Latin American scene is much more thematic and broader than Eastern Europe but I do not think it is possible to understand either Latin America or Eastern Europe apart from faith.

**Middle East.** The most intense intersection of religion and politics in today's world occurs in the Middle East where the three great religions intersect.

#### The Role of Religion.

The relationship of religion and politics becomes absolutely essential for understanding what is happening in the world today. Religious communities (religions) impact the political process through the following three factors:

**Ideas** - the ways in which people look at and interpret life;

**Institutions** - the way in which a religious faith takes shape and lays hands on questions;

**Communities** - the people who live by faith and whose lives are moved by it. They are the essence of these religious communities. How the religious factor intersects the political factor differs throughout the world.

#### RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The relationship between religion and politics has been discussed in the U.S. since the inception of the country. Constitutionally, the country is organized on the separation of religion and politics. This

is the essence of the secular state. At the same time religious communities have been present in the country and are part of its history from the beginning. Why is it that, in the last 10 to 15 years such extraordinary attention has been given to the question of religion and politics? Since it has been there so long, why does it now take on a kind of new edge, a new sharpness? It is not because we have become more religious or more virtuous. I attribute it to the rise of the moral factor in questions of policy confronting the society. On an increasing number of issues, good effective public policy cannot be made unless there is a consensus on what constitutes right public policy.

The society can be divided deeply and dramatically over moral issues, - so deeply divided that the church simply cannot do anything about certain issues because of that deep moral split. The abortion issue is probably the clearest example of this phenomenon in U.S. society. We are so deeply divided on this issue that it affects not only the issue of abortion but a whole set of issues that are related to it. We have almost no consensus in the society and therefore we keep splitting the political process again and again and again.

Religion and politics are related by the central issue of morality. People look to the religious communities in an effort to get help on the moral questions facing the society.

#### RISE OF THE MORAL FACTOR AT THIS TIME

My contention is that the importance of the moral factor at this time arises out of issues that are neither religious nor moral in themselves. It arises from characteristics of our society which will not go away. Therefore the moral factor will be increasingly with us and the debate

about religion and politics will continue.

There are two characteristics that are simply part of our secular existence but which raise moral questions everyday. One is technology and the second is interdependence. An examination of recent social teaching indicates that these two issues of technology and interdependence are increasingly raised as questions needing to be addressed. In the culture of the U.S. these two issues are pervasively influencing the society and they are creating major moral debates which, if they are not resolved will literally split the society. Let us look at these two characteristics and see how they raise moral questions in our public life.

#### Technology

Technology expands our capacity to control the environment of our life. It is applied science. Because it expands the control of our moral environment it dramatically expands the range of moral choice. Using the U.S. as an example, in the last 50 years we have

- split the atom,
- cracked the genetic code,
- and pierced the veil of space.

Splitting the atom led to nuclear weapons; cracking the genetic code opened the secret of the beginning of life - not just the conception question but the very beginning of human life; piercing the veil of space opened up a whole new frontier. Each of these questions has effectively placed in human hands a capacity to shape human life in a way previous generations would have regarded as impossible. Indeed, for most of the last 200 years if you said to any randomly selected audience that there was someone who had the capacity to destroy all of human life and also to shape its beginning, they would have said that someone was

God. Technology places in human hands the capacity to do things that for millenia belonged to God.

**Moral consequences.** The question then arises, what you do with this power? One response is simply not to use it. This is very hard to sustain for it is difficult to ignore this power. The second response is to formulate how to direct it. At this point the moral questions arise in force and these moral questions influence society across a whole series of very different fields of life and at different dimensions and levels of life. Whether one talks about medical practice or military technology, one is faced with this technological revolution. Once the genetic code is cracked, for example, questions are created such as federal funding for further research and these questions impact society as a whole.

Technology also raises very personal questions. Today every pregnancy opens up long discussions with a woman's obstetrician about amniocentesis, testing for genetic abnormalities. What to do if there are genetic abnormalities? What can be done to alter them or whether simply to abort? These questions are faced by ordinary people in ways that could not have been previously conceived. If one goes to the other end of life, in a society like the U.S., people can be kept alive for so long that every ordinary family has to debate who goes on the respirator? If someone is on the respirator can he or she be taken off it? If someone is suffering long debilitating illness with intense pain, why cannot they be killed? These questions are the day to day ordinary business of life and are dealt with in any U.S. rectory ministering to families. They are profoundly moral questions on which the whole society has to make some decisions.

The second characteristic of our

society is interdependence. It means that we are locked together in a limited universe. That is to say the nature of our life together today is that we are vulnerable to each other in a world of limited resources in which the question of who gets what, the old classical question in politics, has taken on a literally universal dimension.

Interdependence is created by a series of forces. It is created by technology, by communication, by the capacity for travel and most of all by political and economic ties that bind nations and peoples together in such a way that decisions in one part of the world directly and immediately impact people in another part. To say that the world is interdependent is not to say that all nations are equally dependent. The nations of the South are interdependent but are demonstratively more dependent on the decisions of others than nations such as the U.S. or Germany. The whole world is interdependent and then within interdependence there is substantial dependency.

Interdependence is now a material fact of our existence but the question immediately arises about the moral quality of the interdependence we share. If we are a materially interdependent universe is it possible to shape that universe in moral terms in such a way that we are morally interdependent. Can we take responsibility for how we influence each other?

**Financial consequences.** This question is at work in many interdependence issues such as the debt crisis. The debt issue can threaten the banking industry in highly industrialized societies but in developing countries the debt's consequences mean death and deprivation. There are two different kinds of consequences but one issue binds them together.

In the U.S., I find interdependence most visibly on display in the debate on the federal budget. I have argued for a long time that those responsible ought not to ordain seminarians to the priesthood unless they can read the federal budget and preach on it. The reason for this is that the federal budget in the U.S. has the moral character of a secular encyclical. The federal budget is the place where the society puts figures on what it values.

In the U.S. society which is now a deficit ridden economy - a debtor society - there is no longer any surplus money, so a dollar taken from one sector of the federal budget means that there is no dollar for another. Every year the debate on the federal budget very quickly leads to decisions between, for example, spending on submarines or food stamps. There is no spare money which enables spending on both. The budget debate is at the heart of our material interdependence. The question then is what kind of moral judgements do we make to shape our material interdependence. The same question prevails on the international level but it is a more complicated reality.

In the daily business of a highly secular society it does not take people long to know when they are dealing with more than purely empirical issues, for example, the decision to create a certain nuclear capacity that could tilt the balance for or against war, or the decision to spend further money on examining how to manipulate the genetic code. These are not the ordinary daily empirical questions. It is my experience over the years, testifying frequently before Congress, that the empirical questions are not the hard questions. The Congress can get enormous amounts of advice, and conflicting advice on the empirical dimension of problems. It is the moral question that divides and intensifies the debate.

## II THE U.S. BISHOPS IN THE 1980's

I will consider now the case study of the four issues and reflect on what happened when the bishops tried to deal with them. I will take the nuclear issue and the economy issue together since these were dealt with in pastoral letters by the bishops. I will then consider Central America and finally the question of abortion. My purpose is not to analyse these issues in their empirical complexity but to reflect on what happened to the church when it dealt with these issues.

### THE PASTORAL LETTERS

The two pastoral letters were:

The Challenge of Peace, published in 1983 on nuclear policy and

Economic Justice for All, published in 1986.

These letters were a direct outgrowth of two other documents in the life of the Church:

*Gaudium et Spes*, of Vatican II and

Paul VI's 1971 letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*.

#### *Gaudium et Spes*

*Gaudium et Spes* established the ecclesiological basis for social ministry. The significance of the Vatican II Council was not that it added greatly to our moral understanding of social issues. On the whole the major significance of the Council and particularly *Gaudium et Spes* was that it took justice and peace issues - social issues - and moved them in towards the center of the Church's life. *Gaudium et Spes* made an ecclesiological assertion that the work of justice and peace is not an option in the Church. It is not one activity among others nor an activity in which some people ought to be interested or engaged. *Gaudium et*

*Spes* asserts that the work of the Church is scriptural, sacramental and social and all three are constitutional of the life of the Church.

When the U.S. Bishops wrote the two pastoral letters on nuclear policy and on economy policy they implemented the mandate established by the Council in *Gaudium et Spes*. Although there were great differences among the bishops about what to say on these two issues of nuclear policy and economic policy, at no point in the discussions which took place over a period of six years, did any bishop question why they as bishops were addressing these issues in a pastoral letter. People outside the Church and even some in the Church asked this question but the bishops never questioned it themselves because *Gaudium et Spes* had established the ecclesiological legitimacy of these issues.

#### *Octogesima Adveniens*

Paul VI in the letter *Octogesima Aveniens* called on each local church to be a source of the church's social teaching. The local church is not simply taking orders from the center but reflects upon the cultural, social and political character of its setting and thus contributes to the church's social life and ministry.

In their two pastoral letters the U.S. bishops were essentially using the "bottom-up" approach. They were trying to take the broad social teaching of the church which we are celebrating in a special way this year, the centennial of *Rerum Novarum*, and think through its implications in each particular place. When the bishops did this they had to become much more specific than the broader social teaching of the Church ever becomes.

There are those who thought that the direct, specific application of the teaching was a mistake. My judgment is that unless the church gets

specific at the local level it does not make a difference. If the local church addresses very general themes, there may be unanimous agreement about the themes but no one quite knows what is being said. It is at the level of specificity that the church gets into trouble and that it makes an impact. But that is in fact the function of the local church.

#### Impact on the Bishops

The two documents *Gaudium et Spes* and *Octogesima Adveniens* provided the background to enable the U.S. bishops enter into the issues of their two pastoral letters. Let me comment briefly on certain characteristics of what happened when the bishops tried to write their letter on War and Peace and on The Economy.

Both letters addressed the two characteristics we have already noted - technology and interdependence, technology being uniquely present in the discussion on nuclear weapons. No one knows exactly how to handle this new reality which we have created. A number of the people who came to the bishops when they started writing the letter were scientists who had no religious faith at all but who had been involved in the development of nuclear weapons. They offered to provide any background the bishops would need because they saw that the moral question of what they had created was precisely the issue that must be addressed.

Victor Wisekoph an eminent physicist from MIT, who is now 85, gave an address to the bishops, not on their pastoral letter but on his own experience. When he looked back as a scientist at the cracking of the atom he said it was an overwhelmingly exciting experience. For a scientist, whose job it is to probe the inner secrets of nature, being asked to do this research was the peak experience of his life. When he looks at the consequences of what

they accomplished then the ambiguity comes in - not about the scientific discovery but its uses. And, of course, they are both connected. The technology issue reaches its apex of paradox in nuclear weapons. The pastoral letter was trying to address this aspect.

The pastoral letter on the economy addressed the interdependence question both in the U.S. and in the relationship of the U.S. to the rest of the world. It was clear from the beginning that it was impossible to write a letter on the American economy without looking at the rest of the world, especially the impact of the U.S. economy on other nations.

#### Characteristics of the Experience

**Consultative Quality.** The bishops planned to draft a letter and then send it out for responses, collect the responses and then redraft the letter in light of the responses they had received. They came to Rome in 1983 to meet with some of the European bishops' conferences about the pastoral letter on nuclear policy. The letter, it seemed, had caused some real problems. A number of the NATO countries felt that the letter was threatening their position and they had made representations to the Vatican.

The U.S. bishops were "invited" to come to Rome. Representatives of almost all the European Conferences were there. The U.S. bishops' pastoral letter was on display and had to be defended. The New York Times was in Rome to follow the issue. They thought that we were battling about the first use of nuclear weapons and related questions but that really was not at all the point of the discussion.

The European bishops generally did not understand the idea of sending out a teaching document for commentary as they thought that the

teaching authority of the document was thereby lost. The U.S. bishops however expressed the view that they gained in teaching authority by sending it out for commentary. Actually the sending out of the letter happened almost by accident. It was sent out to the bishops but the U.S. society became interested in it, so the bishops cannot claim some new innovative insight. They "fell into" the procedure but then became convinced that it was in fact a very good way to teach. The European bishops were confounded by this idea.

**Catalytic Quality.** Because the church is at the center and at the edge the comments from the center and the edge were different. The most important thing about the pastoral letters was not the answers to the questions but that they started a moral debate among other people in the society. The bishops had said something about a moral issue which other people then picked up on. The pastoral on the economy was published in full in the Los Angeles Times one of the major newspapers in the country. The significance of the letter, they wrote, was that it made the discussion of the poor in our country a respectable issue because this body of people, the Catholic bishops had undertaken it. This did not mean that the Los Angeles Times agreed with what the bishops wrote ought to be done about the poor.

The nuclear issue sparked off an interesting relationship between the scientific community and the Catholic Church, where for three centuries before, the relationship had been extremely difficult. All kinds of people who had no religious connection at all now wanted to enter the discussion. They had never found a way to get a hold of the moral issues themselves but they could now engage in it when it was initiated by the bishops.

I have had the experience of going to universities around the country to speak on the pastoral letter on nuclear policy only to discover a Nobel Prize winning scientist in the audience willing to listen. I do not ordinarily get Nobel Prize winners to come to my lectures! - but they were profoundly interested in the issue.

**Church - State Debate.** The letter on nuclear policy provoked a major debate on Church - State relations. An open public debate developed between the bishops and the government of the United States during the Reagan administration.

**Internal Dialogue** within the Church was likewise a feature of the whole teaching process during the discussions leading to the final text.

**Local Church to Local Church Discussion.** Finally there was discussion between the U.S. and the European bishops on the nuclear issue. On the whole the developing world did not get very involved in the nuclear debate but on the economic debate there were responses from episcopal conferences from a number of countries where U.S. missionaries were serving, especially in Latin America.

## THE TRANSNATIONAL CHURCH

### The Central America Issue

I will focus on the Central American issue to illustrate the transnational aspect of the Church. The church, as a universal transnational community, as a national institution and as a local community has a capacity to engage a series of issues that few other institutions have. The Central American policy issues demonstrated this capacity at work. There were three levels to the Central American issue in the 1980's.

At the local level what was happening in El Salvador, in Nicaragua

and Guatemala differed from country to country. At the regional level Central America had been convulsed by a war that cut across almost all of these countries. At the international level the U.S. was directly involved and the Soviet Union was involved through Cuba. During the 1980's each of those levels found its voice within the Church in each of these countries.

### Criteria for Involvement in Specific Issues

The Bishops' Conference adopted three criteria to apply to their involvement in a public policy debate. They would speak to an issue:

- when there were major issues of social justice or human rights at stake in another part of the world;
- when they could get some guidance from the local church on what to say;
- where U.S. policy was involved in the issue.

The bishops determined they would not make a public statement or become involved in a policy debate unless these three criteria were met. Even when an issue met these three criteria it was not easy to determine what to say. The voices of the local churches were consulted and filtered and decisions were made regarding what the voice of the local U.S. church should be in the given situation.

**Conflictive voices.** When there was a question of stopping all U.S. military aid to El Salvador or funding the Contras in Nicaragua, the voices from Central America were very conflictive. The U.S. bishops became drawn into the conflict and the U.S. government, knowing that the religious factor was the driving force in the debate in the United States was itself very active in trying to shape the opinion of the U.S. Church. The bishops

were visited regularly by government officials who would try to tell them 'what was the real story.'

Bishops who became involved in the public policy debates made sure they had their facts straight and had 'hard data.' The sessions in these Congressional debates were very intense because the Catholics in the Congress were dramatically divided among themselves about what to do. Congress persons who found the bishops' position on issues differed from their own position were particularly aggravated in the midst of a debate that was already very intense politically.

The religious factor. It is important to understand that the reason why the religious factor could so drive the debate in the U.S. was because people understood how important the religious issue was in Central America. And important also to understand that the U.S. bishops could not simply hear the voices from Central America and speak them in the U.S. They had first to hear the voices, then do an analysis of the situation in the U.S. and relate it to the public policy debate. This is what happens when the church moves from general to specific issues.

The response of U.S. Christians to the Central American debate was distinct from their response to the issues of nuclear or economic policy. The Central American issues generated groups of Catholics and Protestants who together were very active advocates about Central America. In all honesty their positions were much more absolute than the bishops who found themselves to the left in the political process but to the right of those in their own Churches.

## THE ABORTION ISSUE

Medical technology has made abortion a comparatively simple procedure and universally available since 1973. The debate that opened then has not been closed yet. Public opinion polls conducted only 18 months ago after 17 years of debate in the U.S. show opinion divided 51% to 49% on what should be done on this issue. The depth of feeling about it is hard to convey. The abortion debate has three levels:

- the moral question pertains to abortion as a moral issue;
- the juridical question pertains to how the civil law in a pluralistic society ought to be encoded. You personally, may be convinced that all abortion is morally wrong but if you try to legislate that juridically it may divide the society irrevocably;
- the political question. Because we cannot get agreement morally or juridically we fight it out politically. Abortion is thus a major issue in every political campaign.

Within the Church there is a strong basic consensus about the moral question of abortion, but there is division on the legal question: how much of the Church's position can be translated or encoded into civil law?

The abortion issue also highlights the debate about issues related to it. The debate surfaces very quickly the whole question of women in the Church and society. People who may be in agreement about the moral question of abortion are not in agreement about the questions surrounding it and clearly are not in agreement about questions like contraception, where 80% of the faithful oppose the Church's official position. The abortion issue cuts across a range of issues and leads to difficult public policy debates like the

distribution of contraceptives in high schools to protect people from Aids or to prevent abortion.

### III FROM ISSUES TO QUESTIONS AND THEMES

Part of the difficulty we have in the community of the Church in the United States is that there are intensely organized advocacy groups on issues like nuclear policy, economics and Central America and also on abortion. These groups are Catholic and organized around public policy issues but they do not talk to one another.

How does one move from these issues to other themes? When the Church gets involved in these issues in our secular and pluralistic society it must then answer three other questions:

- whether the Church should be involved in these issues publicly?
- why the Church would be involved in these issues publicly?
- how the church is going to communicate its teaching within the Church?

The 'whether question' asks if the separation of Church and State is being violated. If the Church takes a stance on these issues then it is challenged on whether it is stepping beyond what religion ought to do.

The 'why question' is an internal one. Do we corrupt the religious nature of the community by becoming involved in these secular issues? We must then discuss publicly the social ministry of the Church.

The 'how question' concerns how we relate the teaching authority of the Church to the conscience of Catholics? How much room is there for disagreement? The Church deals with an increasingly educated popu-

lation, overwhelmingly educated to college level or even further. It is not waiting for directions from the bishops to make up it's mind on these questions. How does one deal with this?

### Strategy for a Transnational Church

The Church has an enormous potential in a world in which transnational action makes a great deal of difference. We seldom think about a strategy for that institution. Will the 1990's be like the '80s? The effect of Vatican II was a decentralization which was carried out in the post-conciliar period and which gave local churches more space and more encouragement.

The Church is now back into a period of re-centralization, - but it is re-centralization after decentralization. Developing a strategy for a transnational church which has been decentralized, in which the local communities have had more activity and space and which is now being tightened up from the center can be complicated. This is true whether one is considering teaching authority, advocacy or relationships among local churches.

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### Questions and Answers:

Q:

Can you speak about the relation between party politics and the U.S. Church?

A:

The Church in the United States attempts to stay apart from political parties in every way that we possibly can. That is a wise decision on two grounds. The Pope is clearly opposed to any connection between the institutional Church and any political party. Secondly, any association between the Church and a

particular political party in the United States would render the Church's social ministry ineffective.

Generally, in the U.S., the Democrats agree with the Church's public stand on nuclear policy, the economy and Central America but they are never around when the issue of abortion is brought up. The Republicans on the other hand are always around when abortion is discussed but they are never around when the focus is on the other three issues.

By taking positions on the four issues the bishops cut across the political spectrum. They have to make difficult tactical choices because when they take a position on an issue others identify them with a political party even though they themselves do not identify along party lines. Every election year the bishops publish a document on exactly what their position is on abortion, otherwise they would get involved in an immense struggle.

Q:

What happens when bishops try to talk to the masses and try to answer their concerns? What has been your experience of this over the last 10 years?

A:

There could be a lot more of this kind of dialogue. It varies with the individual bishop in his diocese. When the bishops were preparing the pastoral letters they invited witnesses to speak and testify to them. These witnesses represented a wide variety of groups in the society. There was an effort while preparing the economic pastoral, for example, to reach out to groups that spoke in the name of the poor or that represented women and minority groups.

Archbishop Roach of Minneapolis was the president of the Bishops' Conference when the letters were being written. He announced that he was holding a Town Meeting on Tues-

day nights at Saint Isodore's Parish for surrounding parishes to discuss the nuclear question. Anyone who wanted to come was welcome. He would attend and present what he understood the bishops were doing and then have an open discussion.

Many interested organized groups came to bishops individually or to the Conference as a whole trying to press their positions. In the writing of the two letters there was also a fair amount of informal visiting by the bishops in their own dioceses so that they could discuss those issues with the people.

Q:

Could you distinguish between general and specific consultations?

A:

The general meetings were more pluralistic because there were more people involved.

Scientists, for example, would testify on very specific technical issues. The bishops took a position against the proposed Strategic Defense Initiative and as that was a highly technical issue it was crucial to have expert witnesses.

The general public would not get very close to that kind of discussion but they would often comment on whether the bishops should or should not speak on these issues. People would say to the bishops that they were doing the right thing without necessarily endorsing everything they wrote while others would say that they thought the bishops were forfeiting their moral authority as teachers by writing about these issues.

Q:

I hope you will have an opportunity to say more about the transnational Church at work because my concern is that the U.S. as a superpower has a lot of influence in the world. I now appreciate more the work that went into the pastoral letters. I think they could have a great influence on the thinking of

churches. I am wondering how a "Third World" church can make itself heard in the Church? I believe there is a sense in which the center of influence in the Church is changing? Do you agree?

A:

I think Rome has a lot of influence. It tries to bring to the attention of the world what is happening in 'Third World' countries. Rome is very concerned that large churches like the U.S. do not overly influence other churches, for example, the Church in El Salvador or Nicaragua. The question of who is the local Church can be very complicated. If it seemed like the bishops in a third world country had a different view from those in the U.S. then Rome would come in very

directly because they are apprehensive about the influence of a Church as large as that of the U.S.

In the U.S. Church the bishops have had the experience of publicly pursuing what they thought to be the right issue. Empirically it might have been so, but ecclesiologically Rome was there to see that another hierarchy was not going to be overwhelmed. United States missionaries in a particular country might want the bishops to speak to an issue. They might be willing, but if the local episcopal conference of the country asks them not to address it then it cannot be addressed. This is quite apart from the merits of the issue and often reflects ecclesial concerns.

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### III. FUTURE CHALLENGES:

## INTERNATIONALISATION AND PROPHECY IN POLITICS, CHURCH, AND MISSIONARY COMMUNITIES

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In the previous conference we examined how justice and peace is done in one specific local setting, namely a developed, industrialized democracy of the first world. We looked specifically at its political, cultural and economic system and considered how one tries to fulfill the justice and peace ministry in that framework. We considered a case study of how the U.S. Bishops dealt with justice and peace issues and how these efforts impacted other parts of the world.

Limits of the case study. There are limits to that case study. The first limit is what I will call balancing universality and specificity. There is a gain in specific detail by going in depth into one kind of social, cultural situation but there is a loss of universality. Much of the justice and peace work in the United States will not be applicable to other situations. There will have to be specific applications of the Church's justice and peace teaching to those situations, for example in Europe or Japan or in a so-called 'third world' country. The gain in specificity leads to a certain loss in universality. In Japan for example, the possibility of being invited to testify in Congress is just out of the question. So there are enormous differences.

There is another limit to the case study. It is not meant to be a list of accomplishments of what the United States Church does, but a record of what one local church is trying to do, a church where the

justice and peace ministry is particularly urgent because we know what a country of our size can do for good or for ill.

Two further clarifications are necessary: the meaning of transnationality, and finally, the meaning of prophecy, the theme of the seminar.

I am going to deal with three things in this third conference.

1. The Theological Foundation of Social Ministry and the Role of Prophecy in Social Ministry.
2. The Changing Framework of International Politics for the First World, the Second World and the Third World.
3. The Transnationality of the Church and of Religious Communities within the Church.

#### I. THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL MINISTRY AND THE ROLE OF PROPHECY IN SOCIAL MINISTRY

I propose to deal with three significant elements here:

- the biblical basis of the social ministry;
- the ecclesiological recognition of social ministry; and
- the role of prophetic expression within social ministry.

## The Biblical Basis of Social Ministry

In my view it is important that as we celebrate the hundred years of Catholic social teaching we do not communicate the notion that it took the Church nineteen centuries to find out that it should be social. It is important that we root the social in the very foundation of our faith and see the last hundred years as a particular systematic expression of something that has been there from the very beginning.

Three places in the biblical text provide the perennial mandate for social ministry in the church. First there is the Genesis text, secondly, the prophetic text, and thirdly, the New Testament. Now in each of these places I submit there is a basic insight that it has taken nineteen hundred years to fill in and that is because of the richness of the insight.

**The Genesis text.** The first eleven chapters of Genesis give us two themes that have been foundational and fundamental to the social ministry. Genesis teaches us about the sacredness of the person and the meaning of stewardship.

**Sacredness.** The Genesis author is a faith filled person who reflects on the world in which we live and then tries to explain that world and its wonder through a vision of faith. The author conceives of a world that God has shaped with his hands and, after the rest of the wondrous universe has been put in place, at the very pinnacle of God's creating action, God says: 'Like unto me will I create man and woman; like unto me, will I create them.'

Catholic teaching says the rest of creation reflects the Glory of God, but man and woman are the Glory of God. We are the image of God. From that text to the text of Pius XII in the 1950's saying, 'the person is the foundation and the purpose of

the social ministry of the Church,' it is the sacredness of the person that is the reason why the church has a social ministry.

**Stewardship.** Genesis teaches us, therefore, about sacredness. It also teaches us about stewardship. Men and women, the image of God, are presented with the world and they are entrusted with what John Paul has called, 'co-creation'. The Catholic doctrine of creation is not that God created once and then left the world to itself. It is that God sustains the world in his hands and calls human beings to cooperate in the development of the world which he has given us as raw material.

Stewardship highlights our continuing responsibility to shape and re-shape the world according to the needs of each time. Stewardship is the perennial test of how we use the goods of the world. This is described in the most recent encyclical as the universal destination of the goods of creation. The world is for all those who share the image of God. The text about whether the goods of creation are reaching their destination remains in every age at the international, national and local level. Catholic teaching on distributive justice is rooted in a notion of the universal destination of the goods of the earth and that is rooted in a notion of stewardship.

**The Prophetic Tests.** If Genesis teaches us about stewardship and sacredness, the prophets, centuries later, teach us about faith and justice. The prophets were many and each had his own theology which must be viewed on its own terms. But all the prophets had one single theme, and that prophetic theme was always the same: the quality of your faith is dependent on the character of justice in the land. How you stand with God is greatly dependent on how you stand with each other.

The prophets tied faith to justice and then taught how to test the justice of the society:

'care for the widows, the orphans and the aliens - they are the most vulnerable people in the land ; keep your eye on the edge of the circle of life'.

In the United States I have always used this text because it goes back eight centuries before the coming of Jesus. It is a contemporary text for all times and for U.S. society. The prophets speak with a kind of contemporary edge about sacredness and stewardship, faith and justice.

The New Testament. The New Testament, which completes and fulfills God's revelation, completes and fulfills the foundation for social ministry. It takes what we had already learnt from the Hebrew scriptures and gives it new depth and a new radicality. The Incarnation is the surprise of the New Testament. At the dawn of creation God made us like unto God, 'in my image I will make them'. The New Testament calls this the fullness of time. God is like unto us.

The truth which we have learnt about sacredness from Genesis is now given a whole new radicality and meaning. Now the human person is not simply the image of God. Now the human person is joined, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone to the God make human in Jesus. Now it is clear that the person is the clearest reflection of the presence of God among us. To lay violent hands on a person or to fail to build a society that helps a person to come to the fullness of humanity, is to come as close as we can come to laying violent hands on God.

The social ministry and ultimately the prophetic ministry is rooted in the way we read the sacred text that is the source of our faith. But like all things in the church, the truth of revelation is larger than the truth of the church at any given moment. We

grasp the truth piece by piece and therefore we need to talk about, what I call, the ecclesiological recognition of the truth of social ministry.

### Ecclesiological Recognition of the Truth of Social Ministry

The church came to understand these texts in a way that would change the way it fulfilled its ministry. In 1991 it is possible to note two different stages of ecclesial recognition of the social ministry.

The Social Encyclicals. The social encyclicals date from 1891 until today. These encyclicals have not taught us that Christian faith must be social. Genesis, the prophets and Jesus taught us that. What the social encyclicals have tried to do is to take the presumption that the faith must be social and to systematically lay out the consequences for the church and the world. They have systematically developed the social vision and its applications to the conditions of twentieth century life.

The church did not find the social in the encyclicals; it developed the meaning of the social. The encyclicals accomplished much but they were only a partial recognition of the meaning of social ministry for the church. They have been strong, for the most part, in the area of moral development, pointing to the moral meaning of the gospel in terms of justice, human rights, peace, human dignity but they have been weak on the ecclesiological legitimation of the doing of social ministry. So the second stage of ecclesial recognition comes with the Council.

Vatican II. Prior to the Council it was never clear that the meaning of that doctrine was really central to what it meant to be the Church. There were priests, for example, in the 1930s, 40's and 50's who worked on the social encyclicals,

specially on labour/management questions. They were known as 'the labour priests', the implication being that there were the labour priests and then there was the rest of the priests. The labour priests were seen as having strange, genetic traits that moved them to take up odd problems that the rest of the priests did not deal with!

Even today some talk about "the gospel" and "the social gospel". This sounds like as if there is the gospel for everybody and then there is the social gospel for extra credit, if you want to take it up! The social encyclicals had never made clear where the social fitted in the life of the church.

And so when the Second Vatican Council was in preparation, a council which was to be ecclesiological, - a council about the Church - there was no plan for a document on 'The Church in the World'. A document on the church was foreseen, but not a document on the Church in the world. It was only out of the experience of the Council when the bishops, under the guidance of the Holy spirit, we believe, tried to think through what it meant to be church in the light of *Lumen Gentium*, that it became clear that *Lumen Gentium* was not adequate as a framework to define what the Church was meant to be in today's world.

*Gaudium et Spes*. At the end of the first session of Vatican II, three bishops, one of them being Cardinal Montini, the future Pope, spoke to the Council. They maintained that what had been done was necessary and good, but not adequate, because it had not answered the questions the world wants to have answered. What is the church of Christ doing in people's pursuit of human dignity, justice and human rights? How does the Church answer that question - as church? Out of those interventions came a

determination that it was not possible to have a full description of the Church unless it dealt with the church in the world. So *Gaudium et Spes* came about. This is significant in that it provides the ecclesiological foundation for social ministry. It moved the social from the edge of the church's life into the centre.

It is possible to trace a direct line in development from 1965 to *Gaudium et Spes*. Paragraph 76 of *Gaudium et Spes* says:

"It is the task of the church to stand as the sign and safeguard of the transcendent dignity of the human person."

That is an ecclesiological, not a secular nor a purely moral task. It is a task that is rooted in the very nature of what it means to be the church. The social teaching of the church now tells you that you are to stand as the safeguard of human dignity. You have got to deal with human rights, you have got to deal with social justice, you have got to deal with the way that a society is ordered. *Gaudium et Spes* says that is an ecclesial task. It is of the nature of the Church. As a result of the Council there is an understanding of the nature of church that is scriptural, sacramental and social.

Synod on Justice. This prepared the way for further development of the teaching about justice in the world. The Synod of the Bishops a few years later, in 1971 declared:

'we believe that pursuit of justice is constitutive for the life and ministry of the church.'

That word 'constitutive' is not very often used in Catholic teaching. The sacraments are constitutive of the church. So is the episcopacy. When you say that the social ministry is constitutive of the church, you are saying that without it the church is not the church. I submit that you do not find that in the best of the encyclicals.

**Centesimus Annus.** The present Pope repeats this teaching and makes it more explicit. The social teaching is essential for evangelization, essential for the evangelical message of the church. You cannot explain the Roman Catholic Church of the last twenty-five years apart from the impact of those texts on the life of Catholicism and the development of this ecclesiological morality of social ministry.

### The Prophetic Role

I start with a distinction. All social ministry is an expression of the prophetic legacy in the church's life. Not all social ministry is done in what I call the prophetic style. So I distinguish between the prophetic legacy and the prophetic style.

**Prophetic Legacy.** Traditionally the Church fulfills the three roles of Christ: priest, prophet and servant. The social ministry fits into Christ's prophetic role. It also fits obviously into his servant role.

All social ministry is an expression of that prophetic role and prophetic legacy. All social ministry has the following characteristics:

- it affirms that justice is essential for faith - not optional, not marginal, but essential for faith;
- the prophetic legacy teaches the church to watch for the edge of the circle of life - to watch for the widows, the orphans, the aliens of every age;
- it teaches the church to watch for the structural character of society.

'Structural character' arises out of 19th and 20th century language. But when the prophets said, 'We want to know who owns the land? We want to know what the wages are in the society?', they were asking structural questions. The prophetic legacy is all part of the social teaching.

**Prophetic Style.** Although all social ministry is done in the prophetic legacy, it is necessary to distinguish a specific role in the social ministry for what I would call the prophetic style. The prophetic style is a particular way of doing the social ministry but it does not exhaust it.

First, it tends to collapse the eschatological and the historical. The prophet wants the kingdom now. The lion lies down with the lamb, justice is done, peace is achieved. And the prophet says: 'that is what ought to happen.' Prophets are not known for patience!

Secondly, it sees conversion as an event rather than a process. The prophet says, 'thus saith the Lord', and you had better do it! Prophets are not beyond persuasion, but they tend not to footnote their articles! They tend not to document their data. And they tend not to think that there could be conceivably any objection to the goal they are pursuing from any reasonable person, much less anybody in pursuit of holiness. One wonders whether the prophets would have much patience with St. Thomas' method in his *Summa*.

Thirdly, the prophet sees himself or herself as a counterpoint to the community whether it is the religious community or the civil community. The prophet confronts the priest and the prophet confronts the team.

The prophets will always have to be present in the church but they do not exhaust the substance or the style of the church's ministry.

a) It is Catholic to believe that the Kingdom grows in history and will never be fully realized in history. We are in a world marked by sin. The prophet wants the Kingdom now and that is admirable but maybe not possible. The Kingdom grows in history with the wheat and the cockle,

slowly. The Kingdom grows in a complex fashion and prophets are known not to tolerate a large amount of complexity.

b) Conversion is an event, but it is also a process. That is why we have confession. So the call for total conversion is desirable but the question is whether it is feasible and particularly if one is talking about a whole society.

c) It is arguable, that persuasion is a necessary part of the church's work. Sr. Thomas is probably rescuable! He is sensitive to the objections to his position before he presents his position. His feeling of responsibility leads him to respond to the objections after he has presented his position.

d) The community needs to be called forward - that is what a counterpoint does, but the community also needs to be sustained as it seeks to move forward. A counterpoint may not always do that. How do you call a people forward and live with them as they struggle to take a step forward? How do you do that when you are talking about whole societies?

#### Tension between legacy and style

Tension between the prophetic legacy which all social ministry must have and the prophetic style which is a particular and specific role within the larger ministry is reflected in two themes in catholic theology - an ecclesiological theme and a moral theme.

The ecclesiological theme is that Catholicism has always opted to be a big church, that is to say, a church of saints and sinners. That probably means that those who do not immediately convert, those who

struggle about persuasion, they too need to be part of the community. That has been the traditional Catholic answer.

The moral theme is the attempt to strike the balance between setting out the horizon of holiness and establishing the minimum requirements for participation in the community. How do you continue to set out the beatitudes in all their fullness and then deal with a church that is not a church of beatitudes? Moral theologians are always looking for the lowest common denominator and at times one can legitimately criticise this lowest common denominator style. At other times it becomes clear that it is absolutely necessary because the church is really not made up of saints like Francis and Catherine! If there were no lowest common denominator what do you do with everyone, "the others"?

So I conclude: the church must sustain the prophetic legacy as a whole; the church as a whole must also somehow use the prophetic style; and some people in the church are called to the prophetic vocation, the prophetic style.

## II

### THE CHANGING FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

1990 is one of those significant moments in history 'when the normal constraints that bind us fall away and one has the chance to set the direction for the next decades'. Trying to deal with this brings up the tension of the prophetic and the empirical. The prophetic always sets its eyes on what is desirable, the best and the good; the empirical often struggles with what is the

feasible, the possible, the likely, the unintended result of what was planned in pursuit of the task.

#### Tension between the Normative and the Historical

Another way to express this is the tension between the normative, what should be, and the historical, what is. As I weave my way through this view of the future I am going to pay attention to the incurable as well as the prophetic, to the historical as well as to what is possible at this moment. Prophets are absolutely essential because of the tendency to take too narrow a vision of what is possible. Sometimes however, our vision can be so broad that we run away from the empirical. It is difficult to get from A to B even though we can, ought and must do it. That is the church view.

*Gaudium et Spes* was helpful here. It says you must respect the legitimate autonomy of empirical disciplines. You must respect them but that does not mean that they define the whole vision of what life is about, or what it ought to be about. It is necessary, for example, to struggle with the fact that economics has been known as the dismal science; to struggle with the fact that people who study international politics almost always read Hobbs' view of life, 'that every man is to another man a wolf and that life is nasty, brutish and short'.

Those who study international politics start with the notion that the world is that kind of place. That is not very prophetic! It is too pessimistic, and I would not start there, but I would not deny that Hobbs reminds me of something about our human history as we try to move towards the Kingdom and understand the kinds of beings we are. It is called original sin. While we stretch for a vision we struggle for reality. These are the theological presuppositions. Augustine was not Hobbs, but

Augustine was not exactly optimistic either!

#### The Way That It Was

It is easier to describe what has been. John Paul II calls it 'the logic of the blocs,' in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. The logic of the blocs is the cold war of the past forty-five years. In the language of the political scientist there was a bi-polar world, the two major poles of power being the Soviet Union and the United States. It was the world that created and fostered the nuclear arms race; the world from which we get our terminology of first world, second world, third world, and fourth world. The major theme of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* was the disastrous effect of the East/West struggle on the South.

The significance of 1990 is that that world is rapidly disappearing with the dissolution of the blocs. The terms we have come to use - first, second, third and fourth world, or the terms East/West, North/South, are also dissolving. East/West, and North/South were never purely geographical. They arose from a whole political, social system centered in the Soviet Union, and extended to Eastern Europe. That has collapsed.

When we talk about the West today, we usually mean Europe, the United States and Japan, which by no stretch of the imagination, is the West. It is one of the industrialized democracies. A new world is emerging in which a Japan and a Europe will play a major part. Nor does it make any analytical sense to speak about the future of Singapore and the future of Mali or Chad in the same breath. The language we used, the ideas we had and the dynamics, are dissolving.

**Goals of the West.** At the end of World War II the United States had three major objectives:

- preventing Soviet aggression and avoiding nuclear war; hence Nato, the Marshall Plan and the nuclear deterrent;
- rebuilding Germany and Europe on the one hand, and Japan on the other;
- decolonisation and development of what came to be called the South.

Looking back from 1990, the first two goals were accomplished; the third clearly was not. We do not have the space or time to analyze whether the different attempts, vis-a-vis the third world, were intellectually adequate or whether they were motivated by the right will.

One can point in summary fashion to one good example of the extent of that failure. Paul VI speaking in 1967 on that third objective, described development as an objective for the 'third world'. Twenty years later in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, his successor, John Paul II, had to say that the dominant problem was how to resolve debt in the development world. Moving the goal from development as an objective to paying of debts is failure.

#### The Way That It Might Be

This is a sketch and not a systematic summary of what might be. It has five points:

1. The decline of the Super-Power conflict. Politically, from the point of view of an ideological conflict, I think that decline is almost a certainty. Conflict will probably not be absent in the 1990's but it will not be primarily, or maybe not at all, a US/Soviet conflict. The danger of nuclear war has dramatically declined in terms of the super-powers, if not in terms of proliferation. While arms control is still absolutely necessary because there are fifty thousand nuclear weapons existing, the chance they will be used has declined by, I

would say, 40 - 50 percent in three years. It is now almost inconceivable to think of a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union - almost, not quite. Furthermore, I think that US/Soviet conflicts in the 'third world' will decrease dramatically. The logic of the blocs made indigenous regional conflicts more complicated and much more viable. I suspect they will be gone.

2. The rise of economic power. Nations that essentially do not have military power of any major significance will become major influences in the world. Examples are the European Community and Japan. The future of the European Community and of Japan is complicated, but I just want you to know what you are not getting!

3. The rise and the role of trading blocs. A possible, not necessarily desirable way to see the future of the world is the organization of three major trading blocks. Even the fact that one can talk about this highlights the decline of military power on the whole as a significant indicator of the future.

One trading bloc is the integrated European Community with countries in Africa which have been traditionally associated with it. A second bloc is organizing around Japan, reaches toward China and encompasses parts of Asia. The third trading bloc is U.S. Canada and Latin America. Europe with a single market, has already said that it will honour the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) to some degree, the question being how and in what way? The U.S. and Mexico are about to sign a trade agreement; US/Canada have already signed it; the next step is the integration of the Caribbean in that US/Mexican agreement and then a move on to Latin America. The Japanese/Asian market may be more complicated because of the tension between Japan and China but it is a real possibility.

Two questions among others immediately surface about these blocs. First, who gets excluded? Who is left outside the world after the blocs are organised because they obviously give preference to trade possibilities with those inside the blocs. Secondly, what are the relationships between those within the blocs? Does being in a trading bloc mean being equally present.? Will Mexico count for one against the US? The interdependence/dependency question rises again.

4. The fate and future of the developing world. In the discipline of political science and political economics today there are the NICS, (Newly Industrialized Countries). That means Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, all East Asian countries, where for the last twenty years, there has been dramatic growth in terms of gross national product, dramatic industrialization, rapid rise in the standard of living often accompanied by authoritarian regimes and suppression of political rights. Korea is the classical example of this.

One can distinguish this from the second group, the large debtor nations. They have obviously significant economic capacity but right now are mired in the problem of debt. Brazil and the Philippines are good examples. There are others.

Thirdly, there are the nations on the edge of survival, where starvation is a real possibility, where one is struggling with the basic conception of what is basically necessary for human dignity, - Africa, the prime case, Bangladesh and others.

Whether one looks at the world of blocs or at divisions among nations, the danger is that international politics becomes the survival of the fittest. Only those nations who can force themselves on the attention of others get attention. That is the Hobbsian possibility.

Over against that Hobbsian pos-

sibility there is the moral, the religious and the simply human imperative. The case for this can be made on the highest religious principles, on the basis of pure, moral understanding, and even on the basis of simple human self-interest - on what kind of globe we want to live it. The survival of the fittest cannot be the logic of life. If we reject this it will be necessary to establish what the Pope called for, a conception of order.

As we stand at this transitional moment when the normal restraints fall away and there is a chance to set the direction of the future, then the basic question is - who fits into the order we are trying to plan? It is the fundamental question. What we would want and what the Pope called for is order where every single person counts for their intrinsic human dignity.

The conception of order then has to move rather dramatically to a recasting of the institutional framework by which the political and economical future of the international system will be governed. Recasting of those institutions will also involve security to some degree, because there will be possibilities of violence, of aggression and of clear conflicts. These can no longer be dealt with in the cold war logic. Nor can they be dealt with by a renewed U.N. system with the United States as the sheriff of the U.N.

Security is only one part of the problem of conflicts. Another part is crucial, - the monetary question, recasting the institutions of trade. Development has been debated over the last thirty years. We have to refocus development. In the 1980's it was not really on the agenda. It has got to be on the agenda.

5. The role of international institutions. In a world in which the logic of the blocs is gone the chance arises again for real, authentic,

international institutions that would do what is necessary for an adequate conception of order. The questions then arise: Who speaks within these institutions? What is done through them? Are the ones we have, adequate or do they need to be transformed, adapted, supplemented.?

### III A TRANSNATIONAL CHURCH IN A TRANSNATIONAL WORLD

In a changing world what is the place of the transnational church that has a prophetic legacy as its responsibility?

Different resources are needed to develop the whole picture of the transnationality of the church. Part of the frustration we feel is that nobody has the complete picture. I cannot supply one in ten minutes!, but I will try to provide a framework for the different resources in the church. The framework I propose might work. When we try to grapple with the transnationality of the church, we need to look first at the dimensions of the question. There is first the transnationality of the Church as a whole; secondly, the transnationality of the local church, - how the local church fits into transnationality; and thirdly, the transnationality of religious missionary communities.

#### The Transnationality of the Church as a Whole

It is the church itself in its entirety that is a transnational entity. Theologically we have always known this. We called the church a universal church. The language of transnationality is a social science perspective on what we have always defined in theological language. Social scientists see the transnational church as an institution that operates in the world. They may not

even be concerned about the fact that it carries a salvific ministry. That is not the point. The point is that without letting go obviously of the theological universality of the church, its transnationality can help us think about its potential to contribute to this developing concept of the world.

Within the church as a whole its transnationality can be exemplified in terms of three different dynamics.

- How the center affects the local church. The most recent encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, for example, gives us something to work with, something to think about in terms of where we are going. Obviously, that is not only what the center does.

- How the local church affects the center. There can be social teaching, social ministry, and other initiatives which work from below to affect the center. The Brazilian church in the 1960's, with its emphasis on human rights, helped to heighten that question in the church as a whole and brought pressure on the Vatican to correspond. The Brazilian church too probably learnt something about human rights from *Pacem in Terris*. The process is never one-way only. It is not all from the center down. That way misses the potential.

- Crucially, how local church affects local church. In this highly complex developing world it is not possible to wait for the center to address all the issues. Part of the reason is that some of them are too specific. The Pope cannot be tied to every specific problem any more. That is a central issue for us in the United States. When for example, US policies are a disaster for other local churches we have to do something about it in the United States. We then need to work local church with local church.

I cannot conceive that the Vatican is to be tied to every aspect of these

problems nor that we wait until the Vatican takes up the issue before we can deal with it. There is an example from the 1970's, when so many people asked, 'Why did the Catholic Bishops ever begin to deal with the Panama Canal?' Simply because the bishops of Panama asked us to and because the Vatican was clearly not going to get involved in a dispute with the U.S. Senate about the Panama Canal!

### The Transnationality of the Local Church

There are specific functions for each local church in the light of its place in the universal church and in the light of the place of each country or nation in the world. There is some tension here. The Vatican is very, very careful that on diplomatic issues it speaks clearly for the church. When local churches get involved in U.S. policy in Central America, or in Korea or in the Philippines, the lines get fuzzy. Quite honestly Rome gets very nervous especially about local churches working together, or trying to work together, when they are enormously different in size. Rome is understandably nervous that the larger churches will dominate and should watch that this does not happen. But this should not cancel out the possibility of local church to local church dynamic.

### The Transnationality of Religious Communities

You who are in religious communities have to see your communities from the perspective of being part of the whole, part of a church that is transnational. Religious communities are transnational actors within a transnational church. In a sense there always has been tension between dioceses and religious orders, which are reforming institutions and able to act across dioceses.

Religious communities seen from a more social perspective are also transnational within a transnational church. They must have a systematic presence, and a vision of how they are going to live within the different churches where they work. In the transnational area of the local church, one local church is inter-related with other local churches in terms of issues that affect them. The religious community may be within both with links across the local churches. The local church helps the community to think through its systematic presence within that local church and the systematic links of the religious communities between the two. This is really not the role of the Vatican. It is a distinct role.

### Dimensions of the Question

Subsidiarity. How to work out the principle of subsidiarity in a church that is transnational is the question here. Religious communities are transnational actors within a transnational church. What they do depends first on the communities' perception of themselves. Each religious community has its sense of its own charism and diocesan priests are taught not to go near that! It is very dangerous territory! I want to point however that there is a way of thinking through a charism historically in terms of the community's transnational role. Missionary communities doing this, will meet the challenge of more varied transnational situations than will other communities.

Inter-community relations. Secondly, there is the question of inter-community relationship, the kind of thing Unions of Superior Generals struggle with. What you are trying to do there, is to give yourself a forum where you can maximise the impact of transnational actors within a transnational church. That is another layer of presence in the Church and it has to be thought

through strategically both in terms of 'whose toes you might step on', what conception others have of your proper role, and how you have this worked out.

Learning process. Thirdly, there will have to be a learning process which goes on, for the church as a whole, for the local church and for the religious community. You cannot design this as a kind of folklore! You need a framework and a sense of structure. Then you live with it for a while to see what you are going to do internationally. You have to find

your way out of a bi-polar world into 'a something else,' but the something else is not at all clear.

Tension. Finally, it is inevitable that there will be more tension to the question of strategy in a church whose language is primarily theological, ministerial, religious. But we must not restrict how we think about a transnational church in an increasingly inter-dependent world. That world has been one thing in the past. It will not be that thing in the future, but what it will be is still open to question.

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## I. PROPHETIC MISSION: SNIFFING OUT THE KINGDOM

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Edwina Gateley

Prophetic mission is about challenging and stretching ourselves, the church and the world to be just and to be holy.

Mission by its very nature is prophetic. It follows that missionaries are the church's *avant garde*, the ones who walk ahead, the ones who break new ground and plough new furrows. Because our essential task is to go out beyond the normal boundaries we therefore experience the strange, the new, the different and it is this very journey which gives the missionary the unique task of being an agent of transformation, constantly calling ourselves and our communities to check on whether we are growing and moving towards the reality of God's rule, or whether we are stagnating, or, indeed going backwards.

### Mission - Sniffing The Kingdom

Do you know that little animal called the mole? The mole lives below the earth and she is a furry little thing. Do you know that the mole is blind? She cannot see a thing. She lives under the earth and although she is blind she has developed over the centuries an instinct for the rain, an instinct for the sunshine. She has been endowed with an incredible sniffing ability and so she sniffs her way below the earth in the darkness, even though she is blind.

We missionaries must be like the mole. We must sniff in the darkness

for God's reign. We don't know where we are going and that's alright because in our gut we have been endowed with the gift of faith that tells us that God is with us as long as we continue to sniff for God's justice, to sniff for God's light in the darkness. The journey goes on and on in darkness.

### Charting New Territory

The missionary, therefore, has the ongoing task of being particularly committed to charting new territory and inviting God's people to experience and live out the Good News in ever new and life-giving ways. This is no easy task. If faithfully pursued it means, for the most part, that missionaries will be a bit of a nuisance because we must rock the boat that lies still. We must question constantly whether the Kingdom of God is indeed amongst us, and if so, where and how... and it may well be that the Kingdom of God is not exactly where we thought it was. In actual fact it may look quite different from what we once thought.

There was a time when we thought the Kingdom was all about gathering, getting people all together, - with the same language (Latin), - in the same building (the Roman Catholic Church), - professing the same faith and creed (ours), - all under the same hierarchichal leadership (the Pope and his Bishops), - all centered in the one place (Rome), - and worshipping the one white male (preferably British) God. But it is not

like that. In fact it is very different. It looks like the nicely packaged Good News that we have spent so long parceling, labeling, and marketing spilled out and burst its packaging.

What we have been gradually discovering these past few years since Vatican II is that God, and God's rule, is a great deal bigger and a great deal more difficult 'to get a handle on' than we could ever have thought in our earlier evangelizing days. It is the missionary in particular who is becoming more and more conscious of this and is seeking new ways of understanding mission and its praxis.

#### Reaching Out

As you may know, I work on the streets of Chicago. I remember meeting one of my first, if you like, clients. She was one of the women to whom I was sent, to evangelize, to reach out to. She was flat, horizontal on the pavement, drunk, a street woman, a prostitute. Everything in me said, 'save her, reach out to her!' You know that wonderful feeling of helping that we get when we do something for the poor. So I reached out and scooped up this prostitute off the streets and I took her home to help her so that she might be like me - middle class, white and educated.

I gave her a shower and I gave her clothes and I said to her, 'You don't have to be a prostitute. You don't have to be on the streets. You can get your life together.' As a missionary I thought this was what I was supposed to do. I took care of her and I did everything I could for her. After a few weeks - off she went, back to the streets and the drink. I went after her and I brought her back - back to the center, back to possibilities, back to health. We began again. And off she went again! Being a good Catholic missionary, I went after her

again. I went in pursuit of the one that got away!

Over a period of three years that woman shot off a dozen times, two dozen times fleeing from the Good News. Can you believe that! Fleeing from the Kingdom! One day I said to myself, - 'I'm finished. I won't pursue her any more.' After three years of desperately trying to call her forth, I gave up. Late one night, three o'clock in the morning, I received a phone call from the prostitute saying, 'please come'. I said, 'No - I will not be co-dependent.' (We're all trying not to be co-dependent now!) Then I got another phone call from the Chicago police asking, 'Do you know this woman who has killed herself? She's dead in this dirty apartment building in Chicago' She's dead!

#### Finding God Present

I said to my God, 'I have been faithful and you weren't. I have pursued what I believed to be evangelization and you didn't do anything.'

I could not understand what this God was doing. How far do you go in pursuit of the Good News? I was numb with grief. We had the funeral in a small funeral parlor in the area where I work because there are many poor people there and they can't afford big funerals. The coffin was by a little altar. I was to do the service. We only had a dozen chairs so I stood by the coffin and I didn't understand why she had to die.

Then the door opened and in came the shopping-bag ladies with their trolleys which they wheeled up to the altar and parked beside the coffin. And they looked at the dead woman and said 'she looks better now than she did when she was alive!' The shopping bag ladies sat down and in came some priests from the local parish. Then came some prostitutes, drug addicts, pushers

and pimps from the streets of Chicago followed by some nuns from the suburbs.

The prostitutes and the pimps sat down among the priests. The bag ladies and the drug addicts shoved up against the nuns. There we were all scrunched-up together - priests and prostitutes, nuns and bag ladies, drug addicts and sophisticated white Christians from the suburbs. We took the hymn book and began to sing of God's presence in our world.

As I saw the dead body of the one I'd worked with for so long, and saw all the people gathered - Black and White, pimps and prostitutes, nuns and priests I suddenly realized that God was indeed present in a different way. In the breaking down of barriers between people who should never normally have come together. God revealed God's Self and God's Reign to me. Not in the way I chose, not in the way I wanted. I wanted to see one woman live and God chose to show me that if you are faithful even to death God will bring together, priest and prostitute, Black and White, lay and religious and that this was mission and that I didn't understand it at all. It was a different agenda from my own.

#### And in the Northern Hemisphere

Mission, once narrowly perceived as 'going out' with the Good News to the 'outsider' in foreign lands, and building monuments and cathedrals as symbols of the triumph of Christianity, is now being recognized as an activity that might well be based at home, directed at the insiders! - including ourselves. It may have a lot more to do with inner healing and nurturing rather than with preaching and building.

We are beginning to recognize, as Michael Amaladoss has suggested, that many of the problems facing the Southern Hemisphere and the

poverty, injustice and hunger prevalent there, are directly linked to the economic and political power and lifestyle of our own Northern Hemisphere. We in the Northern Hemisphere are a people obsessed by progress and success, moving at a devastatingly fast pace and, in the process, suffering from all sorts of addictions and diseases which, in turn, affect the whole globe.

If we are to understand mission not simply as limited to furthering the Roman Catholic Church, but as the much wider call to bring about God's rule in the world then we missionaries have to start again - at home! Most of us have a deep fear of mission at home - how many of us prefer to stay in the Southern Hemisphere? Why do you think that is? Are the problems, the lifestyle, the pressures harder for us at home perhaps, than in 'the bush'? Are we nervous of proclaiming God's Kingdom where no one perhaps, really wants to hear about it? Are we afraid?

#### Being Carried by God

Once when I was in the forest I found a little chipmunk. It had been caught by two cats and they were playing with her, throwing her from one paw to the other. The little thing was flying through the air terrified. I ran in and rescued the chipmunk. She was shaking and nervous. I lifted her up and told her, 'You'll be alright. I'll put you in a safe place.' I carried her and as I walked with her she bit me hard! I again tried to reassure her that she would be alright. She bit me again and this time drew blood. Everything in me wanted to say, 'You stupid, stupid chipmunk!' I felt like hitting her but I took her to a safe place feeling extremely frustrated that I couldn't communicate with her that I was taking care of her and that everything was alright.

Afterwards I asked myself how I

felt and I realized I was so frustrated because I was unable to get my message across. Then I thought about God. Is it like this for God? Is God carrying us in the palm of his/her hand and are we biting all the way because we are not sure? Is God covered in bites? Who is inflicting them? Surely, we missionaries are, knowing that God carries us in the palm of God's hand with the message of evangelization and wholeness - 'tell my people not to be afraid; it's alright'.

Surely, we are the ones that must understand that God will never leave God's people if we are faithful. But we shiver and shake at the thought of how mission is going to be today. How can we face the kinds of problems we see prevalent in the First World? Our God says, 'Don't be afraid! Because you are my *avant garde*. You are the ones who go before proclaiming my work. Do not tremble. Remember, I carry you in the palm of my hand.'

#### WALKING THE PROPHETIC EDGE

God longs for our transformation. In all our research we must not forget that. What happens to us often, in the North, is that we become so overwhelmed by the problems and sense of helplessness that we allow ourselves to become somewhat anesthetised.

We missionaries are called to walk on the prophetic edge. Its very tight and its very fine. We have to balance ourselves between the world and God's reign. We know the world and its problems but we have another dream - of world peace, justice and transformation. We walk the prophetic edge but what happens is that often we look so much at the world and its problems that we let go of the prophetic edge and its sharpness. We go 'blob!' like a jelly. We say, 'I cannot do anything about it, it is safer to just settle down and

say its not my problem.'

The missionary who is sharp and alert, walking on the tight edge says, 'I must not allow myself to become like a jelly, I must not settle. I must keep moving along right on the precipice.' It's a balancing act at which the missionary must become adept. The temptation for our church and especially for its missionaries is to be pulled back into the jelly-mold. But if we are pulled back there will be no evangelization, no Kingdom. We must maintain the prophetic edge of evangelization. We must not buy into the system that would settle down. We must continue to sniff for the light even in our own darkness.

In the United States and Britain the church often vacillates between finding the prophetic edge, feeling its sharpness, and then moving rather rapidly back into a jelly mold. The American bishops (and I suspect the European ones too) occasionally come out with prophetic statements - for example, the pastoral letters on Peace and the Economy. But, on other issues, for example, Mission, and Women - two major issues, they fell well short of reality, let alone prophecy! Gospel people cannot be choosy and selective about justice. They must be a just people on all issues, and on a global level. The Vatican Council puts it like this:

"Wherever there are people in need of food and drink, clothing, medicine, housing, employment, education... wherever people lack the facilities necessary for living a truly human life or are afflicted with serious distress or illness or suffer exile or imprisonment, there Christian love should seek them out and find them". (Apostolate of the Laity 8:4)

#### CALL TO CONVERSION - BEGINNING WITH OURSELVES

Seeking out such injustice and poverty is a lot easier when the

search is focused "OUT THERE" and "FAR AWAY". As we know from our past missionary history it is a rather comfortable feeling to dip into our excess and help out the poor folks in another land. It is much more difficult to challenge our own selves, our churches and governments to change lifestyles and attitudes in the name of the Gospel!

Mission is, indeed, a call to conversion and, without any doubt, it begins with ourselves. As missionaries we are to be tuned in to God's Spirit permeating the world, ever calling us to individual and institutional transformation. If we are open, if we let go of our penchant for power and control, we will hear this Spirit and we will understand the call. If we recognize the mess and are repentant about it we will experience new possibilities. But not without cost. Not without the cost involved in letting go and listening and suddenly finding that we are rather small and helpless before this great God of ours.

### Letting Go

I have yet to get involved in a new experience of mission that was not preceded with a whole letting go of the familiar and the traditional. It took me 18 months to start the Volunteer Missionary Movement in England in 1969. It was 18 months of struggling, believing in a vision for laity in mission, believing that mission for me was to stretch the church to be open to laity. Eventually it happened and the VMM began, - a new and different thing in the history of the church in England. There was growth, numbers, consolidation. I was nominated Catholic woman of the Year. All in 10 years! I was proud of my mission. It was good to be popular. But mission is not about popularity or establishment. It is about sniffing for the kingdom and even moving in

pursuit of it.

Maybe we need to be in the wilderness to get back in touch with the promise. When I felt the call of God whom I call "The God of the Belly-button", to let go of my position, of the responsibilities, the power and the status, I didn't want to hear. I felt so much part of the establishment, and let me tell you it is comfortable to be there. The God, whom I believe dwells 2 inches in from the belly-button, was moving in my gut and telling me to let go, to move on. I kept protesting: 'I know the bishops well; and lots of people here; and my name is in the Catholic Universe and the Catholic Trumpet; and my mother is proud of me.' God kept saying, 'move on' and I kept answering, 'Go away and leave me in peace. I can proclaim your message here where I feel comfortable!'

### Praying and Listening

I went to the Sahara desert to try and make sense of the call I was experiencing, to let go of the Volunteer Missionary Movement and all it meant to me. It was in the wilderness that I felt this God saying, 'I will never leave you but you must be faithful to the sniff! You must keep moving on.' It was for me a painful experience.

Maybe it's appropriate for us now to consider a new mission today. It's called "Letting go". I describe it in my book:

"I can smell that it's time to let go, to consider a new mission today. I can smell it, breathe it, touch it and something in me trembles. I will not cry. But it is time to go; time to step out of the world I shaped and watched become. Time to let go of the status and the admiration. Time to turn my back on a life that throbbed with my vigor and a spirit that soared through my tears. Time

to go from all I am to all I have not yet become. I will not cry but I will tremble at the death within me. Lonely, brave departure while my being shudders in utter nakedness."

I lost a great deal of ground, it seemed, in letting go of my mission and all its accoutrements but I was trying to be faithful to the sniff!!

If we pray and listen we will know what we must do even if it may not make a great deal of sense. Most of the time Jesus did not make a great deal of sense to his hearers. He disappointed his followers and friends, he was elusive, he refused to be fixed, he refused to allow the kingdom to be concretized or pigeon-holed. The kingdom was leaven - salt - a mustard seed, - among you - within you. The kingdom is about the children - the poor - the dispossessed... No wonder he was not popular!

We missionaries, who are about the same business of sniffing out the kingdom, must take the inevitable risk involved in being faithful to mission. We are not to be at the centre of things, but at the fringes, the periphery, ever stretching God's people to greater faithfulness. The sniffing that we do requires reflection and prayer as a pre-requisite to action.

#### Call to Mission U.S.A.

The missionary sniff led me to the United States 11 years ago. I went to study theology at the Chicago Theological Union. As a Catholic lay woman, missionary, minister, I had never studied theology. I didn't know the language of the professional missionary and I wanted to know what is it that they do, what is it they learn in those big buildings they call seminaries where all the young men go in one door and 5 years later they come out the other

door wearing their collars - a sign of mission as a priest. I wanted to know what I as a Catholic lay woman had been missing all these years. And I got it - a degree in theology!

I said, 'look God, I got it. I'm a Catholic lay woman missionary minister with a degree in theology!'

And God said, 'Put it away. You don't need that right now. Why don't you listen?'

'I don't want to listen, God, I've learned it all'.

'Why don't you do nothing?'

'What do you mean, do nothing? God, don't you know the world is hungry, the world is suffering and oppressed?'

'Edwina, I have something to tell you which is a secret. The world has already been saved. Just listen and let me get to know you'.

Listen!

That was a very difficult thing for me to do as a missionary - to feel the call, to let go of my activity, and to listen. I got myself a little hermitage and put it in a forest in Illinois. I did not understand why I was there or where I was to go next. I hoped that in my uselessness and lack of activity and being faithful to doing nothing I would have a vision or two, or a dream, or be filled with a great sense of God's presence.

I sat alone in that stupid forest asking God to tell me what to do. Nothing came to me. No dreams, no revelations, just the day after day longing for God to be present. I found myself walking through the forest talking to the squirrels. I do not know what it was that kept me in the forest but maybe it was that tiny little grain of faith that lives behind the belly button. I believed that God would not leave me in my darkness, in all the mess, and I knew I had to hold on even though I knew it looked crazy.

In the ninth month suddenly God was alive, God was a person. I thought of a woman in childbirth. The seed of new life requires the darkness, the silence and the warmth but the not-knowing of the womb. The God-seed in our gut also requires darkness and silence as God's word matures in the heart of God's people. We must allow for the gestation. Yet how close we are to an abortion! We constantly have physical abortions, but what about spiritual abortions because we cannot wait to hear God's words or cannot wait to understand what we must do

Instead we have our five year plan or our three year plan. We must know what the process is. But God operates in darkness and God's people must be familiar with God's ways.

Listen deeply. We cannot enter anyone's darkness until we have entered our own.

#### To Work the Streets

Called to work on the streets was not my idea of mission, U.S.A. Apparently one of the wealthiest countries in the world, having more Christian churches, huge cathedrals and well established rich dioceses than I had seen anywhere else in the world, it seemed to me incongruous to do mission in U.S.A.

I asked God to send me back to Africa.

'I'm good in Africa, you know, God, or send me back to England and let me work with the Church in England - I'm OK with the British, or let me teach - I can teach, you know.'

Then God said, 'I want you to go to the prostitutes.' 'Stop right there, God! That's not my agenda. I don't know anything about prostitution. When I was in the seminary there was no department of brothels and prostitution. I read no books on how to evangelize prostitutes or how to minister to street people or drug

addicts or pimps. And there was nothing about the Church pimping.'

And God said again, 'I want you to work with the women in prostitution.' 'But, God, I've no plan. I don't know anything about it. Who is going to pay? Do you think anyone is going to believe me? Does anybody believe you, God? Do you think I can go to the Cardinal and say, Eminence, I feel called by the God in my belly-button to work with women in prostitution, and would you please pay my medical insurance, or would you please support me? No way!'

As a Church we do not embrace the edges. We have things nicely set up and organized for the center. I told God that I wished I'd never gone to that silly forest because I listened so deeply that I had heard God's whisper. When we stop and listen deeply in the darkness its dangerous business to pray because then God gets very excited and says, 'A fool! I can send her or him out to places where only an idiot would go. I can send them out to tasks which may be a little frightening for them.'

God is always looking for opportunity, always tempting and daring the missionary church to go to the edges, - to take the Good News to the women in prostitution.

#### Walking on the Water

This call reminded me of Jesus going to the hills to pray while the disciples were in a boat rowing away in the midst of a storm. While they were rowing against the elements Jesus was off in the hills to communicate with his God. He comes back the following morning. The disciples are still in the boat and Jesus walks on the water. The disciples think it is a ghost. Jesus calls the disciples - dares them - and Peter jumps into the water and goes towards the vision, the dream, towards that which calls him. Peter isn't thinking, he is following his

gut, his bellybutton. As he goes on the water towards the vision of the kingdom, he begins to think about what he is doing and he begins to sink.

The moment we begin to rationalize the kingdom, to ask, is it possible?, can it be done? can we afford it? is it safe? will we be alright?, - we drown. Missionaries on the prophetic edge have to stop thinking, stop planning, stop trying to work it all out and follow the bellybutton. That is the only way God gets a chance to show God's miracles. When we try to work the miracles with our brains and computers the kingdom never fits into it. We need to loosen up and allow our hearts to lead us.

I was more at home with mission in an African village than I was with hanging about the dirty streets of Chicago with 'no handle' on my mission at all! But, then perhaps, I was the mission event. When we are too secure, when we are too strong, we are part of the problem. Perhaps I had to pursue the kingdom blindly in Chicago in order to enter a process of mission conversion myself, one in which all my notions of mission would be turned upside down and transformed once again.

#### Saying 'Yes' to God

My first encounter with the women on the streets confirmed for me that in spite of my fears and insecurity, God was very real and present in my new call to mission. I will share with you my first encounter with the women on the streets of Chicago late one night thinking 'What am I doing here?!' I saw them smoking their reefers and standing around on the street corner wearing long boots and short mini-skirts. They were flagging down the cars of those poor innocent middle-aged men who just happened to be driving along the road at midnight!

I went up to the women and I

said, "Hi!" And they looked me up and down and then said, 'f... off!' And I did! I got out of there as fast as I could because, you see, in my mission in Africa nobody ever told me to 'f... off!' When I was in Church with the people in Africa they said, 'Welcome! How nice to see you. How are you?' And here I was in Chicago trying to be faithful to the sniff and they didn't want either it or me. I went home and told God what to do with the prostitutes and God said, 'Go back.' God never gives up calling the people to mission. Mission is God's problem. All we need to be is fools and say to God, 'yes!', we will go and do it but you work it out'.

I went back the next day and there they were doing their thing and I went up to them and I said,

'Hello!'

'Hey, baby, we told you to f... off! What the f... are you doing here?'

'I can stand here. I have a right to stand here on this street corner'.

'We told you to f... off. Get your a... out of here!'

'No, I can stand on this street corner.'

'Hey, are you a cop?'

'No, I'm not a cop.'

'Are you a journalist? Are you going to write a report on us?'

'No, I'm not a journalist.'

'Are you a nun?'

'No, I'm a lay woman.'

'Well, why are you on our turf. We don't have no christians in our place.'

'I'm an alien.' (I have this card from the U.S. Immigration Office and in big blue letters it has the word ALIEN, and I showed it to them. My thumbprint is on one side of the card and on the other side is a picture of my ear. The U.S. government believes that the ear is unique. There is no ear in the universe like mine! Can you imagine God making all those millions and billions of ears! What fun she must have had!)

The women in prostitution looked at my card and said,

"She's not nobody. She ain't nobody."

And I heard God laugh. When they take away the pulpit, and take off the vestments and take away the bible and all the credibility, - you ain't got nothing. And then the poor don't feel threatened. The poor and the marginalized who know what it is like to be on the edges, to be on the periphery don't need to be scared of us. Because you are nobody.

### Taking Risks

God's ways are different. God throws away all the strength and all the power and all the symbols and all the glory and triumph and finds those who will walk with nothing and go to places where only fools will go so that God will manifest God's power in the world. We missionaries especially have to be right there on the sharp edge of discipleship. God will transform God's world - not with jelly but with the prophetic edge of authentic discipleship which dares to take risks in order to see God's miracles.

We Gospel people should know that God will provide if we are about the business of the kingdom. Having learned from my African experience that listening is vital to mission I knew that my task was simply to hang around the streets and do just that. It became one of the most painful learning experiences of my life.

### AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

I found myself in the midst of a poverty that was overwhelming - exacerbated by the cosmetic wealth, power and freedom of which the United States boasts.

Here is a country which flies its flag proudly and dares to proclaim itself the defender of world freedom and democracy. And yet here is a country of approximately 57 million

Catholics in which:

- one out of every four women are raped;
  - which spends \$31 million dollars an hour on arms;
  - in which 60% of all households are headed by women with dependent children;
  - which constitutes 5% of the world's population and which uses 40% of the world's resources;
  - which has more people in prison relative to its population than any other country in the world;
  - in which one in every seven live in poverty (judged by USA standards);
  - which has 7 Trident missiles (one is capable of destroying all the cities in the N. Hemisphere) - and is planning to build more;
  - which ranks last amongst all industrialized nations for economic fairness in distribution of income;
  - which produces 700 thousand tons of toxic waste daily;
  - in which over 90% of women involved in prostitution are victims of incest or abuse as children;
  - in which 10,000 children a year die from poverty;
  - in which every day 350,000 children bring guns to school.
- One could go on and on.

### Where is the Kingdom?

Mission - evangelization - the Kingdom. Where is it? What must we do about it? We must cry aloud where the Kingdom of God is not present. But the Church is not good at crying. The Church is good at organizing and planning. Maybe we need to learn to weep again, old fashioned weeping. Where must we be to sniff out and call forth the Kingdom? A poem in my recent book attempts an answer.

America the beautiful -  
salute the flag,  
while down the dirty alley  
old ladies scavenge for cans and

garbage scraps.  
And Mick, bent and broken,  
shuffles down the street,  
picking up the fag ends,  
center of his life.

America the beautiful -  
salute the flag,  
while the lines  
at the soup kitchen,  
all ragged and shamed,  
grow longer and longer  
in winter's cold dusk.

America the beautiful -  
salute the flag,  
and in the darkened hallways  
the old folks huddle  
under yesterday's papers  
claiming a stronger,  
rising dollar.

America the beautiful -  
salute the flag,  
and raise it in the shelters  
where the weak and hungry  
in their dirty, smelly clothes,  
are too sick,  
too old,  
too poor,  
to raise the flag themselves.  
America the beautiful -  
Ah, bury, bury your flag,  
until the smallest of your children  
can raise it up themselves.

#### THE CHURCH OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE CALLED TO CONVERSION

As I became more and more aware of the terrible problems and the injustice prevalent in the U.S. I knew that God's Spirit was indeed alive and well and calling for new mission awareness and activity right in the heart of the Northern Hemisphere. In Washington millions of dollars are being spent to continue the building of a basilica to honour the Mother of Jesus. Yet women and children are the most oppressed and poverty stricken population in the U.S.A.

An authentic church cannot afford to be ambiguous. It seems to me that conversion - yes! - repentance - old fashioned repentance! - a change of heart, for those who hold the power and the resources, is indeed the new challenge of mission. One way or another, it is meant for all of us, but in particular, for the church. We have preached enough. We need to sit with the pain in order to be open to transformation.

I work in the brothel system in Chicago. The brothel is a house of prostitution. It is a strange experience sitting in a brothel instead of in church and not knowing what to say. If I am preaching - when I am allowed to preach - I know what to say and I know my audience. When you are in the brothel what do you say to a women in prostitution? 'Why don't you stop that? I'll get you a job. In Mac'Donalds.' What do you say? I sit there with the women and I have nothing to say. We are so used to having our role set out that we need that security. When God calls us and moves us to the edges, to the periphery we are not secure and we don't know what to say. What we need to say to each other is that that's fine - just fine.

#### Mutuality of Evangelization

I remember once being invited to preach homilies in a western suburban church in Chicago. I went to the brothel and just for conversation I said to the madam that I would be preaching in church next week. Madam said,

'Girls, Edwina is preaching. We're going.'

I said, 'Oh, no! that's not necessary.'

The last thing I wanted was to have the women in prostitution hear me preaching. At the church the following week I went up to the lectern. There they were - a whole row of prostitutes right in the middle of the church. I couldn't believe it. I got through my homily.

Afterwards I went to the back of the Church and there was the madam and there were the girls at the edge, by the wall, trying to disappear into the wall. I said, 'Thank you, thank you for coming! Thank you for your support.' The madam said, 'Well, we missed a morning's business but it was worth it.' Again I said thank you and then one of the women said, 'Edwina, you come and sit with us in our place, you come and you sit in our house, with our problems. We know you ain't doin so well in your church, you being a woman and all, so we come and we support you when they let you preach.' And I heard God laughing.

### Solidarity

The women in prostitution wanted to support me, to be in solidarity with me because of the oppression found in our very own church institutions. It's as though the women were saying, 'We go and we hear you, the woman, preach. You come and you sit and you see us in our poverty, you see us in our abuse and you support us by loving us, even though we are in that darkness! The mutuality of evangelization! In spite of this darkness and struggles the missionary Church must be faithful.

### Bearing Fruit

When I was in the Sahara desert one day I was feeling very lonely and very alienated. I'd been there for months and I hadn't heard God's voice. I sat on the sand and leaned against the remains of a little old mud hut. I let my head fall back and began to think: 'Is God really with us?' and I saw curling down from the remains of this hut grapevines and leaves and at the top a whole bunch of grapes growing in the desert. And I heard God saying, "Even in the desert, especially in the desert I bear fruit".

We are in the desert and it is

alright because God is with us and it is God that bears the fruit. All over Europe and America prophetic individuals and communities are trying to be faithful, to bear fruit and make a difference.

Last Sunday I was in a place called Rock Island in the state of Illinois. I had been invited to preach and to give a talk by a church that dared to invite a woman because it was committed to justice and peace. They told me that although they had invited me they were unable to announce in public that I was speaking because I might then have been banned. Why would I be banned? Because I am a woman and because I am preaching. I am a 'Gospel women' and for 25 years I have tried to understand and preach the Good News but still the Gospel women are not allowed to preach the Good News.

That particular parish is on the verge of being closed because of its commitment to justice and peace, and because of the pastor's activities which are not in conjunction with the institutional church nor with the bishop. This pastor and his community, many of whom spend time in jail for protesting against nuclear arms, and who invite a woman to preach, are on the prophetic edge, but the reality is that the parish may be closed. And the reality is that a church, a small community stays on the edge where they believe they must be.

### PROPHETIC CHALLENGE

Our VMM Movement in the U.S. received no support from the U.S. Catholic bishops because we dared to use the word 'ecumenical' in our public statements. Although we are 90% Catholic we opened out our movement to our Protestant brothers and sisters. So we are an ecumenical movement with Catholic roots. We are disqualified from Catholic support in

the U.S. because of this ecumenical stance. We cannot afford to be ambiguous in the church. The prostitutes say, 'Tell it like it is!' Preach the truth, not ambiguously, not changing it but straightforward. The truth is we are ecumenical. That is what we are called to be. We come from traditional Catholic roots but we will not sell ourselves for the money or for the power.

VMM Europe is also on the line now in Scotland. The bishops want to know what we think of the Eucharist. They heard that we were allowing people who are not Catholics to receive the Eucharist. What do we do when we are in a community of missionaries and we are gathered to break the Bread? Do we say to one, 'you can have some' and to another, 'you can't because, although you serve with us, and walk with us, you are not Catholic?' The Scottish bishops say 'Tell us exactly what you are doing. If we do not agree with it you lose your funding'.

The God who called us to mission and evangelization says 'say it like it is! Do not play games with the gospel and do not play games with the Good News'. If that means we lose ground financially or materially or power-wise then so be it, but we will try to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus.

#### Genesis House

Genesis House, the only house of hospitality in Chicago for women leaving prostitution, served 4,500 prostitutes over the last few years, and helped them to get their lives together and to live wholesome and dignified lives. It lost its support from the institutional church because it taught 'safe sex.' You cannot go to a prostitute and say, "My dear, why don't you be celibate".

You cannot preach chastity and celibacy to women who have known only violence and who do not give a

damn about themselves, and who are selling their bodies on the streets because they don't know anything else. You have to say 'at least I'll try to save your life.' Safe sex. The church as an institution, coming from a totally different perspective, says 'no!'

These people are hungry for the Good News, hungry for resurrection, hungry for nurturing, not for rules and ethics. You cannot say to an incest victim, a rape victim or a deviant who has been in and out of jail - 'be celibate!' You must say I will try to make your life a little bit better. And in doing so we lose the support of the institutional church which looks like the power broker. We have 'to say it like it is' to these people, and also to the institution. We know what's going on. It is a difficult place to walk but maybe we missionaries, the *avant garde*, have to be in dangerous places, and maybe we have to question much of what we do and how we do it.

#### Women Questioning the Institution

Because of entrenchment attitudes in the U.S. and British churches the whole institution is being questioned. This is particularly true of women who are coming up with alternatives. One of these is MARY'S PENCE for women. MARY'S PENCE says that if the institutional church does not understand women, the poor and the prostitutes, then they will gather together and come up with alternative ways of reaching out to the widow and the orphan, the abandoned mother and wife. They will find resources elsewhere.

If the resources which we have in the church can only be shared with those who perhaps, do not challenge the system then maybe we should find our resources elsewhere. I spent the last 3 Summers in England, Scotland, and Ireland at the request of scores of Catholic women throughout these countries. In

Britain, the U.S. and Australia the mothers, the wives and the daughters are creeping out and saying,

'Edwina, let me tell you something! There's little for us in the Catholic Church.'

'What am I going to say to my three daughters - they won't even let them be altar servers.'

'Edwina, what are we going to do?'

These women are hungry, they are not being nurtured. They are coming out along the edges and asking, 'can we gather and nurture our children in different ways?' Do we have a message of Good News for them?

The women are rebuilding the church. They are sniffing the call to mission and to a meaningful spirituality. We, the missionaries must not lose that connection. We must be part of the underground movement that is moving forward from the poor and the dispossessed, especially the women. We must know about it and be in tune with it if indeed we are to be the evangelizing arm of the Catholic Church.

### The Radical Jesus

If it is to survive, the church, like the radical Jesus must speak aloud on behalf of the poor and oppressed, both at home and elsewhere;

- the church, like the radical Jesus, must have no truck with the power dealers and their tables...;

- the church, like the radical Jesus, must listen to the Spirit who cries aloud for justice at the city gates and in the market place...;

- the church, like the radical Jesus, must be missionary and being missionary means being a pilgrim, it means being on the edges.

### The Escape of the Spirit

I will end with a story. Once upon a time we captured God and we put God in a box and we put a beautiful velvet curtain around the box. We placed candles and flowers around the box and we said to the poor and the dispossessed, 'Come, come and see what we have! Come and see God.' And they knelt before the God in the box.

One day, very long ago, the Spirit in the box turned the key from inside and she pushed it open. She looked around in the church and saw that there was nobody there! They had all gone. Not a soul was in the place. She said to herself, 'I'm, getting out!' The Spirit shot out of the box. She escaped and she has been sighted a few times since then. Last seen with a bag-lady in MacDonald's.

The missionary task is to be alert; to look for where the Spirit escaped to; to ask 'where did she go?'; and to say to the community, 'Look, we think, maybe here; it could be there.'

But at least we are on the journey, at least we are moving.

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## II. PROPHETIC MISSION: HEALING, NURTURING, BIRTHING

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### TELL THE PEOPLE WHO THEY ARE

Once upon a time there was a country ruled by a king. The country was invaded and the king was killed but his children were rescued by servants and hidden away. The smallest, an infant daughter was reared by a peasant family. They didn't know she was the king's daughter. She had become the peasant's daughter and she dug potatoes and lived in poverty.

One day an old woman came out of the forest and approached the young woman who was digging potatoes. The old woman asked her: 'Do you know who you are?' And the young woman said, 'Yes, I'm the farmer's daughter and a potato digger.' The old woman said: 'No, no, you are the daughter of the king.' And the potato digger said, 'I'm the daughter of the king?!' 'Yes, that's who you are!' And the old woman disappeared back into the forest.

The young woman still dug potatoes but she dug them differently. It was the way she held her shoulders and it was the light in her eyes because she knew who she was. She knew she was the daughter of the king.

We must tell people who they are. We must go from place to place saying to the dispossessed and to the lonely and the downtrodden, 'Do you know who you are?'

The ones who have heard the Good News must carry it and help the poor to understand who they are so that they may stand up and carry themselves with dignity even though they

dig potatoes.

### The Northern Hemisphere

We missionaries in the Northern Hemisphere have much to do with healing, nurturing and birthing. It seems to me, travelling throughout North America and Europe, that there is an incredible woundedness and debilitating sense of helplessness deep in the hearts of many people. We are in need of healing. We have become so afraid that many of us are frozen into apathy. God's frozen people need a GREAT THAW!

For us missionaries there must be a great letting go of our concretized ways of seeing and doing things, of our dependency on tradition where it stifles new life, of our holding on to the old and familiar where it excludes the fresh and the different, of our fears of new ideas and ways of doing things. This requires a softening as well as an openness of heart, a loosening of our joints.

In chapter 17 of Eccl. we read: 'Yahweh says, 'I have given you a heart to think with.' Only God could do something as silly as that. Normally, we think with our brains. Perhaps it is time to think with and to move with our hearts. I think Jesus did it. Jesus was a man of passion, a man of deep feeling, a man who embarrassed his disciples, his confreres and friends because he was passionate and it is embarrassing to be passionate.

### Passionate about the Gospel

It is not acceptable for the Church to be hot. Maybe we are part of the

freeze and maybe we too are in need of the thaw. Jesus said, 'I have come to set fire to the earth, - how I wish it were burning already.' My question to the missionary church is: Where is our fire? We know where our brains are, our pastoral letters, our plans, our structures. But where are our hearts?! Where is the fire?!

I believe that when we die or go off to wherever it is we are going to, there will not be a great God standing at the gate with a book saying, 'Oh, welcome! What did you do? What did you achieve? What did you build?' There will be a great God standing there with a thermometer, a huge thermometer and God will say, 'How hot were you for the Reign of God?'

#### A Feeling People

How passionate are we? Or are we too respectable, too afraid to be a feeling people, too afraid to do what Jesus did when he stood over Jerusalem? As we stand over Rome and London and Chicago and New York and Washington and Nairobi can we too cry aloud because we too are to call forth the Reign and we see the enormity of that task? Eighty per cent of the work of mission is accomplished through passion! If indeed we were to get really passionate about God and the Good News who knows what might happen?

Hildegarde of Bingen, one of our great early Rhineland mystics defined sin as a drying up process making us like chaff or straw. Where then are our juices, where is our wetness? - the kinds of things we do not talk about in the Church because they are too close to being sensuous, too close to the idea of bodies or physicalness or intimacy. I believe that the missionary church knows what it must do. It must set fire to itself and to the world.

We must be hot and we must be a

juicy feeling people if we are to truly make a difference in this world which is so afraid and so apathetic. If we indeed were really passionate about the gospel of Jesus what would happen? Working in Chicago's brothels, I know I cannot stand up and preach. I know that all I have to bring as a missionary is my heart and I sit with that and somehow hope and believe the Holy Spirit will break through in the brothel because I am there with a love and a longing to make a difference.

#### Where the Pain is

Marge was a woman in the brothel. She was in her forties - "a little bit past it" - as they say in the brothel. She had long blond hair. She wore a low-cut blouse, short skirt and high boots. There were track marks from drugs all down her arms. She was desperate to make \$10 that day in the brothel.

She sat with her book waiting with the other women for the men to come in. The door bell rang and Marge who had been sitting with that helpless, numbed, frozen look of all women in the brothels stood up and said, 'Hi babe! You want to turn a date?!' and she circled around the man playing her tricks to entice him and the man looked and shook his head and he took another woman. Marge sat down with her book, frozen again.

The second time a man came in, Marge jumped up again with the smiles and the games and the man rejected her. Three times I saw the men come into the brothel and choose other women and Marge sat and I sat opposite her and watched as she put her head behind the book and I watched her knuckles turn white with a sense of pure exclusion with a sense of 'I am no one.' I watched the rejection in her very body. When all you have left is your body to sell for \$10 and nobody wants it, you know you have nothing.

What does a missionary do, what does the missionary church do in the brothel? The missionary, the disciple of Jesus, does not preach. The disciple of Jesus knowing that the sin is too painful, the pain is too deep, reaches out as I had to do. I put my hand on her shoulder and right from my toes it came, 'I'm sorry! I'm sorry!' It was the first time I said I was sorry that a woman was not taken in prostitution. She saw in my eyes that I meant it and that I loved her. The power of touch. We must not be afraid to embrace, to touch.

#### God is with God's People

We must be, as a missionary church, right where the pain is, right where the action is, standing as the women did beneath the cross of Jesus. We get a different perspective when we stand right beneath the cross, right within the pain. It is a different perspective from the one we get when we move far back with our binoculars and we see from a distance as the disciples did, 'Look! What's happening? He's being crucified!'

We do not stand back and debate. We do not stand back and calculate. The missionary church is there at the heart of the oppression proclaiming GOD IS WITH US! GOD IS WITH GOD'S PEOPLE!

Places like brothels make us ask questions. Why do women sell their bodies? Is there a connection between prostitution and the attitude of society and the Church to women? One of the major driving forces behind prostitution is poor self esteem which is a consequence of incest or rape or violence or negative treatment and negative attitudes towards women.

Prostitution is rampant in all our major cities. Has the church got anything to do with it? Is the church doing anything about it? What is the church's attitude towards

women? Do we follow the example of Jesus in his attitude to and treatment of women? Has evangelization and mission got anything to do with prostitutes? As I got closer and closer to the women I began to ask questions... 'Is it that the prostitutes need the Church or that the Church needs the prostitutes?'

What could we learn from the prostitute? She, like many of us, perhaps, has hit rock bottom, but she teaches us how to rise up from the very pits. There is an authenticity about the prostitutes which is amazing. There is a realness about women in prostitution which we who play so many games in the church and in our society, somehow have lost touch with. The struggle of the prostitutes I have worked with on the streets of Chicago to get free of dependency and co-dependency, to get free of addiction, self illusions and quick fixes has been for me an education and a call to conversion.

#### A PROCESS OF CONVERSION

Let me tell you about Sandy. She was a violent woman on the streets of Chicago. She carried 3 guns in her back pockets. She was impossible to do anything with. I met Sandy when she was 16 and I have worked with her for the last 8 years. When I met Sandy, the violent spitfire who would put a knife in anybody's back, we sat down and began to talk.

She said, 'Edwina, look at my back,' and she showed me all the scars and the welts on her back and told me that when she was an infant her mother took her by the ankles and dipped her up and down in boiling water. Her hands were scarred because her mother put her hands on the hot plate until they burned.

Is it any wonder that Sandy is on the streets of Chicago? How do we

mother you Sandy? How does the Good News of the Gospel touch Sandy, scarred from infancy. Sandy, whose mother told her, 'From the moment you were in my womb I hated you!' How does the disciple of Jesus come and say, 'Sandy, God holds you and loves you!?'

Sandy made it. She did OK. Slowly the nurturing, the mothering transformed her and after all those years on the streets of Chicago she went to school and got a job. She told me that she was going to get an apartment overlooking the lake. I told her that was too much! She got a job in a seminary library. I could just picture it: 'Yes, Father, a book on moral theology?!' But she had pulled herself from the pits. She worked three jobs including the one in the seminary library.

Last year, I was invited to Sandy's apartment. I went in and I said, 'Where's the lake?' And she said, 'Edwina, hold onto the table. Now just put your head out the window and look right out and you see that little blue spot in the corner? That's the lake! I got me an apartment overlooking the lake!'

I knew it was a resurrection. I knew it was a mission event. I knew that Sandy was an example to me because the Good News was transparent in her and it was for me too. Women like Sandy have been teachers for me - they have taught me that mission is indeed a process of conversion for all of us. The poor, - people like Sandy, have indeed, much to teach us because they live the Gospel.

If one of the sins of our church is indeed its very strength and power and rootedness - perhaps sitting with the poor and the broken hearted in solidarity and empathy will soften us, make us a more compassionate and gentle people. We,

the missionary church, must be stretched by the Gospel.

### HIS REIGN IS FOR ALL

I was in Genesis House one day and there is a knock at the door and I open it and there is a beautiful prostitute - tall, a lovely body, long blond hair, blue eyes, a striking woman. She is crying, 'Help me. I want to quit the streets, I can't take it anymore.'

I invited her in and told her she had come to the right place. I sat down and talked with Lisa. After listening to her story I told her she could stay with us and start again. Lisa was so happy to have an opportunity to begin a new life.

As the days passed, I heard the other women complaining and mumbling and grumbling and I asked what was wrong. 'We don't like her in the house with us. She doesn't fit!' I replied that we're to be together like a family. They simply didn't like her. I sat with Lisa observing her. Then one day I called her and I said, 'Lisa, you have not been honest with me, have you? Lisa, You're a man, aren't you?' Lisa whimpered, 'I'm a man.' 'Lisa, why didn't you tell me you were a man?' Lisa looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'If I told you I'm a faggot, a queen, a queer you would never have taken me into your house, would you?' I hemmed and hawed, 'Well, you see, Lisa, we work with prostitutes - I mean - with women. No, I wouldn't have taken you into our house because you see we have an agenda, we have plans.'

Then I could hear God saying, 'My Reign is for all. I've let this great net down and see the great variety in it and see what I have made. My

Reign is for all. Do not exclude my people. All of them, Black and white, Iraqi and American, Christian and Communist, straight and gay, transexual and transvestite and prostitute.'

But we are afraid that we will lose our control. God dares us, the missionary church to love them all. God dares us to break the barriers that divide people and divide the church, dares us to gather them in because our God is bigger than us and our church. What have we got to say to the transexuals, the transvestites, the gays, the drug addicts? I asked Lisa to stay with us because we needed her to evangelize us. If mission involves conversion of heart - then let us be the first in the queue and begin to recognize what we must do to be faithful to mission.

#### That the Beauty may be Revealed

One of the first streetmen I worked with or rather walked with was flat out drunk on the sidewalk the first time I met him. He was in his 60's and had been living and drinking on the streets for thirty years. He was unshaven, dirty and smelly. I said, 'My God, no way! I can't do anything for this man. Some people are too far gone for the Good News. It's too late for him.' I saw this man and I knew I wasn't even going to try to ask him to get his life together or to go into a programme. I would just make friends with him.

I made friends with him and I walked with him. Over the years whenever he knew I was coming to meet him on the streets he would go to the Salvation Army and take a shower and he would get himself a new shirt and he wouldn't drink that day. He'd be standing by the side of the road and say, 'Hey, Edwina, we're going to go around the streets,' and he would be my guide on the streets.

One day he came to visit our small VMM community and he stayed a day. He came back again another time and stayed a week. Then he came and stayed a month, a year, two years, three years. The old streetman, 'the one who was past it' became one of the pillars of the lay missionary community in the U.S. I say this and I ask myself what happened? I didn't preach. I loved him. I walked with him.

One day I was in the forest and I saw something sticking out from beneath the foliage. On closer inspection I saw it was a leg of a little old table. It was carved with berries and grapevines and leaves. I called the streetman to come and see what I had found in the forest. He helped me pull out the old table from underneath the foliage and we carried it up to the garage. It was bright green. The old man took a broken bottle and he began to scrape and scrape the green paint off the table. Under the green paint there was red paint. He continued to scrape and the beautiful carvings became clearer. Beneath the red paint was brown paint. For 6 months the old man scraped with the broken glass and at the end a beautiful antique carved oak table had emerged.

I suggested buying furniture oil to put on it but he said that he would put nothing artificial on it. He went down to the forest and he picked the berries from the trees and he brought them back and boiled them to make a natural berry resin. He used an old rag and rubbed the natural berry resin into the oak table. There was the beautiful antique oak table in all its beauty and the former alcoholic streetman standing beside it and I heard God say, "The table is the man himself."

What do we have to do as a church to scrape away what is not real or what is no longer authentic?

What must we do to scrape ourselves so that the beauty within the heart of the church - the life of the Spirit - can be revealed?

## THE NORTH IN NEED OF EVANGELIZATION

### Spiritual Hunger

In North America and Britain there is a tremendous spiritual hunger that the church has never managed to fill. When people are alienated and lost at a very deep, often subconscious level, they rush to fill up the void with all sorts of alternatives. We are an addicted society in North America and fast becoming that in Europe too. Spiritual poverty sets us up for all sorts of addictions - food, sport, shopping, keep-fit, drugs, alcohol, sex - even religion!

The missionary church has to address this disease which is fast taking such a hold in the Northern Hemisphere. It is a symptom of a lack of connectedness - a lack of meaning for millions of people who, as a consequence, are literally unable to feel any responsibility or commitment to others other than on a superficial level.

This was made very evident in the U.S. during the Gulf War. There was a mania about Yellow Ribbons. Everybody was gathering yellow ribbons to show they supported their troops at the front. They were not thinking about what it means to kill, to go to war. I gave a homily in a parish at that time and all the trees surrounding the church were tied with yellow ribbons. On the door of the church was a huge yellow ribbon urging citizens to support the troops. I was struck by the sentimentalism, the nostalgia and the lack of depth and understanding of what it means to go to war and kill hundreds of thousands of other human beings.

I went to the pastor and asked him why he had yellow ribbons around the church. He said the people had put them up. I asked him why he let the parishioners cover the church in yellow ribbons and he replied 'to support the troops!' I told him that I would put up a black one for every yellow one on the door.

Then I went to the convent and it too had a yellow ribbon on the door. I said, 'Sister, take it down! How dare you put up a yellow ribbon? Do you understand what we are saying through this symbol and what we are witnessing to?'

A missionary church daring to rock the boat must remember the call to bring Good News and healing, not death and death-dealing.

### Alienation

The alienation, the lack of connection between the North and the South can be seen in two recent diseases that have apparently erupted in North America and Great Britain, described by the mass media as 'Disaster Fatigue' and 'Donor Fatigue'. They underline how far away the Northern Hemisphere is from the reality in the South. We are apparently fatigued at trying to do something for the thousands who are dying. We are not connected deeply enough to realize they are our sisters and our brothers. We in the Northern Hemisphere are tired of 'handing out' aid to the South. We have had enough. We want them to go away.

The missionary community knowing the pain of our brothers and sisters must be the bridge to the South. We must remind our sisters and brothers in the North that we are one and if the Christian community does not reach out in this one world then we are not being faithful as a Christian church. It is this community that

must stand up and make a public proclamation, a fiery and passionate one, an embarrassing one that makes people say, 'Isn't that a little bit hysterical! Isn't that a little bit emotional!'

Yes! It's time we got a little bit emotional because we have removed ourselves so far from the reality of the pain that we are in danger of freezing up any message of the Good News. There will be no alleviation of poverty and starvation, there will be no equal sharing of resources, there will be no peace in the world until the peoples, the churches and governments of the Northern hemisphere are converted and evangelized by their own children.

### The Rape of the Earth

The lack of connectedness and meaning which plagues the U.S. is also evident in our treatment of the earth. If we do not see ourselves as part of the earth, connected to all living beings, then how can we value and respect the earth?

It is only in recent years that we have begun to wake up to our responsibility for the devastation of the planet and the misuse and rape of its resources. If indeed, we believe God's spirit permeates the universe and God created all living things then surely we also must hold them sacred, and especially the earth on which all creatures depend! Mission has a great deal to do with ecology and the environment. The church, and indeed, the rule of God would be quite irrelevant if we ended up with no planet to live upon.

The human community, - the earth, as well, presumably, is the locus for the rule of God. It took a billion years to make the ozone layer and in a decade we have begun to destroy it. Are our missionaries and bishops trained in basic ecology, in environmental values? In sniffing out the

kingdom are we sniffing the pollution of God's earth too? Are we about the business of saving God's home?

The universe is becoming exhausted - as many of the peoples in the Northern Hemisphere are exhausted with the pace and the power-goals we have set ourselves. To Native Americans it is a sin to be exhausted. In 65 million years of the unfolding of the Universe nothing has been so devastating as our moment! The missionary - about the business of God's Reign must challenge rape in all its forms.

### Dicothemies in Our Society

Do we perhaps, as a church, need to re-look at what we have been teaching for so long? We have emphasized the dicothemies between earth and heaven; body and soul; male and female; human and divine. We have accepted if not approved polarizations which have led to a deep alienation of the earth and the human from the holy.

Our church's traditional scorning of the values of the physical body and physical world as opposed to spiritual values may have a relationship to humanity's sickness today, including prostitution, rape, homelessness, pollution and destruction of the earth, and other addictions. One of the challenges for mission today in the Northern Hemisphere is to affirm the essential human dignity and potential holiness of every person, and of the earth.

### HEALING

A constant problem I have met in working with the women is their lack of belief in themselves.

They say 'Edwina, we are the scum of the earth. Do you want to know what we are? We're sh..!' I have said over and over to them, 'No, No!

You are not scum.. You are the Temples of the Holy Spirit.' 'Edwina, be real, we're sh...!' 'No, no, no! Your are God's work of art.'

How do you move from scum of the earth to God's work of art? How do you make that journey? The missionary knowing God's dream, knowing God's people are essentially holy, that they are called to holiness, sees the layers that need to be scraped away. The missionary goes around declaring: 'You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit!'

The woman said, 'Edwina, I ain't never been loved before!' The missionary has been trained at loving, is committed to loving. But can you see it shining in their eyes? Are they hot? In our cities, children of rich and poor alike are growing up amid family breakdown, divorce, easy access to drugs and sex. Young people are without direction and they are not, for the most part, getting it from family or church. I see the consequences of this on the streets and in the brothels. Perhaps if we truly valued each individual as the temple of the Holy Spirit we might bring a little light and hope back into people's eyes, not only of the prostitutes and the street people - but also the shoppers, the golfers, the addicts, - the Christians!?

Do you think if Jesus had been a battered baby he would have grown into a full awareness of his divinity and of his relationship to the Father? If Mary and Joseph had not been in awe of the child and had not brought him up with incredible respect do you think he would have become the son of the Divine as well as their son? How would it have been if Jesus had been a battered baby?

The challenges to mission today are very great, but perhaps the greatest challenge is healing. We cannot solve the problems without

first doing the healing. I believe that fortunately, God is in control and knows exactly what is going on.

### An End to Patriarchy

God knows that we can only handle so much revelation at a time and so reveals her/himself to us progressively as we mature from infancy, to adolescence, to adulthood. Thousands of years ago in the Néolithic Period, humanity recognized life's origins in the womb of the GREAT MOTHER who was personified in Goddess Worship. The human race has worshipped a female goddess far longer than it has worshipped a male God. As human consciousness developed so did the need for a masculine differentiation and a separation from nature took place which became personified in the masculine God and the worship of Yahweh.

Over thousands of years we moved from a feminine goddess as divinity to a masculine God as divinity. Now perhaps we need to look at whether we have gone from one extreme to another.

We have got ourselves into an either or situation with distinctions of male-female, earth-heaven, body-soul, North-South, rich-poor, black-white. etc. etc. When one reality is negated, or neglected in the other, the result is an imbalanced, impoverished and alienated people. We have neglected whole areas of tradition, culture and human experience. The resulting overwhelming patriarchy wreaks havoc in society and causes inner violence in the human psyche. This is seen in all sorts of external violence.

There is need of a marriage. There is need of a conversion, a change of heart in our distorted and sick world. There is need for a new way of being human. It must embrace the feminine and the woman

as well as the masculine and the male.

### Nurturing and Birthing

We are obsessed, fascinated by the idea of growth and progress - but what about depth, fullness, creativity? We must be about the business of healing, nurturing and birthing, as well as building, progressing and planning. And it must begin in the Northern Hemisphere where the damage is the greatest and the pain is the deepest.

Could we, perhaps, bring back a little JOY into the world? We who are so caught up in doctrines of sin and guilt, could we not look a little more towards the resurrection? Death and dying are rampant. Can we keep the dream alive - the dream that God indeed has a plan for God's people, that the Risen Christ is for a broken world. We have many Fathers of the Church. Where are the Mothers of the Church? Where are the children?

Today in this seminar, we are celebrating Pentecost the Spirit of wisdom. Her name is Sophia, she is feminine. This world is hungry for wisdom and desperate for the fire and light of the Holy Spirit. It is appropriate for us today as missionaries to gather on this feast, to ask what's wrong with our world? With our mission? We do mission so

often as if we never read the scripture, as if we didn't know how important healing is, that male and female are integral to wholeness and that polarities divide. We do mission as if we did not understand that the preaching of the gospel must be about the bringing together of a world that is divided.

### Wholeness and Holiness

We know what we have to do and much of it has to do with us, with ourselves because we have repressed so much that is vital to the wholeness and holiness of our world.

Yes, there will be prostitutes, there will be rape, there will be incest, there will be hunger for wisdom, and there will be a great deep gut-level hunger amongst God's people - until the missionary church renewed with a breaking open of heart and gut, understands, comes forward and says, 'We will set fire to the earth because that is our mandate. We do not need to do any more research, or write any more letters. We do need desperately to give birth in a sterile world frozen in impotence.'

If the women do not move forward and begin to bring back a little compassion and gentleness and healing balance in our world then all of us will continue to suffer and be in pain.

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### III. PROPHETIC MISSION: EMPOWERING TO MISSION

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*(Edwina Gateley answered wide ranging and searching questions in her third conference which took the form of an open-forum. It provided further significant insights on her ministry to women, her relationships with her own community and the wider community and many other aspects of her prophetic mission).*

#### THE VOLUNTEER MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

*Q: What is your relationship with the VMM Community at this moment in your missionary life?*

Edwina. They have asked me to be an animator for the VMMs overseas and to continue to help in a spiritual capacity, not in an administrative way. I have no say in the development or policy of the VMM International. I feel a little like an old lady who is loved by the members. I am very grateful for their support of me and for the nurturing I receive from the VMM international membership. This year I gave their Lenten retreat in Ireland and I was asked to do the same in England. It was a wonderful feeling to be wanted still.

Home mission. My responsibility is now of a spiritual and prophetic kind. They look to me for ideas and they ask questions, for example, what I think we should do about home missions. Ten years ago I made a proposal asking if they would consider developing home mission projects. At their General Assembly they decided against it. The VMM was founded to work in Africa and they felt it was not ready for home mission. I was disappointed but they told me that they respected

my idea and would endorse my doing something about it.

As a token of support they gave me \$3000 to help start a project for the women in prostitution in Chicago. Later they invited me to use the VMM house as a vacation/holiday home for the women in prostitution and for the bag-ladies. So, at Christmas and Easter I take the street people to the VMM Center where we are received with kindness and hospitality. It is so important to me that I am not alone doing my mission with the prostitutes and street people. Without the VMM support I do not know how much I could do.

The VMM itself has now decided to go much more into home mission and I'm delighted about that. They are beginning projects with the itinerants and the homeless in various places. They are very much involved in development and mission in Britain and particularly in the United States. So I feel a part of a whole movement with one foot in the wilderness on the prophetic edge and the other foot very firmly planted in the heart of the VMM.

It was in a VMM place that I spent nine months discerning between the VMM and Genesis House. They were my hosts and fed me. I was in their

forest, so to speak and I could not have done what I did without that backing.

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH RELIGIOUS MISSION SOCIETIES

*Could you share with us how you see lay mission and community in the future? What relationship would you like to see between lay mission movements and religious mission societies?*

From my VMM experience in the U.S. I see that an increasing number of lay people want to be involved in mission but also want to be involved in community. The VMM is participating more and more in a community of "being missionaries". It seems to me that fewer and fewer people are going to religious societies in today's changing world but these same people do want to do something about mission. They want to be involved but are afraid of a structure which may not be open enough at this time or which may tie them down. More and more people are coming to movements like VMM and asking what they can do.

**Life Commitment?** The VMM has facilities for life commitment but they are facilities within a lay context. I consider myself a missionary for life but it does not mean that I have a structure which insists that I have to stay in a certain place or be moved or follow a certain set of rules. I belong to a family and we share the same spirit. We come together for prayer, for retreats and for support. There is nourishment there but in a much more flexible way perhaps than in many traditional kinds of religious societies.

Families need to earn money to support their children. They can still be members of the VMM and have 5 children because they come to the missionary movement for spiritual

nourishing, for support and for prayer. Lay people need that commitment.

**Open Your Doors.** I think religious societies must open their doors and not see lay people as a threat or as something "added on". See lay people as fellow Christians trying to understand and fulfill the Gospel in a way which is appropriate for this age. Religious societies need to listen to the lay leaders. Share your resources and facilities with them because you do have resources and we do not. In turn we lay mission movements will share with you our youth, our rather wild ideas and our experiences. But we value your wisdom and your tradition.

**Remove barriers.** I think it is important that we stop these great distinctions of lay and religious. I do not know what is the difference between you and me but I know that I have spent my 26 years as a Catholic minister carrying a label which says that I am lay and you are religious and I am still not quite sure what it is that is different. Yesterday, we talked about breaking down barriers between North and South, male and female, rich and poor. We also need to do that for lay and religious so that the world might understand that you are not so special, that you are really supposed to be quite ordinary and yet filled with the spirit. That is what religious means - ordinary people who are filled with the spirit.

**Community.** Community will always be essential for any form of religious life. The question is what do you mean by community life and how do you function as a community? What is your leadership? Where is your authority? Who wields it and how? Lay people have much to tell religious societies about how to do it differently. The VMM is an example of a new way of being a religious community.

## FINANCES

*How large is Genesis House and how do you finance it?*

Genesis House is an ordinary house with three bedrooms. We can house from 4 to 8 women. We see 200 women per month. They come to the house for counselling, support, a shower or a meal or a cry. There is a lot of traffic in Genesis House. Support for it is still a great burden which I continue to carry. Support has come mostly from the widow's mites. The VMM \$3000 enabled me to make my first move towards surviving on the streets of Chicago. Then I went to the local small parishes and began to get support.

Last year when we had heavy financial problems and were about to close down, I wrote to the VMM-US asking if they could lend us some money. They lent me \$25,000 and saved Genesis House from closure. I have only paid back \$2,000 but I will try to pay it all back. We hold a mortgage of \$2,000 a month which at this time I have to find from the widow's mite in the Christian community.

**A Marginal Ministry.** It is very difficult running a programme like Genesis House because it is a marginal ministry and does not get major city or church funding. When I first started working in Chicago I was sitting in the brothel one day. The madam came up to me and dropped \$20 down my blouse - that's where the women keep the money, - and she said to me, 'Edwina, this is for your ministry.' I took it out and everything in me said 'I can't accept prostitution money!' - a man had just given it in the bedroom! How can I a Catholic minister take the guilt money - the sin money? It was as if I could hear God laughing, 'My ways are not your ways. Do not expect the support to come from the normal resources. I will provide where the

big institution does not provide.'

You remember from the scripture how Jesus one day was having a meeting with his disciples and the door opened and a woman came in. Her hair is all over the place and she's all a mess and she scents Jesus out and gets down on her knees. She has this perfume and pours it down his calves and begins to massage his feet. All the men begin to ask 'Don't you know who she is? Who let her in? Who's watching the door?' There was terrible confusion because Jesus was being ministered to by this hooker.

Where did she get the money to buy the perfume? She didn't earn it in the normal way. Jesus must have known that. He looked at the heart. When the madam gave me the \$20 and I was desperately in need of it I just thought, 'who am I to question the support that I receive. I must be ready to receive whatever God gives.' That was 6 years ago. Every month the madam sends a donation to Genesis House. When I go to visit she always gives me a wee bit extra 'for your mission.' At the beginning it was one of the major and constant contributions I received. When later, the Catholic Church said 'no' and withdrew funding the madam in the brothel said 'yes!' I think that is a stretching experience.

I now support my work selling my two books and also painting sweatshirts. These are the main support for my work. I had to find a creative way to support my ministry as a laywoman without a financial community behind me so I started buying sweatshirts in the market, painting mandalas on them and selling them for 150% profit. Now I have a small market for selling sweatshirts. Whenever I speak I always ask for a table and I put out my books and 10 to 30 sweatshirts of all colours and sizes, - except here! The VMM members take care of the sales. I talk, they sell

and I get the money!

We have to be creative to support the new ministries but it is hard. Before I left Genesis House this week I talked to the woman in charge of the accounts and I asked her if she had enough to keep us until the end of May and she said, 'Edwina, maybe, maybe not.' I told her she must not close before I get back from Rome to which she replied, 'No, we'll be OK.' It is like that all the time.

#### MISSION TO WOMEN

*Do you intend to stay with Genesis House indefinitely? What are your plans for the future?*

Moving on from Genesis House will be very painful. The VMM community is very nourishing; so also are the women in prostitution who call me their grandmother. I love those women. But the reality is that it is very difficult to work in crisis situations like incest, rape and prostitution for a long period of time. It burns me out.

"Burn-Out". You have to be very careful in these ministries because you can get so lost in the pain and in the frustration that you lose your balance. It is important for Genesis House to have a flexible community of people that can work within the ministry, within the mission but that also have families to go home to. Five years is about as much, at any one given time, that one can work exposed to the violence of the streets of Chicago. I am 48 today, as you know, and I am beginning to feel that it is time to move on, and I have been praying and reflecting about this. I would miss the women so much. They are my inspirers, they have done so much for me and they teach me so much.

Prostitution in Our Church. As I have worked with women in prostitution I have considered what prostitution means for me and for Christian women and I have begun to think we in the church also prostitute. I have seen so many people leave the church and I say, 'Why are you going?' All my colleagues have long since left the Roman Catholic church. There is really only me left, and I have to ask the question, why are they leaving? They are leaving because there is no love in the Catholic community for intelligent women who do not want to be treated as children.

Many of us continue to stay. 'Yes, father!' we say and we stay, and we hope that maybe things will change and maybe it will be different. We must somehow find a way for ongoing mission for our own peace, for our own people who have suffered within the Christian context because of our own lack of justice.

How can we serve those who are not prostitutes, but who, nevertheless, feel themselves oppressed or abused like prostitutes? How can we gather women up within the Christian, Catholic community and say, 'we must work together to change, not only the world, but the church?'

Called to Europe. The idea of mission to women is very strong for me. When I went to England three years ago, a woman friend of the family came to me. She works in a market where she sells towels, sheets and things. She has three daughters. She says to me with a very thick accent, 'Edwina, it is alright for you going off to bl... America, off to them prostitutes, - but what about us? There's bl... nowt for us! I take my little girls to church but, I'm not going to take them any more because there is nowt for us. We don't get no food. Why

don't you stay here?'

I think, 'Oh, no, my mission is to Chicago. My mission is to Africa!' But we must listen to what the people are saying. The seed was with me, the idea, and then I said to her, 'You find twelve women who will gather in the North of England. I will come and give a retreat. Maybe that will help. But you must find twelve. It has to be twelve because I cannot afford to subsidize a retreat'. And I went back to Chicago. She called me on the telephone two weeks later.

'Edwina, its bl... marvelous. I've got forty!'

'Forty women! Where did you get them from?'

'They heard there is a woman coming from America and she's English. She's going to give a retreat for women - for ordinary women!'

We had all these women gathered in the North of England three years ago and we had a weekend retreat on the scriptures for women, - laywomen, ordinary women, women who work in the market, women who work in the shops, the laundry, women with kids and husbands, women who were not being fed within the structures. It was wonderful. And they said, 'We want to do it again and we want to bring our friends'.

Since then I have returned to England every summer and this year have gone to Scotland and to Ireland where women have gathered in the simple places - not ten women, not twelve, but hundreds of women because they are so thirsty, so hungry. All I do is take the scriptures and say, 'OK ladies. What was Jesus about?' And we talk about the scriptures and about the church and we celebrate and share and pray together. And those women have given themselves a name.

The women at the well. In the North of England the women call themselves, 'The Women at the Well'. In Scotland there is another group and in Ireland another. Now I am being asked to keep going back and I say to myself that maybe I have to listen to the Spirit. If we are losing our wounded, our best women and their daughters, let us gather them together and feed them so that they will be a voice for all of us.

What about a centre for healing and spirituality? What about a place where ordinary women can gather for retreats, or for theology? The ordinary woman in the street says, 'I never read none of your books on theology. Ain't read none of that stuff. Don't understand it.' They don't understand what we write but they have a right to know what we are saying. We have to share our traditions with the ordinary people. So now I am planning to come back to Britain.

Religious Communities. We always have to rely on the religious communities. I am going to write to religious communities of men and women, telling them I am looking for a place that God will provide in England, Scotland or Ireland, a place to open for nurturing spirituality for the wounded women within our own communities so that we will raise ourselves up and we will stop losing so many fine women. Have you any ideas? Have you got a spare house? I would be very grateful!

#### FORMATION FOR THIS MINISTRY

*I would like to know something about your formation programme. Do you have a particular approach?*

I was curious when I went to

Chicago and studied theology. I did not know what theology meant except that it was about God. I called it 'Godology'! I enjoyed my time there. The scriptures I found very, very powerful. I was able to make sense of the everyday life stories of Jesus in the gospel because they were utterly relevant to the city and to the streets, and that was real for me. The rest I studied and stored as a kind of background material. A little bit of theology is OK., but for me the test of relevance was, how I could make sense of it in mission and ministry rather than in the academic field. I got my degree and since I left I have continued theology and I think it is important.

**Spirituality.** I tend to concentrate on what women are writing about theology and about liberation theologies. Spirituality is very, very important to me to nourish our longing for God. In Michigan where I am now living we have a spirituality group. Two or three times a month we gather a group, usually of women, sometimes with their husbands, to study theology and scripture and pray together. It is important for the lay groups to nourish themselves.

**Un-costly courses!** I look out for courses but quite frankly I cannot afford to go to most of the theology courses on scripture that are available. This has made me think. If I as a minister in the Catholic community cannot afford to attend courses what can I do to change that system to make theology and scripture available to the average women? Could we make it more accessible with a centre? How exciting the average woman gets when she is empowered to talk about God and Jesus and theology. I get so encouraged by this - even when we meet just in our homes. We need to find ways to break open our monopoly on theology and to share it.

My family - a yardstick. One of my yardsticks is my family. My mother is 80, just a very ordinary woman and what I call, 'the salt of the earth'. She spent thirty years selling tickets on the bus service in England and my father worked in a factory, so I have an ordinary family. I began to think of how I could bring my theology/spirituality to my mother, my sister and my brother. I thought - my mother goes to bingo, so I will go to bingo with her and somehow in the bingo hall I will bring up my theology and we will start talking about stuff like that. My mother says, 'Listen to our Edwina. She's real clever! She knows all this - what do you call it love? - scripture? It's about Jesus!' It's so exciting to see that happen. The other place we do it is in the pub. We sit around and we talk about mission. That's important.

I have received a number of awards from Illinois and the church in Chicago. And the USCMA gave me their annual mission award, 'for the wonderful work you did for the church and for mission'. I don't know what to do with these big wooden things made to be put on the wall! (A cheque would have been easier). So I take them to my mother and say, 'look love, I have no room for these things.' She was so proud!

She got a little suitcase and she took them all to the bingo hall and she has put these Catholic Mission Awards all round the bingo hall! That's exciting. It's like God escaping from our kind of boxes and getting to the bingo hall! 'Edwina's doing lovely work. She is working for ...? What is it you are doing, love? 'Prostitutes?' My mother says, 'Edwina I don't know what you do over there with those prostitutes in America. We have got prostitutes here. Why don't you come home?'

## THE PROCESS

*How have you the confidence, the strength to go on? Is there a great danger of burn-out?*

The people or the Society who give you a donation or a grant have a certain expectation of you. How many women have you saved? But the whole nature of this kind of work with the very poor is quite different from work where we can give facts and figures and talk about numbers. Basically we are talking about woundedness and the process of healing.

If somebody asks us, in Genesis House, 'how many people have you saved or how many people have you got out of prostitution?', the answer is 'we don't know'. We meet a woman at some point in her journey. She is so psychologically and maybe physically and emotionally wounded and bruised, that at that point all she wants is a shower, some food. Then she may say, 'I don't want you straight folks. I don't want any of your straight religious talk,' and off she goes. Great! That is step number one - she knows us, she saw us, and wisely she got scared to death because, 'she ain't used to folks like us'. She goes back to the streets and probably back to jail. Months later she comes again. She may stay a day and then off she goes again. It may take up to two, three, four years checking out 'them foreigners', 'them weird people', 'missionaries'. They have to be able to do that.

I said to one woman: 'Look, love, it's your life, OK? I'm not dying, - it's your life. You want to gad about? The door is open. This is not a prison, just remember that. You don't need no prison, right? You just sit here. You want to get out? Bye-bye! - off you go'. Then she knows she is safe. We are not going to come down on her with rules about this or that or what you must do! We have to learn street

ways. We have to know that these people are frightened, like animals in a corner. They need calling forth, very gradually. They need loving, nurturing. When they are ready, (it may be three years!) they may say,

'I am sick of the streets, you know. I would like to do something else'.

'You are sure you want to do something else?'

'Yes, I don't want to sell my body any more, right'.

'We have some rules'.

'OK! Tell me your rules.'

'OK! these are the rules. You go to a programme. You go for interviews for jobs. You go back to school. You do chores. You stay here for whatever length of time is necessary.'

'Sure.'

Provide a framework. Only when they are ready can we give them a certain framework, a support. This is very important, - a support like Alcoholics Anonymous. Ninety percent of our women are alcoholics and, or, drug addicts. You cannot heal prostitution without healing alcoholism and drug addiction. So you have to have three programmes running simultaneously.

"Prostitutes Anonymous". We have started

"Prostitutes Anonymous". The women must share their stories, else they stay inside and one day they'll get out a knife. You have to bring out all the anger. So you have to be a psychologist, a counsellor, a social worker, a minister to understand all these different kinds of process. It is a long journey.

Part of the healing ministry is getting the women to stand up and to say. 'My name's Mary and I was a prostitute. Like AA, I'm an alcoholic.' The women must learn to tell their stories, - also to the public, so that you can heal the gap between the public and the prostitutes, so that the women in prostitution can con-

front the straight society which is so distant from them and say, 'Do you hear me? Do you understand what happened to me? Do you understand?' And you see the audience and hear them say, 'O God, Yes!'. They are so empowered by hearing the story from the women themselves.

I can speak as a minister. I am working with prostitutes. I can tell their stories fairly well, but let them tell their own stories and that is empowerment for the women and it is challenge for the community. That is part of our programme.

#### BURN-OUT

You asked also about 'burn-out' because this ministry is so slow and because maybe we do not have a lot of success stories. There are 435 women who have left prostitution in six years. That's not bad. Maybe it's not enough, but one of the things we do see happening and that we fight for is changing the system in the courts.

The legal system. We are now in four Chicago court rooms every day. We go to what is called the 'Bull-pen' where they lock up the women. The night before, they have picked up the women from the streets and put them in the cage. We come and say, 'OK girls. We are Genesis House. This is our address and telephone number. If you need help, if you want to quit, phone us up'. When they are brought before the judge, we stand as advocates with them. We say 'we will support this woman if, instead of being sent to jail, she wishes to come to us.'

Genesis House now has desks also in two Chicago court rooms. Imagine! Ministers with a desk in a court room, where normally you have the judge and the sheriff with his guns! It is making a difference and it is happening in other cities too. We

are changing the way women are dealt with in the courts where being sent to jail is normally the only way out. There is now an alternative. Seeing that and seeing the judges coming to Genesis House keeps one going.

Burn-out comes from the constant stream of casualties, from knowing that approximately fifty percent of the women I have worked with in the last six years are dead. You get close to them; they are young; and they are killed or murdered, or die of Aids, or they commit suicide, or they take an overdose. That is hard. Last week I buried one. Three months ago I buried another. You have to be very careful for your own sanity.

#### COMMUNITY

*We work with the physically weak. We do not have experience of working with your people. I feel frustration, suffering, about the place and role of the religious community. Yet if the person is on her own, without the support of a religious community she/he simply cannot go on dealing with such persons day after day.*

Yes, I use "we." I do have a community of eight working now in Genesis House. They are not a religious community. They are lay people who are working in the programme for women, and we have our own support group. Once a week we meet as a community/staff to say how we are doing, how we are managing etc., I am only part of that team, but I am on the cutting edge of it. At this point I am still considered the leader of the Genesis House ministry and so the 'buck ends with me.' If we are going to survive, I have to be the one in the community to move forward.

The women treat me as a grandma, so they tend to come to me a lot with their troubles and their pains, but I

am not alone. I started alone. I had to. There was no-one else, but I could not do it now without the community. Then I have the wider 'net' community, the VMM, and they are not involved at all in Genesis House. They are my support and this is very important.

If you are thinking of doing this kind of work you may begin alone, but eventually you must have a support community behind you. As you stand in pain there, others come and walk with you and you look and say, 'Yes, we are more than one.'

### CHILDREN

*What can you do for children of women in prostitution?*

Most of our women have children. We only have four beds so we have to separate the mothers from the children because we can hardly manage with the adults let alone the children. The children have to go to foster mothers or into adoption, or to aunts, or grandmas - we cannot take women with their children. One of our biggest pains is taking the mother from her child when she wants to straighten out her life especially when she says, 'I want to stop being abused - but if I stop being abused, I lose my children'. We have a legal programme by which we try to get the children back after two years. We can assure the judge, about the mother's efforts. We work with the courts also for visiting rights for the mother. The children visit our house on Sunday or the mother is able to visit her children. It is very difficult, but we try.

**Employment.** We employ our women after they have graduated. Fifty percent of our staff are ex-prostitutes. We have a graduation ceremony and presentation of certificates. We think it is very important that these women who have never celebrated anything - no birthdays -

no Christmas - nothing - have this as their first celebration. It is a joy to see them, maybe in their mid-twenties celebrating the conclusion of their Genesis House programme. There is a Certificate of Honour graduation for a three year course in personal development from Genesis House. They are so excited! We need to create these new things for women. If they have a skill that we need we employ them in the programme.

Three of our Board of Directors are also ex-prostitutes, - only three, because it is difficult to get them to that degree of responsibility. Eventually what we want is that the women will run the ministry themselves.

### LONG TERM 'DROP-OUTS'

*How do you work with women who have been many years in prostitution?*

There are difficulties. We deal with a woman as an adult, not necessarily intellectually or professionally, but when a long-time prostitute comes to our house she is a grown-up woman. There is a long history of church people treating victims or the poor in a manner that is condescending or patronising, and it is very difficult to get away from that. I have to talk to the women as my sisters. They recognise that, they appreciate that.

**Empowering.** We have to empower them to stand on their own feet. It is a whole different approach. Instead of starting with, 'I'm coming to help you, to do this for you', we start at the bottom line with, 'If you want to do anything, you have got to do it yourself. All we will do is open the door and say, 'If you want to go through the door, we have opened it for you'. She has to walk through to make the journey, to do the healing. We facilitate the

healing. We offer the resources. I think traditional ministry in this area made the women feel we wanted to change them with well meaning and sincere prayers.

Our policy is that we can change nobody. Only they can change themselves. They will only do that when they feel good enough about themselves to say,

'I'm OK. I'm going to do OK'.

'What do you want to do now?'

'I want to go to school.'

We don't say, 'we think you should go to school', or 'we think you should start a programme'. We wait until they are in a situation to tell us what they are looking for. It's a growth from the grassroots up. We see the women grow from that kind of approach; it takes a lot longer, but it's deeper.

#### LAY MISSIONARIES AND RELIGIOUS MISSIONARIES

*What do you think of the relations between lay missionaries and religious missionary societies?*

The image of the lay missionary is changing specially in recent years. It has improved a good deal since I was in Africa. There is a lot more cooperation between lay missionaries and the religious societies now than when I started. This is the fruit of experience. More and more societies have had VMM missionaries working with them and have got used to the idea. They have read more about laity in mission and are more open to them.

It is also significant that religious societies particularly in the United States, have shared their resources to empower the VMM to grow. This is an incredible breaking open of what once separated us. Individual religious societies are there when we send out a cry for help, and that

has done an incredible amount to heal the gap. Across the board I would not say that relations with religious missionary societies are terrific! - but amongst them there are prophetic communities which have deeply touched lay missionaries and have opened us out to what your needs and problems are.

I find for example, here in the United States that the Xaverian Missionaries are generous. We use their facilities for our programmes. Lay people coming in see the house and ask, 'Is this yours?'. We say, 'No, it belongs to missionary societies, but we collaborate'. Collaboration is very, very important in sharing our training resources. The VMM has a very good intensive mission orientation programme developed over twenty four years. Sisters and priests are now coming to it and that's great. Sometimes they are as many as the lay people. We have always wanted that. It took a long time before it came about but now it is happening and I hope it continues.

Open your doors to laity. Do not be afraid. We won't steal your vocations. On the contrary, many of our people join the religious communities. We need to witness to the Christian community that missionaries will not separate or build barriers but will collaborate.

#### LAY MISSIONARIES AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

*Are there factors that really work out well in your relationships with the institutional church and specifically with the hierarchy? Do you find understanding?*

The institutional church is quite different from the missionary societies. It is much more entrenched, much more difficult to get through to. I think it feels more threatened in a diocese, because

many people come up with different ideas. There are different communities, different programmes, different projects, (VMM is one of them!), and the head of the diocese gets pulled right, left and centre! The 'competition', if you like to call it that, to attract the attention of the institution is much bigger than within the missionary circles.

I really no longer look to the institution for new life or for assistance because I do not think these qualities are there. They are not greatly interested in lay ministries or in marginal ministries. Representing VMM we get passed from one person to another, from one Monsignor to another Monsignor to another, and we end up saying 'keep it!' The good news is present on the edges. Chicago has a good man at the centre and he has given support to Genesis House, but when we began instruction in "safe sex" for the women in prostitution the help was withdrawn because he represented the institution. I understand that the institution is restricted in this way, in its ability to experiment or to be flexible. The missionary societies are not.

#### MINISTRY TO MEN

*Is there any approach to men who are suffering, for example in situations of war, or present day sick society...*

If you mean the consumerist society - the cause of prostitution is not limited to today's society or to consumerism. The cause of prostitution goes right back to our stereotyped image of male and female where the woman is a sexual object. It goes right back as far as 'Eve' who seduced with the apple. Women

have never been forgiven for Eve. In our society men must be seen as strong, able to take a prostitute. This is seen as a good and 'manly' thing because the attitude is that what makes a man is his sex and virility. Women are down there; we are used to sell cars, to sell cigarettes, to sell clothes. As long as the stereotyped sexual roles of male/female are perpetuated then prostitution will continue.

As long as man's role is somehow seen to be above women, prostitution will be an inevitable result. At the root of prostitution there is an incredible anger which leads to incest, rape, and violence to women. It is a long history. We need to heal relationships between male and female.

The Church has to start by changing its own attitude towards women within the Church. If the Church thinks this is irrelevant and that it has nothing to do with social problems it is mistaken. The hierarchical exclusion of women, the attitude which regards them as not quite good enough to be in certain positions, has a lot to do with the social problems. It means that women are still 'down there'; that they are at the receiving end of the exercise of power, - and that is part of prostitution.

We cannot separate attitudes and activities within the church and the way it deals with women, from the overall oppression, of which prostitution is one consequence. The church has to make its house a just house, a house that is a symbol of right order, a witness to the world that it will not treat women like second-class citizens. But now it gets uncomfortable, because now we are talking about ourselves.

## PERSONNEL OF THE 1991 SEDOS SEMINAR

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### BY SPECIAL INVITATION

Helene O'Sullivan, MM (former Associate Director)

### FACILITATOR

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