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#### COMING EVENTS IN SEDOS 258

## IN THIS ISSUE

The two papers presented at the SEDOS Seminar on HEALTH IN A SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS contain a wealth of practical advice by two Sisters who have had many years experience of primary and rural health care programmes in Africa, one in Ghana, the other in Zaire. "Never do anything yourself if you can teach someone else to do it for you" was one piece of advice which caused much comment. Read about this. We recommend both papers to our readers specially those connected in any way with medical ministry, including pastoral workers and formation personnel.

A special study group of SVD missionaries drawn from all continents made a comprehensive study of secularization, dialogue and inculturation, culminating in a ten day consultation in Rome.

They see the world in mission today through the twin lenses of inculturation and dialogue, - lenses that have been a long time in the grinding. That world is indeed something new and important where they encounter the phenomenon of secularization. They present their reflections not as a final work but as the beginning of an ongoing conversation. Their findings are important not just for the members of their own missionary society but for us all. We are grateful for their permission to share their findings with our reader.

The U.S. Bishops pastoral, HERITAGE AND HOPE, on the fifth centenary of evangelization in America was approved by the Bishops at their last November meeting. James Hug. S.J. of the CENTER FOR CONCERN in Washington finds much to praise in the pastoral letter but finds also a tragic flaw. His critique

of HERITAGE AND HOPE is intended to alert the Catholic community to certain fundamental questions about evangelization in America in 1992.

Preparations for the Synod of Bishops Meeting for Africa are taking shape by degrees. There is clear

evidence that some dioceses are making serious efforts to involve the people directly and to work through basic communities where these have emerged. The CATHOLIC HIGHER INSTITUTES OF AFRICA met twice to contribute to the preparatory process. The report of their third meeting is here.

There are Mission Moments, News and Notices.

## NEWS

### WELCOME!

We are happy to report the arrival of a new Assistant Executive Director at SEDOS. She is MAUREEN O'BRIEN of the Sisters of NOTRE DAME de NAMUR. Sister Maureen worked for sixteen years in Japan, during which time she spent a two year period in the Philippines. On her return to the U.S. she held a leadership position in the Connecticut province of her Congregation. For the past five years she has been Vicar for Religious in the Diocese of Syracuse, New York. She brings to her new post a rich experience in different ministries. We are happy that the long search for an Assistant Director has been successfully concluded. Welcome Maureen! We hope you will be very happy at SEDOS.

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**SECOND SEDOS SEMINAR  
ON  
HEALTH IN A SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS:**

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**1. PRIMARY HEALTH CARE**

Rose Sumah, OLA

*(Sister Rose Sumah from Ghana, is a member of the General Council of the Congregation, Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles. She is a nurse, midwife and Nursing Service Administrator with a Masters Degree in Public Health from the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, affiliated to Prince Leopold University, Antwerp. Sister Rose worked 8 years for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana having responsibility as Supervisor of the Church's Primary Health Care Programmes throughout the country. In this capacity she worked with the Ministry of Health and with other Churches).*

I would like to approach this topic by raising certain issues and concerns of justice and health at the grassroots level. I will deal with health for wholeness as it embraces physical, spiritual and psychological elements - meeting persons in their wholeness.

In the midst of plenty, the majority of people in the world today live in profound poverty due to the concentration of power among a few who own and control needed goods. These poor people have limited access to essential resources and thus they also have the lion's share of sickness and related misfortunes. Most vulnerable among them are children under the age of 5 years, women, and the aged.

**Justice Issues**

The primary cause of disease in the developing world is poverty and poverty in many ways is the result of oppression, exploitation and war. Poor nations are victims of inappropriate technology. They are being used as dumping grounds for

expired drugs, toxic wastes and other harmful substances. The Prophets constantly cried out against this oppression and exploitation of the poor. Jesus beginning his ministry, quoted the prophesy of Isaiah - he was sent to free the oppressed, give sight to the blind and bring good news for the poor. (cf. Is.61:1-2)

Health, healing and wholeness is linked to the socio-economic, cultural, spiritual and political realities of society. The political and economic policies of rich countries disrupt the lives of people elsewhere, notably people of the poor and developing nations. Poor countries continue to borrow money at high interest rates from rich countries and are then obliged to allow the destruction of their environment to pay off debts. Economic products of the developing countries are controlled on the world market by rich countries.

An example of this is that poor nations become the easy victims for medicines declared harmful or outdated in the country of origin. These are shipped to developing

nations where governments do not have the will or resources to monitor them.

When I visited Kenya in 1981 I found that many of the family planning clinics give women injections of Depo Provera, a drug which is not allowed to be sold on the American market. Just a few years ago we received the pain-relieving drug Tylenol, a drug which in its capsule form was withdrawn from the American market because some of the capsules were found to be criminally tampered with. Those of us who knew the history of these capsules were afraid to use them but we had nothing else to use in their place. I could continue, but these few examples should be sufficient to make my message clear.

#### Hope of the Future

In 1978 a world conference on health was held in Alma Atta (U.S.S.R.) to determine new strategies for achieving health for all by the year 2000. Since then heads of state and Church organizations have been searching for an affordable health strategy which will benefit the majority of the population.

It would seem that the state of health of the developing countries has improved since the end of the second world war, yet in most of these countries only about 30% of the population has access to health care comparable to the West. Health facilities are found in urban centers but the rural population still depends on traditional health facilities and will continue depending on these facilities until well after the year 2000. We still have a long way to go!

At present, according to the *State of the World: 1991*, African life expectancy in the low and middle income groups is 47 years, by far the lowest of any region in the

world. Many children die before the age of 5 years. Death is caused by malnutrition, infectious diseases, diarrhoea, dehydration, malaria, measles and respiratory infections.

#### Strategy for Health for All

At the beginning of this "Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000," the Epidemiology Division of the Ministry of Health for Ghana did a study on the benefits expected to result from the application of Priority Health Improvement procedures to reduce disease, disability and death and the numbers of healthy days of life lost. Twelve priority diseases were identified from epidemiological reports and a very comprehensive strategy was developed not without logistical constraints.

The strategy adopted was that the procedures were "to be accessible and affordable." To be accessible meant an increase in the infrastructure, in health personnel and in logistic supplies. Health facilities were to be within a 5 km radius of a cluster of villages. These were to serve as reference points and every village community (or group of villages within easy reach) should have a community health worker who would take care of both preventive and curative aspects of health.

This health worker would be helped or supported by nutrition and agricultural extension workers, water and sewage extension workers and trained ministry of health workers and educators.

Communities were to be responsible for their own health-care and therefore must buy their needed medicines and pay their health workers. This community-based approach, stressing self-funding, preventive medicine and health care and the use of para-professionals, throws down a special challenge to Africa and to the developing world.

## Assessment of the Strategy

We are not far from the year 2000 and it is hard to say how much has been achieved, but from my limited experience, this envisaged, rapid expansion seems to be overwhelmed by the thinly spread existing resources.

In many countries the programme depends greatly on external financial and material inputs. In many of our developing countries health, not being a productive but a consumer ministry, comes very low in the budget allocations. Again, more than half of these allocations go into manpower services. As a consequence services have generally deteriorated.

## Traditional Healers

Community health work does not impede the provision of institutional health care. They are interdependent and complementary and it will take the two sectors to achieve the goal of health for all or at least for the majority of the population in our developing countries.

In Africa the population depended on traditional healers before the advent of Western medicine. The majority of the population will continue to depend on the traditional health sector for generations to come, especially in the rural areas. Incorporation of these traditional practitioners into our efforts at health and wholeness is absolutely necessary

Primary health care to my thinking cannot do without the help of traditional healers. These consist of herbalists, magico-religious healers and traditional birth attendants. For one thing they are to be found in every village, especially the herbalists and the traditional birth attendants and in many places one finds even bonesetters.

They have a system of remunera-

tion which is already acceptable to the community. They are respected in the community and form part and parcel of the social life of the community. They have an advantage over the community/village health workers who are often young adults, picked in principle by the community and trained by ministry of health staff. But these community health workers are often dissatisfied with their remuneration and look on their training as a stepping-stone to self-advancement.

In many of our developing countries, at least in Ghana, traditional healers are now given recognition and are therefore being trained and initiated into the Primary Health Care Programme. They are being trained in hygiene and in the manner of their administration of medicinal herbs. Traditional birth attendants are also being trained to be more effective in pre, intra and post natal care of the expectant mothers.

The obvious confidence of the people in traditional medicine must lead us to ask ourselves many questions about our health services. This leads me to the next point - spiritual and psychological wholeness.

## Spiritual and Psychological Wholeness

Normally the traditional healer's approach to medicine attends to persons in their wholeness, that is in their physical, spiritual and psychological wholeness. We Christians, and in particular we religious who are involved in the healing ministry, must also be concerned for the wholeness of the person. Too often patients discharge themselves from hospitals, both government and non-government, in order to consult traditional healers. This must pose questions for us: "Do these persons feel that they need spiritual and psychological healing while all they get from our hospitals is physical healing which does not resolve their problem?"

Religious bodies, whether involved in the healing ministry or not surely have a role to play. I know from my work with the Catholic Health Service in Ghana the difficulties we have finding chaplains for our hospitals. Yet they would form an indispensable part of our health work. Certainly we need ordained ministers for the sacraments but alongside these we need pastoral workers "Wholeness Ministers" who will give time to the sick, listen to them, encourage them, and generally be a moral support to them.

This ministry can only enhance the overall success of scientific medical practice. We have something to learn also from the independent churches many of which have the charism of spiritual healing. We are sometimes astounded when a well-educated person, having a health problem, does not seek the aid of scientific medicine but instead goes to a center for spiritual healing perhaps in an independent church and/or to the traditional healer.

As Christians and religious we must learn from Our Lord Himself, the Divine Healer, who took persons in their wholeness as we find in so many instances of His healing ministry in the Scriptures: (Lk. 5:18-25 - the cure of paralytic; Lk. 7:1-10 - the centurion's servant; Jn. 5:5-9 - the pool of Bethsaida; Jn. 9 - the man born blind; etc. etc...

## Conclusion

As church personnel, I recommend to you this quotation from the letter of St. James: "If any one of you is in trouble, he should pray; if anyone is feeling happy, he should sing a psalm; If one of you is ill, he should send for the elders of the Church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again. (cf. Js. 5:13-15).

And a quotation from *Dolentium Hominum* - No. 3 pg. 15: Illness is a sign, revealing a break produced between the creature and the creator, the sign that we are living in conditions that do not correspond to God's original plan. The return to that plan demands a struggle against disease and its causes, the overcoming of disorder and pain. For such a struggle, our action is both required and fitting, but it is Jesus who comes to supply the salvation with His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection.

Religious involved in a health service bring to it a total dedication and thus help the sick to appreciate and retain their dignity. While religious must continue to look to the needs of the poor and take the risk of finding ways and means of responding to those needs, they must not lose sight of the spiritual and psychological needs of the sick.

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SECOND SEDOS SEMINAR  
ON  
HEALTH IN A SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS:

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2. SOME ELEMENTS OF  
HEALTH MINISTRY  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Emily Mullen, SND

*(Sister Emily Mullen from the USA, is a member of the General Government Team of the Sisters of Notre Dame. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Trinity College, Washington, 1969. She was head of secondary schools in Zaire from 1969-76. She gained a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing at the Catholic University of America, 1978 and a Master's of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, 1979. On her return to Zaire she was responsible for a Rural Health Centre, Supervisor in a Rural Health District and later Administrator of the Rural Health District).*

I would like to begin this sharing by putting my story into context. First of all, although I am a nurse, and have spent most of my "ministry" years in Africa, I belong to an order which has traditionally had education as its primary focus and which has the great majority of its members in Europe and the U.S. Those of you who belong to orders which have had "health and healing" and/or missionary work as a primary focus have behind you the learning experiences of many women and may find what I have to say very obvious. I hope my sharing will be helpful to those of you who do not have a health service background, but who are in leadership positions which bring you into contact with sisters who are in the health profession and who are working alone or in small groups in developing countries.

My own experience has been in Zaire where I worked for 7 years in formal education, and then, after returning to the States for training,

spent 11 years in primary health care in rural areas. Since I left Zaire in October 1990, I have had the opportunity to visit other African countries and realize that each country has its own health structure, with individual resources and unique problems. There are, however, common elements which need to be dealt with in any developing country.

#### 1. PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

What kind of professional background is most helpful? From my own experience I would suggest basic nursing followed by a year's specialization in public health.

When I first began my own discernment about changing careers, an American Medical Mission sister advised me not to study medicine. She felt that expatriate physicians are often perceived as a threat by local doctors. In Zaire, her perception was certainly borne out as I

watched numerous foreign doctors forced to leave the country. Qualified nurses, however, seem to be able to work creatively within the system as their lower status does not pose such a threat.

In addition to basic nurse's training, I would highly recommend six months to one year in a public health course which deals with the organization of health services in developing countries. I did a one-year Master's course at Johns Hopkins University which I found to be excellent. Other good one-year courses available in the U.S. are those given at Tulane, Harvard and Hawaii. There are also three to six month courses available in London, Liverpool, Antwerp and Amsterdam. Most of these courses include basic epidemiology, administration and planning, and tropical medicine. I was also able to take courses in nutrition and curriculum development which I found helpful.

I stress the importance of public health because so much of "first world" nursing is based on the individual, whereas we are today being called to a community approach. Where resources are scarce and needs can be overwhelming, we must be able to consider the population as a whole and to identify high-risk groups within it.

Other specific areas of study which might be useful are midwifery and basic lab techniques. I was able to take the master's level courses in obstetric nursing which were available in the school where I did my basic training. I only did the "theory" in the U.S., however, and saved the "practical" side for Mama Yemo Hospital in Kinshasa where 120 children were born every day. One month there gave me much more "hands on" experience than I would have gotten in years in the States, and conditions were similar to those I would face later. Knowledge of basic laboratory techniques are also impor-

tant, but can more easily be picked up in the country where one is going to serve.

## 2. COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

### External Collaboration

Most developing countries today have national health schemes in which, at least in theory, primary health services are organized at the district level. The health district most often is made up of a district hospital, a network of health centers, and a variety of village (or community) based structures, including the village health worker, the traditional birth attendant, the village health committee, the village development committee, and the village health post.

In Zaire, at least, one may find in the same district institutions which belong to the state, to religious groups, to the local population, or to private industry. (For example, the health district in which I worked most recently had a state hospital, two catholic health centers belonging to two different congregations, five Protestant health centers, four state centers and nine centers built by local community groups). In order to provide integrated health services in such a system, collaboration between all of the participants is essential.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to work with expatriate and indigenous doctors at the district, state and national levels and have been disconcerted by their perception of how difficult it is to get "the good sisters" integrated into the district health schemes. I realized that this perception is one-sided and that there are many examples of very diverse groups working together. I have also known, however, instances where fear, mistrust, and a misplaced sense of perfectionism have isolated

Catholic centers from the rest of the system, with unfortunate effects both for the center and the district.

If a congregation is being asked to take up some work in the health field, to staff a hospital or a health center, it seems to me that an important part of the discernment process is to see how this work or institution fits into the whole. This is particularly important if the invitation comes from a local bishop or parish priest who may not have an understanding of the national health policy.

### Internal Collaboration

One of the most important precepts I learned at the School of Public Health was; "Never do anything yourself if you can teach someone else to do it for you." This may seem like a rather lazy axiom at first, but it is based on the presupposition that the highly trained individual, in order to have time to use complex skills needed for organization, planning and training, must enable less trained persons to take on simpler tasks. This implies a willingness to teach, delegate and let go.

Whenever I visit a health center and see a frazzled and overworked sister in charge, I look to see what she is doing that someone else could be taught to do. I am also amazed at the resistance this idea meets...there are so many reasons why she must do it herself. Yet in the end, this kind of do-it-yourself perfectionism is not only inefficient, it is unhealthy.

### 3. BURNOUT

Speaking about the unhealthy practices of health professionals brings me to the question of burnout. I am sure you are all familiar with the phenomenon of burnout which occurs in any type of ministry. It is a very real danger

for individuals working daily in stressful situations, especially where one is called upon to make life-and-death decisions.

I began my nursing career as head of a large health center (really a small hospital with no doctor). Our district hospital was 80 km away over bad roads. The district medical officer came out for supervision once every 6 weeks. The area was recovering from a bad drought and severe malnutrition was very common; 10 to 15 children were dying at the center every week. I was filled with anger and frustration. I could not pray. It was hard for me to share what I was experiencing as I was the only nurse in the community, and the only American. I eventually got hepatitis which gave me "permission" to get out of a situation before I burned out beyond repair. It was not the healthiest way of coping, but for me it was effective. It gave me space to get things in perspective, to face the question of suffering and to look at healthy ways of dealing with grieving.

I share my experience because although burnout can touch anyone, I think the nurse in a non-nursing community sometimes feels the isolation of the veteran coming home from war, unable to share feelings of horror and revulsion. I would suggest that where possible, opportunities be provided for health professionals to get together for prayer and sharing. Just as persons living amid violence need "green spaces" in their lives to maintain balance, so the health professional living daily with the violence of the death of children needs "green spaces" in his or her life to maintain equilibrium.

### 4. HEALTH AND WHOLENESS IN THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Working with the Bakongo in Western Zaire gave me a whole new

understanding of the nature of health and illness. I once read a book on traditional medicine in which the author grouped together *illnesses* treated in a similar fashion. One group of illnesses included problems as disparate as *headache, mother-in-law trouble* and *unemployment*. According to the Bakongo tradition, illness was seen as a lack of harmony in the family or the community which became manifest in an individual. Except for the most simple cases, one could not treat a *sick* person without dealing with the *sick* family or community.

The malnourished children I spoke of were part of a community in which the majority of individuals were in a state of borderline malnutrition. It did not take much to tip the balance and make the latent malnutrition in the community manifest itself in its weakest members. Although we could and did care for the symptomatic members of the community, no long-term change could occur until the nutritional state of the entire group was improved. This involved, among other things, beginning an agricultural project teaching new, more efficient methods of farming, bringing in drought-resistant strains of cassava and introducing soya.

Health is not *whole* until it reaches beyond the individual to the environment and the community which form a living, vital entity. I say this so that when you look at existing health structures in which your sisters work, or if you are called to look at possible new insertions, you consider how and to what extent the structure is related to the community and the environment in which it is situated.

## 5. THE JUSTICE ISSUES

Bryan Hehir, at the annual SEDOS seminar earlier this month, talked about the prophetic call to *compassionate care* and *effective*

*presence*. As health professionals the "*compassionate care*" comes easily, but the *effective presence* is not always quite as clear. It implies working with the community to identify the root causes of the problem and to deal with them in an appropriate way.

Zaire is a country with immense mineral wealth and reasonably fertile land. It is also an extremely corrupt dictatorship in which the wealth of the country is systematically skimmed off by those in power, in part to pay off the national debt, but even more so for their own personal benefit.

The community with whom I was working, and whose children were dying from malnutrition, were farmers. For generations they grew what they needed to feed themselves and traded the surplus in barter for non-farm goods. With the introduction of a money system, of schools, of health centers, of radios, of all sorts of *needs* which could only be bought with money, people began to sell their crops in order to obtain cash; cash to clothe themselves, to educate their children, to obtain medical treatment. In order to placate the growing urban population in the capital city, food prices needed to be kept low. The farmers had to sell more and more of their crops for cash, and less and less was left to feed the family. Families were faced with the choice between education for the older children and the survival of the younger ones.

In discussions with the community, the issues were clarified and the consequences of choices were made clear. Any yet why should a family be faced with the choice between education and survival? In the political situation in which we lived and worked options were limited. And yet, just as it was our role there to help the community to come to an awareness of the consequences of choices made, so it is also the role

of the health professional to help make the global community aware of the implications of its choices.

As persons responsible for congregations with health professionals in developing countries, we need to help our members probe the root

causes of the health problems with which they are dealing and to communicate their lived experience with other members of the congregation. This is a good example of a situation in which our transnational congregations can act as links bringing together two worlds.



"Sometimes I'd like to ask God why S/he allows poverty, famine and injustice, why doesn't S/he do something?"

"What's stopping you?"

"I'm afraid God will ask me the same thing!"

*Courtesy SND*

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## SECULARIZATION, INCULTURATION AND DIALOGUE IN TODAY'S WORLD

### REFLECTIONS ON MISSION TOWARDS THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM AND BEYOND

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*(The recent SVD General Chapter mandated that a comprehensive study of inculturation and dialogue be made, along with a further study of the role of the Society in a secularized world.*

*From April 29 to May 8, 1991, a group of SVD confreres from all over the world met outside Rome, to consider the topic of secularization, inculturation and dialogue in today's world. What follows is the concluding statement from this important consultation.)*

#### INTRODUCTION

As we reflected on these three issues, the insight emerged that inculturation and dialogue were ways of living out our religious and missionary vocation, not only within the contexts of traditional cultures and religions, but also within the context of the developing world culture which is the product of the secularization process.

If the twin lenses of inculturation and dialogue have been a long time in the grinding, the perspective they present when used together at this moment in history is indeed something new and important. Just what this might mean in terms of concrete mission work is too early to tell. For now, it is only important that we have a look, eyes open wide, and communicate to each other what it is we see.

Mission work is a collaboration with a world in the making - God's world in the making.

While many forces in the world today, whether economic, political or

technological, are conspiring to shape the world according to their limited visions, the world that God is making is one that is richer and more awe-inspiring than any economic progress, political order or technological advance.

While Christianity is perceived by many as irrelevant to or even destructive of venerable traditions and cultures, Christians are becoming more and more convinced of the imperative to express their experience of Jesus in relevant cultural forms.

While religions refuse to tolerate one another and compete against one another, all over the world women and men are coming together in respectful dialogue.

As the Christian mission faces the turn of this century - indeed of the millennium - it must rededicate itself to cooperate with God in the making of this world.

As an international missionary congregation, our Society shares in these struggles of our contemporary world in a special way. For all the

differences that distinguish its work in various countries, both its members and its basic structures are caught up in the empowering and crippling forces and struggles which shape the world at large.

We share with reflective people everywhere the desire to understand and harness the spirit of our age. At the same time however we find ourselves being carried along by forces of circumstance that often betray our nobler aims.

In attempting to formulate a vision for our Society as the world moves into the coming century and new millennium, we need to emulate the courage of those who shaped its original and abiding vision.

Only by a double fidelity to the deepest values of today's world and the deepest values of our Society's

tradition, can we hope to continue to share - in a new century and new millennium - in Christ's work of awakening the human community to God's presence within it.

In an effort to see ourselves more clearly and to renew our sense of mission, two concepts recommend themselves. Both theological thought and church teaching have repeatedly emphasized them in recent times: the concepts of inculturation and dialogue.

*Inculturation* and *dialogue* are not meant merely as new themes or strategies for theological reflection or missionary activity. Rather they are foundational concepts, a pair of lenses, as it were, which give focus to our present missionary commitments and provide clarity for future missionary enterprises in an increasingly secularized world.

## SECULARIZATION

### THE BIRTH OF A WORLD CULTURE

The world, moving into a new century and a new millennium, is the result of a widespread process of cultural change in which men and women have become aware that they are the ones responsible for their world. It is in the context of this new culture, sometimes called modernity, that we encounter the phenomenon of secularization.

By secularization we mean in general, the irreversible process that results from insight into the autonomy of individuals, societies and the earth itself, free of the controlling authority of religious institutions and beliefs. The impulse behind this insight is cultivated not only by a growing body of scientific knowledge concerning the self-contained evolu-

tion of the world of nature, but also by the increasing insight into the independence of social processes from traditional religious establishments.

### A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Even though it is most evident in highly industrialized cultures, secularization is a process involving the world as a whole.

Especially because of the dislocation of traditional values - cultural, tribal and especially religious - that results from the phenomenal growth of the world's cities, this process is one that needs to be reckoned with seriously not only in the cultures of Europe and North America, but also

in those of Asia, Oceania, Africa and Latin America.

Because of this, therefore, the missionary work of the church finds itself in dialogue with cultures which are participants - in varying degrees - in the secularization process. This is the situation within which mission must redefine itself at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

#### A WORLD CULTURE

In order to understand some of the radical shifts in cultures that are taking place today, we need deeper philosophical insight and historical analysis. Only through appreciation of the history of the struggles that the church has had with the secular world through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and through the Enlightenment into our own century, can we gain the proper perspective on the fact that we are entering into an era of "world culture".

Through the miracles of instant communication and scientific achievement, the men and women of the coming millennium will be bound together by common values forged by mass media and increasing economic interdependence.

Only since the Second Vatican Council has our Church regarded the contemporary world with genuine interest and openness; only by fostering that openness can Christians be assured that they carry out their mission in the real world.

#### A POWER TO BE HARNESSSED

The existence of this emerging world culture needs to be acknowledged and the values that it produces need to be embraced critically. This secularized world culture need not necessarily be interpreted as a force at enmity with the Christian

message; its existence can also be interpreted as an invitation to dialogue, as a call to reinterpret and to enrich the praxis and language of our faith.

The question for Christian mission is not, in the first place, how to stem the tide of this newly emerging culture, but how to channel its vital energies towards the service of human values which open up to transcendence.

The secularization of the world needs to be recognized as a new and vital stage in the world that God is making. Some examples:

Rather than bemoaning the fact that certain traditional patterns of Christianity are being changed by the massive migration to the cities, Christians might help the people of the cities benefit from the advantages that city living can provide.

Rather than resisting the inevitable proliferation of media like television and videos, Christian mission might invest in developing ways and means of using the media for the preaching of the Gospel.

Rather than worrying about the dangers of individualism, Christian mission might align itself with emerging liberation movements - the poor, blacks, women - which are founded on the modern concept of the person and a new understanding of the self.

#### THE NEED FOR A PROPHETIC CRITIQUE

Nevertheless, as daily experience shows and as many contemporary thinkers have pointed out, the culture of our contemporary, modern world has not been wholly successful in its humanizing effect.

While humanity has discovered its power over nature, it has also realized that nature is not to be manipulated, but is rather to be treated with care and respect.

While humanity has learned to appreciate the dignity of the individual person, it has also become aware of the selfishness and hedonism in which the stress on the individual can result.

While science has yielded incredible human progress, we have also become conscious of the fact that such progress, achieved at the cost of the oppression of so many, has been mainly for the benefit of the few.

The culture of modernity, therefore, needs to undergo a radical critique, one that upholds the values it has discovered, but one that roundly condemns the evils it propagates. Such a critique is extremely urgent, for without it we will continue to see more and more people falling into an unreflective secularism or retreating into fundamentalism or sectarianism in one or the other form.

#### THE RESPONSE OF A MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Defining the distinctive role of the Society demands that we reflect carefully on our own collaboration with this world culture.

Both our missionary praxis and our religious lifestyle need to reflect the critical respect with which we hold our contemporary world. Unless they can be invigorated to the point that they can once again edify the noblest ideals of our age, we shall not really

have understood that our world, despite its distortions, continues to reflect God's incarnation in Christ, and that the world in Christ is God's world in the making.

It is extremely important to acknowledge that the critical appreciation of world culture necessary for today's missionary praxis and religious life does not come naturally from our present-day lifestyle as missionaries but from the real spiritual values of our times.

However, our Society's originating charism contains resources that can give direction in this regard. Thus, simply translating these concerns into more familiar, traditional terms by no means exhausts the challenge that this fact presents. Rather, in order to appropriate the vision that is called for here, we need to rededicate ourselves to the recovery of the dynamism that once inspired our members to deep and critical inculturation in their own times and contexts.

We need to face our contemporary world, not with an optimism which refuses to face what is evil and dehumanizing in it, but with a hope that confesses God's active, creative and redeeming presence in history despite its flaws. It is with this hope that we affirm that God so loved the world that God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us. It is with this hope that we can say that God - together with a responsible humanity - continues to make the world.

## INCULTURATION AND DIALOGUE

### AT THE CORE OF MISSION TODAY

God's world in the making is marked by great variety and vitality. Such variety and vitality can particularly be seen in all the areas and

activities of human life: economy, society, religion, worldviews, values, prejudices, language, art, poetry, technical achievements, ways of

interacting, and so on. This is what is meant by culture.

It is only by taking culture seriously that the presence of God can be fully perceived. The Christian tradition is no exception. Even a cursory study of the Christian tradition, including its biblical witness, reveals that it too is a product of many cultures.

The Christian tradition and culture influence each other, but they never exhaust each other. For Christian faith to be lived in an authentic way, it needs to be constantly enriched and critiqued by culture. On the other hand, culture is constantly challenged and transformed by the Christian tradition.

#### INCULTURATION

This interaction between the Christian tradition and culture demands from us on the one hand that we respect and appreciate cultural diversity. We have to see, hear, and feel what is going on around us. On the other hand, we have to be alert to how the Christian tradition attempts to interpret and direct individual and social life, and how it becomes a force that animates, orients, and innovates cultural reality. To participate in this process is to participate in inculturation.

When the Christian tradition and culture mutually and critically interact in this way, the experience of God revealed in Jesus Christ becomes an integral part of the life of a particular people and this new expression of God's saving love contributes to a fuller understanding of that love itself. Inculturation therefore is an indispensable process of Christian mission.

Inculturation takes place everywhere and at all times. It implies more than mere external adjustment

of formulas or liturgical rites. Inculturation fuses the experiences of the people into a new functioning synthesis so that they will see, experience, and express the presence of God anew in the context of their own traditions. These traditions are not static but are in a constant process of change.

The Gospel of Christ can only become a dynamic force in these traditions if the whole complex of age-old values and contemporary opportunities and dangers are taken into account.

#### DIALOGUE

The expression of the experience of God in many traditions includes a set of beliefs, rituals, scriptures, cultic practices, feelings, commandments and prescriptions. These elements, in various combinations, are what can be called religion.

All of these, however, are relative, bound to time and place and cannot be isolated from culture. Understanding these religions, learning from them, growing with them, being challenged by them is an essential task of inculturation.

Because of this, when people of different religious traditions meet and search together for the presence of God with the common aim of rediscovering and being transformed by truth, communion, fellowship and fullness of life; when they are aware of the differences among their traditions and yet are committed to their own traditions while being open to one another, we speak of dialogue.

People of all times and cultures are inclined to see themselves, their own group, their own culture as the measure of everything else, as the center of the world. This is the case especially with different religions and unfamiliar religious behaviour. Too often this narrow cultural perspec-

tive views religious differences as irrational, illogical, somewhat inferior.

Dialogue and inculturation take issue with this distorting, unchristian prejudice of ethnocentrism, variously expressed in some forms of colonial mentality and fundamentalism.

If God reveals Godself through creation; if God is manifest in religious traditions and scriptures, and is present through cultural forms; if it is true that people must express this experience themselves and give their own response to it in their own culture, then to misunderstand, to ridicule somebody's religion endangers the religious experience itself. Our task as missionaries is to expand and not to destroy the religious experience God has initiated.

Dialogue recognizes the right to be different. It means accepting the validity of another's religious experience, even when that experience is quite different from one's own. It requires the willingness and ability to communicate honestly one's religious experience to the other. It is the effort to be open to one another, to listen to one another, to share in one another's life.

#### THE MODEL OF DIALOGUE

Does entering into dialogue require us to put our experience of Christ in brackets? Does it mean that we must suspend our faith? Do we enter into a dialogue with the superior attitude of having the answer before we start?

An old hymn quoted in the letter to the Philippians may help us in this regard. Paul writes: "Make your own the mind of Jesus Christ: Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped; But he emptied himself taking the form of a slave...." (Phil 2:6 ff).

If we take Jesus' self-emptying and servanthood seriously, it is not possible to approach the members of another culture or religion from a stance of superiority, much less of dominance. It is because of his self-emptying and self-surrender that Jesus is the model of dialogue.

#### DIALOGUE AND INCULTURATION ARE INTERWOVEN

In the encounters of people of different religions, churches and religious movements, we abandon the illusion that our own tradition exhausts the revelation of God's self intended for all peoples.

Furthermore, such encounters make us aware that revelation is not limited to the past but continues in people's lives and in human history.

Even further, it is often in and through dialogue that we come to see how authentic religious experience can be enriched by assimilating a variety of cultural elements from other cultures and traditions.

This is not an easy process, but the struggle involved enables us to understand life and the Christian tradition better and to overcome in a new way the limitations that every particular tradition inevitably imposes on its adherents. Dialogue and inculturation are interwoven.

If we want to fulfill our missionary task today, we need to realize that engagement in inculturation and dialogue is not the hobby of a few but the very core of mission.

What has emerged from the discussions at Nemi is that the issues of inculturation and dialogue, whether in the context of the emerging world culture or of other cultures and religions, are not things to be studied for their own sake, but should function as lenses through

## CONCLUSION

which every aspect of our missionary task and vowed life can be more clearly and critically examined. Having made a ten-day effort to look through those lenses, a number of questions have been brought into focus.

- \* What does it mean to experience God in a world that truly seems to have "come of age"?
- \* What does it mean to embrace the world critically in the context of the culture(s) in which we work?
- \* How can we refashion the meaning of our vows in the light of what we know about consumer society, the breakdown of traditional community, growing individualism and oppressive authoritarianism?
- \* What does critically embracing the world imply in terms of working for justice and ecological wholeness?
- \* How can we maintain hope in the face of the violence and dehumanization that urbanization brings about?
- \* How can we live our commitment to Christ while fostering dialogue with followers of other religions?
- \* How might commitment to inculturation and dialogue change the shape and goals of our formation

programmes?

- \* How might commitment to these processes change the way we minister in our parishes and traditional apostolates?
- \* How can we reinterpret our spirituality in terms of inculturation and dialogue?
- \* Committing ourselves to inculturation and dialogue, what might be our attitude in the face of the missionary fervor of sects, or militant Islam or Hinduism?
- \* How might commitment to inculturation and dialogue affect our liturgical celebrations, particularly celebrations of profession and ordination?

These reflections are presented not as a final work, not as a learned treatise and from the belief that such a conversation will result not only in a sharper vision of our world and mission, but also in renewed strength and hope.

Ref. SVD Publications.  
Commissions on Secularization  
and Dialogue/Inculturation.  
May, 1991.




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**HERITAGE AND HOPE:  
EVANGELIZATION  
IN AMERICA**

COMMENTS ON THE PASTORAL FOR THE 500TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS

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James Hug, S.J.

*(Rev. James Hug, S.J. is Executive Director of the Center of Concern which is based in Washington, D.C. The Center engages in social analysis, theological reflection, policy advocacy and public education on the issues of peace, justice and ecology.)*

On November 15, the U.S. Catholic bishops approved a pastoral letter, *Heritage and Hope: Evangelization in America*, on the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus. It is the first step in a major pastoral initiative to revitalize evangelization in U.S. Catholicism.

The pastoral has important strengths and weaknesses. It is essential that we clarify and reflect on both so that 1992 be an occasion for radical re-evangelization of our churches and cultures.

#### The Spirit Blows Where it Wills

The greatest strength, and the key to understanding the pastoral's ultimate weakness comes early in the document. After recalling that the Holy Spirit works outside the church as well, planting "seeds of the Word," the next continues:

The faith...finds expression in the particular values, customs, and cultural institutions of those who respond to God's revelation. This means that both the message and the people to whom it is addressed must

be viewed with respect and dignity. The story of the coming of faith to our hemisphere must begin, then, not with the landing of the first missionaries, but centuries before with the history of the Native American peoples.

The next two paragraphs highlight several elements of Native American spiritualities and depict the harshness for the indigenous peoples of their encounter with Europeans. Some of the strongest language in the document, recalls the "introduction" of diseases to which the Native Americans had no immunities, causing death to millions. It acknowledges "cultural oppression" - injustices against the native traditions and the destruction of their civilization. It speaks of "the violent usurpation of Indian lands, and the brutalization of their inhabitants." In its conclusion, the letter calls us to mourn and respond to the just grievances of Native Americans, seeking reconciliation with them through prayer and social action.

The pastoral acknowledges and deplores the terrible injustices done to African Americans, too. It admits

that Bartolome de Las Casas promoted the slave trade as a way of protecting Native Americans. And it emphasizes his repentance and leadership in fighting slavery. It closes with a commitment to redress contemporary injustices against African Americans, admitting that the negative consequences of slavery are still painfully felt.

Capsulizing a key theological insight, the pastoral admits that the colonizers "failed to see in the natives the workings of the same God that they espoused" and therefore missed the challenge to reexamine the European cultural formation of their faith.

#### The Tragic Flaw

Sadly, the bulk of the letter ignores this profound insight and *Heritage and Hope* commits the same "catastrophic" failure.

Keeping its confession of colonial sins brief, the letter insists that there is grace in this history as well, and calls us to celebrate the grace, learn from it and build upon it for a renewed age of evangelization. The remainder of the text does not reflect the incarnational view which urges us to seek with open mind and heart the "seeds of the Word" sown by the Spirit in all cultures. Instead, it celebrates only the "seeds of the Work" brought by the European evangelizers. The evangelizing Work is spoken of as "complementing" and "challenging" the cultures Christians bring it, not as also being incarnate within them to be discovered and embraced. Evangelization becomes an uncritical one-way process.

Affirming the grace as well as the sin in every situation is characteristically Catholic and, generally, completely appropriate. The acknowledgement of sin has a fundamental purpose that we face reality, accept God's forgiveness, and recommit our energies toward furthering God's

Reign. When, however, the confession of sin is superficial it becomes an instrument - wittingly or unwittingly - of denial and cover-up. And it practically guarantees that the sin and its destructive consequences will be repeated by Christians of even the best good will.

In this case, the pastoral treats the sins of colonization as simply an array of human rights abuses committed by evil people and offset by the good works of those who evangelized. The sinfulness of these human rights abuses is without question. But when we contemplate them and uncover their structural causes, we see that the sin of the colonial era includes much more.

It includes the failure to seek and embrace the Word of God embodied in the Native American and African cultures, the failure to be evangelized by them as well as to evangelize them. It involves the idolatrous identification of European cultural expressions of Christianity with the true Gospel. It is summed up in the cultural imperialism that assumed the European faith and way of life were superior and rightfully imposed upon the peoples. These attitudes, actions and omissions were nurturing soil for the massive human rights abuses.

The consequences of the sin have been catastrophic not only for the indigenous peoples whose culture and civilization were destroyed but also for the "victorious" colonizers and evangelizers - and their descendants - who were not liberated from the cultural confines of European Christianity, freed from its imperialistic attitudes and tendencies, nor enriched by the Spirit of God coming to them through the indigenous cultures.

#### Repeating The Sin

By failing to understand the true nature of the sin it denounces, the pastoral unfortunately repeats the

sin. It heralds the "cultural refinements and scientific advancements of Renaissance Europe" brought to the Americas by the Spanish. The very language reflects the cultural superiority that led to the destruction of the indigenous cultures.

While certainly not all bad, these "cultural refinements and scientific advancements of Renaissance Europe" have been the seed beds of what Paul VI has called the "most blatant form of moral underdevelopment," the greed of Western industrial cultures. John Paul II has denounced some of its most prized contemporary developments as "inadmissible superdevelopment." And peoples around the world are accusing it of spawning threats to the ecological survival of the planet.

Many critics of these developments look to indigenous peoples for cultural values, seeds of the Word, that promise redemption from Western maldevelopment. The pastoral fails to reverence these elements of revelation.

When the pastoral reviews the 500 year history for signs of grace, this failure is magnified. It celebrates people who brought "the gift of the Christian faith," again without acknowledging that they imposed European Christianity. It celebrates pioneers who with great dedication and hard work brought education and healthcare to the Americas, without acknowledging that the "gift" of European education and healthcare itself contributed toward the demeaning and destruction of indigenous practices and cultures. Today the Americas are beginning to look for the more wholistic approaches to health and healing that were integral to many indigenous cultures.

#### From Heritage to Hope

Such a shallow grasp of our true heritage generates sadly hollow plans and hopes. When it considers

today's task of evangelization, the pastoral catalogs only evils in U.S. society. When it turns to the signs of hope, they are limited to the institutional Catholic church. There is no recognition of the "seeds of the Work" in contemporary U.S. culture such as solidarity movements with the Third World poor, the women's movement, the liberative potential of communication technologies, the renewed debate over community values and the common good. There is little confession of the church's sinfulness and need for evangelization. It sees the goal of evangelization as the conversion of alienated Catholics and the unchurches, not deeper faith, hope, justice and love in the life and mission of the community through encounters with the Spirit in the signs of our times. Is this not the same as the colonial evangelizers who, "failed to distinguish between what was crucial to the Gospel and what were matters of cultural preference with catastrophic consequences"?

#### The Process

The same mentality is mirrored in the process that produced this pastoral. Its theme, evangelization, was set by Pope John Paul II when he suppressed the plans of Latin American religious communities for 1992 as too critical of the church's colonial role.

Accepting this controversial theme "from above," the U.S. bishops prepared this pastoral in traditional privacy, presenting it as a finished product for the faithful to accept and implement. They avoided the broadly participative drafting process that has emerged as a significant evangelizing contribution of U.S. culture to the church.

The problems in the document stem at least in part from this failure to listen to the Spirit in the people of God. A broadly participative discernment process draws upon the

best resources of the community to assure its teaching authority. Participation in discerning dialogue is itself one of the most effective forms of evangelization. It, rather than the traditional top-down teaching style, should have been the model of evangelization for this new initiative.

### Moving On, Working Together

This critique of Heritage and Hope is intended to alert the Catholic community to the fundamental perspective if 1992 is to occasion truly effective evangelization. The most important issue is not the pastoral but the renewal of our community, our society, and our world in the light of God's Word. Having looked at the principal strengths and weaknesses of the document, how can we build upon it and respond to the Spirit on this anniversary?

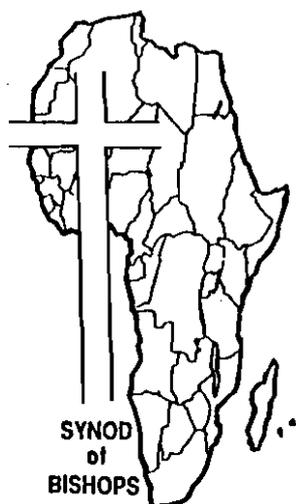
First, the pastoral's denunciations of the injustices done to Native Americans and African Americans and calls for solidarity with them deserve loud and wide proclamation. It will be especially important, as the letter suggests, to bring this critical perspective to the civic ceremonies, held with triumphalistic fanfare during 1991-1992. The church's participation

in those celebrations must not cloak or legitimate the social sin that has scarred our history.

It is also important to look to our history, as the pastoral suggests, for success stories to enlighten and inspire our evangelization efforts today. In reviewing our history, however, we must be critical. We need to rediscover the revelation from God that was missed because of cultural imperialism. Indeed, we need to honor with special attention those women and men who were open to God's revelation in the people they came to evangelize.

Finally, it is important to name the grace we can affirm in U.S. culture. What "seeds of the Word" is the Spirit of God nurturing there for our own evangelization? A community that approaches the 1992 quincentennial minimally critical of itself and one-sidedly negative toward U.S. culture will not see God coming to meet it and will lack credibility among those it hopes to address.

We need to be a community that embraces the Word of God whatever its source, rejoicing in our conversion, a radiant and attractive witness that enhances the dignity and yearning-for-life of all who join us.




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## SYNOD OF BISHOPS FOR AFRICA

JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE THIRD MEETING OF  
THE CATHOLIC HIGHER INSTITUTES OF AFRICA

KINSHASA: 10th - 14th June, 1991

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### INTRODUCTION

At their second meeting in Nairobi, October 3rd - 6th, 1990, sponsored by the Institute of Missiology, MISSIO, Aachen, the five Catholic Higher Institutes of Africa decided each to devote their annual theology week 1991 to studying the issue of the special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Moreover, they proposed to collate the result of their studies at their June 1991 meeting at the *Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa*, and to issue a joint document which would be sent to the relevant bodies in Africa and Rome as their contribution towards the current deliberations on and preparations for the African Synod.

The scheduled meeting of June 1991 saw the participation of three Catholic Higher Institutes of Africa, namely:

The Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Nigeria; Institut Catholique de Yaounde (ICY), Yaounde, Cameroun, and the host Institute: *Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa* (FCK), Kinshasa, Zaire. This current statement, therefore, reflects the position of these three Institutes. It embodies their Affirmations, Reservations, Propositions and Recommendations on the African Synod.

### I. AFFIRMATIONS

Our three Institutes greatly applaud the action of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in convoking the special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. After the Eighth Plenary Assembly of SECAM in Lagos, Nigeria, in July 1987, few African Christians had still dared to hope for such an event of grace in the form of an African Synod or Council. We praise the great work which has been done. The *Lineamenta* published in 1990 to elicit reactions from the general public on the Synod testifies to the magnitude of the work so far accomplished.

We see this time of the Synod as a *Kairos*, a privileged moment which must be effectively used in progressively mobilizing the People of God in Africa to commit themselves all the more to sound evangelization and inculturation of the Gospel message.

We acknowledge that the Synod does have a significant advantage towards effective evangelization by virtue of its continental scope of action. The Church, as the People of God, will for the first time undertake to study together and assess how well it has understood and lived the Gospel message in the African context and what further steps it must need

take to ensure a deeper and more authentic rooting of this message in the hearts of African men and women.

Recognizing this singular importance and its potential for both growth and ultimate enrichment of the Universal Church, we feel bound to raise some reservations concerning the current process of the Synod and to make some propositions and specific recommendations.

## II. RESERVATIONS

A great competence underlies the *Lineamenta* and the people at large have been invited to freely submit their views and comments to the Council for the Synod. This process has as yet not sufficiently involved the people.

Yet for the Gospel to become really at home in Africa, the people must be given, in a mature way, an opportunity to accept full responsibility for its taking root in their personal lives. They must become personally committed to it even unto death. Therefore, they must come to see themselves as its trustees and stewards and accept full responsibility to pass it on to their children even as the early Christians did. In so doing, they need to be challenged by the commitment of African Muslims with respect to Islam and its rapid spread in the continent.

Without such a personal acceptance and life-long commitment to the Gospel message, the Church in Africa today may yet suffer a fate similar to or worse than what it suffered in North Africa during the Muslim invasions. For while the Church in Africa may appear to be growing in terms of new bishoprics, ordinations to the priesthood and professions to the religious life, alarming evidence abounds of a continuous exodus of our Catholics to the Independent

African Churches, New Religious Movements, Islam and the Traditional Religions. We would like to interpret this as a clear sign that the people do not feel fully at home in the Catholic church and that the Catholic Church has not yet succeeded in meeting all the different aspirations of African People.

A heavy concentration and great emphasis on the power and place accorded to the hierarchy is reflected in the current Synod process. Compounded further by enormous communication problems and the complexity of the African situation, a Synod of this importance in the African Church may come and go without reaching the grassroots or making an impact on the lives of the people. On the other hand, taking the people seriously into account will be in line with the traditional African way of life, and style of administration and government.

## III. PROPOSITIONS

During the Synod, the Church in Africa will reflect prayerfully on itself, on its nature and its mission and how far it has borne authentic witness to Jesus Christ. Only in this process will the African Church be true to a vision of the Church as the People of God as reflected in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Without being exhaustive, we'd like to enumerate a number of areas fundamental to the life of the Church which need urgent attention:

(i) The voice of the laity shall be heard not only as *Ecclesia Discens* but above all as full members of the mystical body of Christ.

(ii) The liturgy, being the re-enactment of the Sacred, will be based on Sacred Scriptures, on the patrimony of the Church and on

African traditional values. African Liturgies enriched with African symbols, music and dances, will be introduced.

(iii) The Church as People of God shall be so structured that it becomes very evident that the hierarchy is a charism of service and that lay ministries for both men and women are given their integral and prominent place.

(iv) The Synod shall study African problems from an African perspective e.g., matters relating to church structures, church disciplines, marriages, the place of women in church and society, and African traditional values. The Synod shall work towards the emergence of an African Rite and a code for the African Church.

(v) The Church will need to take serious issue with African worldviews and their multi-faceted impact on the lives and environment of its Christians: inculturated and life-orientated spirituality, the relation between the Catholic faith and politics, the issues of social justice, of religion and the economy; of dialogue and human/Christian rights both within the Church and in Society.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the acknowledged importance of the Synod as a *Kairos* for the Church in the continent, and the equally important need to engage the people fully in the process we recommend:

(i) That the Synod currently in preparation, be seen as a first major step or launching pad, on the continental scale, for an African Council.

(ii) That this Council be prepared over a span of years according to the modalities spelt out at the

Seventh Plenary Assembly of SECAM at Kinshasa in 1984. It should involve individual commitment through the family, basic Christian community, station, parish, diocese, provincial and national levels to climax in a continental event.

(iii) That the task of the current Synod be to determine the time-frames and work out the details for mobilizing the continent towards this historic event of our times.

(iv) Bishops, priests, religious and laity, both men and women, should be invited to participate actively in the current Synod. Membership should also include theologians, representatives from the Catholic Higher Institutes, sociologists, anthropologists and other experts in their various and relevant fields.

These experts will therefore contribute in giving guidelines to solving certain religious and human problems facing Africa, e.g. poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, the challenge of Islam, selfish and exploitative governments, the role of the church in the process of democratization, and last but not the least, the question about the relevance of the Catholic Church in Africa today.

(v) The Synod shall also invite as observers representatives from other Christian Confessions and other World Religions.

#### CONCLUSION

With a firm faith and trust in God who is leading His people in Africa, a new Pentecost will emerge from this Synod, in communion with and for the enrichment of the Universal Church. The consequence will be a most effective proclamation of the Gospel in the third millenium in Africa and elsewhere. This cannot happen effectively without a serious and integral involvement of the

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people in thus making Africa, as Pope Paul VI of happy memory calls her: *Nova Patria Christi*.

Prof. Abbé Buetubela Balembo  
Rector Facultés Catholiques de  
Kinshasa  
KINSHASA, Zaire.

Very Rev. Dr. Peter Akpunonu  
Rector  
Catholic Higher Institute of W. Africa  
PORT HARCOURT, Nigeria

Prof. Abbé Barthélemy Nyom  
Dean of the Faculty of Theology  
Institut Catholique de Yaounde  
YAOUNDE, Kamerun.

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THE memory is a selective function, for nations as well as individuals. Spain's *conquistadores*, Britain's empire-builders, America's pioneers: all are praised for their courage and enterprise—and generally excused any excesses of brutality, racism or damaging incompetence. Western schoolchildren treat Alexander the Great as an ancestral hero—and Genghis Khan, a Mongol counterpart of similar ambition, as an alien villain.

*Courtesy Spectator Aug. 24*



## mission moments

"THEY WENT AWAY WEeping  
...THEY CAME BACK SINGING"...

(BURUNDI)

In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was conquered and razed to the ground. The temple was plundered and a great number of the population was exiled.

In 537 B.C. Cyrus authorized the people of God to return to their fatherland.

Today, the people of God, it is we. This Jerusalem, it is Burundi. It is this Church of God persecuted in the time of Bagaza and its resurrection in the time of Buyoya.

Between 1985 and 1987, many missionaries were obliged to leave. Like the people of Jerusalem, they went away weeping... But their tears shed on Burundi soil have fertilized this country. From those tears have come forth the joy of liberty, the recognition of our God - that God whom Bagaza had fought with all his might - and the joy of welcoming back our missionaries, the joy of reorganizing our apostolate, of beginning anew with a new elan.

Today, we can say that the faithfulness of God has visibly intervened in the situation of our country and of our Church. Praised be His name! So we dare to sing, like the people of Jerusalem: "Then our mouths were filled

with laughter and our lips with song. Even the pagans started talking about the marvels Yahweh had done for us! What marvels he indeed did for us, and how overjoyed we were!"....

...At the end of the Mass, there was a "traffic jam". Each one of us needed four or six arms to be able to shake hands with all those who wanted to greet us. Once more, we heard the crowd say, "Ababikira b'abazungu bagarutse, turahiriwe, murakaza" !!! (The European sisters are back. Welcome!)

The procession followed us to the house, especially at the end of the first Mass. All of a sudden, among a crowd of black heads, we saw somebody whose arms were covered by the children's hands. Each child wanted to hold one of Sister Jackie's fingers. It was a beautiful sight! We saw her talking, laughing... What language did she speak? Perhaps that spoken on Pentecost as described in the Acts of the Apostles? Bravo, Jackie! You can really manage!

The joy of returning is great, but great as well is the joy for someone who arrived in her mission for the first time. Courage, Jackie, you already have a home and a people who loves you from the first day.

Ref. ICM FOCUS  
February, 1991

SHORTAGE OF PRIESTS

(BRAZIL/ENGLAND)

There are lots of returned Fidei Donum (Diocesan Missionary) priests in the UK at the moment. Twelve of us met at Upholland a few weeks ago to consider an appeal from Brazil for more priests. It was decided, after much thought, that:

1. Sending priests out to Brazil is not a solution to their need for priests. What is needed is a local programme of pastoral formation for priests, lay deacons, catechists, etc. This requires cash and personnel.
2. We noted that we owe a huge debt of restitution of pounds and dollars to the Third World, having taken from them for centuries.
3. We are of the opinion that the ordination of "viri probati" to the priesthood is an inevitable choice, whether single or married.
4. Then we looked at Europe. We are discovering a new global perspective of the Church.

Should not all priests have an experience of the global church?

Could not part of a priest's training be in another continent? Would not this attract young people more readily to the priesthood?

Are the days of regional, single-culture seminaries

coming to an end?

Should we not use pastoral centres or institutes, and a junior diaconate centred in them, as the base formation for ministry? It would bind theology to praxis.

Ref. FOCUS

June 1991, No. 62

**OTHER RELIGIONS  
MARRYING IN A  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**(JAPAN)**

In the new parish of Nakamura-ku, Nagoya, Japan, Francis Bures, an American Missionary member of the Divine Word Society, completes his ministry of caring for 664 Catholics by offering a service of welcome and evangelization to many non-Christian couples who ask to be married in his parish church, a large and beautiful building with a splendid pipe organ. In 1989 ninety couples had their weddings there, and Fr. Bures has already had 50 since he took on the parish.

When a non-Christian couple asks for a church wedding Fr. Bures always talks with them to find out what prompts their choice. The reasons are usually not very important: no atmosphere in wedding halls, or friends cannot be invited there, or the girl always dreamt of a church wedding and so on. So he talks with them on the meaning of marriage, of true love, of human nature and of God. Most of the couples are materialists and have no idea

of these things. He also teaches them to pray and tells them about Jesus and his Resurrection.

After this the couples have to take a preparatory course. He usually sends them to the Catholic Centre which offers an excellent course of seven two hour sessions. Not all couples are able to attend. These he prepares himself with the assistance of a former nurse who instructs them on natural family planning.

The main object of the course is to teach the couples to communicate with each other about their feelings and other important matters, and to listen to one another, because in many Japanese families there exists little or no communication. When the children leave home there seems to be nothing to keep the parents together as a real married couple. They seem to be singles living together. "I hope that they may really learn to love each other, become one, and find God through each other," says Fr. Bures.

It is perhaps early yet, to speak of fruits, but there have been some good signs: a few baptisms; one girl who is to marry a Catholic is taking instruction in the faith and has asked for baptism; a couple of fallen-away Catholics have come back. But Fr. Bures sums up: "faith is a gift of God, so we always need the cooperation of prayers." The Episcopal Commission for Missionary Activities is presently examining the theological foundations of this practice.

Ref. FIDES

June 19th, 1991

**RESPONDING TO THE WHOLE PERSON**

**(INDIA)**

For the past 8 years, I have been trying to live out my personal call to mission among the people of the villages of Siwan and Bhagwanpur, in Bihar, India. Prior to this, I was involved in mission for 22 years in Kurji Holy Family Hospital.

I began to reflect that so far I had treated and cared for people who came to me for help in the clinic. Why not go out to them? I was moved by a strong desire to go out to people, to meet them in their own village situation, to respond to the whole person in their own environmental setting and to be part of their culture, customs, celebrations, joys, and sorrows. I began to dream of going to Siwan and living among the people there. This dream became a reality in 1982. As health coordinator I set up a small health clinic, visited people in their homes and conducted adult education classes for women. The liberation of women had the uppermost priority in all my undertakings. As the health coordinator of the diocese, I conducted seminars and get-togethers for the health workers. I also organized seminars on immunization and health care.

In 1989, together with another sister, we started our new mission in Bhagwanpur. Through home visiting, health teaching, conducting literacy and conscientization classes, and training and tailoring, we hope to raise the awareness of

women regarding their plight and the injustices meted out to them so that they can claim their rightful place at home and in society.

My life among the people has affected and transformed me. The most significant experience is the acceptance we have as part of the village community. We have become part of the life of the people. They love us. My whole life has been a continuous response to God's call in whatever way He wants me to be an instrument of His healing presence and love.

My prayer is very simple. God is Life and I respond to Life. I see life in people and I reach out to them. This is my spirituality. If I reach out and touch at least one person in his or her sorrow, then that is good. I do not solve many problems, but reach out in love. I enjoy people, children, flowers, nature. In short, I enjoy Life.

Ref. Intercontinent  
No. 198, 1991

#### THE RUIN OF WAR

##### (1. LIBERIA)

"Horrendous" is the term used by a United Nations assessment team to describe the conditions in Monrovia in December, following the 11 month civil war. "Unprecedented" is the description of a Catholic Relief Services spokesperson for the chaotic situation facing that major relief organization in its Liberian work. One described it "Hell is upon us now."

Hell in Liberia has taken the form of thousands of war deaths, estimated at anywhere from 10,000 to 80,000 and untold injured and maimed. It has meant flight to neighboring countries for more than 780,000 citizens, and more than 500,000 displaced from their homes within the country. This amounts to a huge impact on a country whose total population is just 2.5 million. Fighting has almost completely disrupted the economy and has prevented planting of rice, the main staple. Hunger is the result: In December, as many as 50 a day were dying of malnutrition. Other diseases affected the weakened survivors, especially those crowded into safer areas. Food remains today the major health need.

Ref. USCMA. Washington, USA  
March, 1991

##### (2. MOZAMBIQUE)

"We are still suffering the ravages of war, and are now in the first stage of famine. The peace talks have broken down as has the partial cease fire. Frelimo and the Zimbabweans blame Renamo and Renamo blames the others. From what I see, they are both right. It is a shame for things had been better for a few months.

The war just ruins any hope of planning and development. You can see this in relation to the famine. There was no rain for six weeks of what should have been the height of the rainy season so the maize crop just shriveled up and failed. They have even started eating chicken feed.

The Church is now emerging from 15 years of persecution, during which most churches, schools, hospitals, clinics etc. were nationalised. Many Christians also suffered torture and persecution. The government has started to hand back churches and other property and wants the Church to start running schools and clinics again. More importantly, Christians have started coming back to church."

Ref. M.Afr. England and Wales  
June-July, 1991, No. 298.

#### AIDS - FAMILY FUND

##### (UGANDA)

Fr. Steve Collins of Glasgow writes: "I have started a fund called Aids-Family Fund. I select families where the mother and father are seropositive and there are small children to care for. I supply them with material and projects. By living positively they can survive for 5 to 7 years so their children will be able to cope and there may be a cure by then.

The women have income-generating projects like making charcoal, sewing, making lamp shades, keeping chickens. 40% of AIDS patients are women. We expect three million orphans by the year 2000 A.D. There are 5,000 registered cases in Kampala and they say that for every one registered there are fifty that are HIV positive."

Ref. M.Afr. England and Wales  
No. 298, 1991

continued from page 230

**MISSIONARY INSTITUTES AND  
MISSION IN EUROPE**

Fr. Francois Nicolas, General Councillor of the Spiritans facilitated this consultation held at SEDOS Secretariate in June 1991. Fourteen persons representing eight institutes shared ideas, information about initiatives, hopes for the future and questions. Fr. Nicolas consulted three additional institutes before writing his paper.

This eight page report is now available in French in SEDOS Secretariate. The group of participants arranged to meet again in the Fall to continue their study of this topic so important in view of developments taking place in Europe.

(SEDOS institutes involved in the consultation: MCCJ; DMJ; FMM; OH; SMA; MAfr; CSSp; IBVM; CICM; SVD; SX).

**ISLAM AND  
CHRISTIAN REFLECTION**

This one year course (mid-October to mid-June) will open on October 11th, at 9.00 a.m.

Registration: Write to P.I.S.A.I. (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies) Viale di Trastevere, 89, 00153 Rome. Tel. (396) 5892676.

**ERRATUM:**

We apologize for an error in pagination in SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 23, No. 5, 15th May 1991. Page numbers should be changed as follows: 144 to 143; 145 to 144; 143 to 145.

**COMING EVENTS**

**WOMEN'S CONCERNS: WOMEN BELIEVING**

Join us in shared theological reflection on our experience as women of faith here in Rome on Tues. September 24, 1991; 3.30 p.m. at SEDOS when we will develop themes/process for future meetings:

Tues. Oct. 29; Tues. Nov. 19;  
Mon. Dec. 30, 1991; and  
Tues. Jan. 28, 1992.

For further information contact:  
Cristel Daun, SSps; 366-0247  
Maureen O'Brien, SND; 574-1350.

**RERUM NOVARUM  
TO CENTESIMUS ANNUS  
IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION**

Speaker: Peter Hebblethwaite  
November 7, 1991; 9.30 - 5.00 p.m.  
Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane  
via Aurelia, 476

**SEDOS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY  
"SANTO DOMINGO 1992"**

December 11, 1991 - 9.30 - 5.00 p.m.

**5TH CENTENARY - A NEW AGENDA  
ANNUAL RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR**

Villa Cavalletti, May 19-23, 1992