

SEDOS Research Seminar, May 1993

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SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

Another SEDOS Cavaletti seminar is over. We from the SEDOS Secretariate are happy to present to you in this issue the content of all the conferences given. The meeting was held from May 18th - 22th. The massive response and interest shown by our members proved again that this annual missionary meeting has a firm place in the agenda of many. Again we had a full house, 120 participants who represented over 50 congregations. According to SEDOS tradition, the seminar was held in the Jesuit retreat centre in Grottaferrata, outside Rome.

Following the plan established by our Executive Committee, this year's seminar was dedicated to Africa. "*Africa: Questions and Proposals to The Church*", was the title given to the assembly. Many happenings during the last 12 months gave the topic a special interest. Angola, Sudan, Liberia, Togo, Zaire, Burundi - only to mention a few - have been living through difficult and also decisive moments. The definite announcement of the Synod for Africa by the Pope in Uganda gave our meeting and the conferences a new horizon. The Synod will be held in Rome and will start on April 10th 1994; no doubt it can be a historic kairós for the African Church.

At the very beginning we would like to thank the two guest speakers for their rich collaboration. With Sister *TERESA OKURE, SHCJ.*, from Nigeria and Bishop *ANSELME SANON* from Burkina Faso, we had two very engaged witnesses of the African Church. The reception of their contributions and the evaluations have shown how well they met the wide interest of the participants, many of whom came from the different generalates in Rome.

My first experience of a SEDOS seminar gave me yet another confirmation: besides listening to experiences and reflections, the meeting proved a wonderful moment of general sharing, feed-back and rich contributions from the different participants, many of course with long missionary experience in Africa. Their contributions, coming from different language groups and the panel, gave an additional colour to the meeting.

We also would like to thank Sister Libanos Ayele, SMC and Father Godfrey Odigbo, CSSP., two African general councilors, for giving us in short time their personal reaction to the four days lived and shared in the seminar.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Sister **TERESA OKURE, SHCJ.**, is a native Nigerian. She is at the moment professor of theology at the Theological Institute of *Port Harcourt* in Nigeria. She is known for her writing in *Concilium* and other theological reviews: especially on the laity, the role of women in the African Church and the coming Synod. Her contribution as an African woman who reflects on her role in an African reality, comes from a lived experience. She left us with the will to involve ourselves in the realisation of many of her pastoral proposals.

Bishop **ANSELME SANON** from *Bobo Dioulasso* in Burkina Faso is known to many inside and outside of Africa. He is a leading member of the union of the bishops' conferences of Western Africa. He is the African representative in the Executive Committee of *CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS*. In all these functions he has been collaborating in the preparative process of different documents for the African Synod. After listening to him four days, I felt one great wish and curiosity; to accompany this pastor a few weeks in his daily sharing with his native Church. Bishop Anselme brought us the concerns of a pastor in a very complex cultural reality. His considerations on *Inculturation* show us how many hopes he puts into the coming Synod.



THE LAITY:

PEOPLE OF GOD, IN AN AFRICAN REALITY

Teresa Okure, SHCJ

The topic, "Laity, People of God, in an African Reality", could form the subject of a book. One could, for instance, begin by examining the problem from the New Testament from christological, evangelical and ecclesiological perspectives. Then one could trace the history of the development of the concept of the laity in the Church from the sub-apostolic era of Clement of Rome (c.95 A.D.), through the era of emperor Constantine (280-337 A.D.), the Middle Ages, Reformation and

Enlightenment, to the nineteenth century, the epochs of Leo XIII, Pius X, right up to the Second Vatican Council, on to the post-conciliar era and the present pontificate of John Paul II. But, since such an undertaking is neither practical nor desirable, we will focus our discussion on how the laity, in a particular African setting, views its own reality within our current Church structure. After that we shall examine some possible solutions to this problem.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Before we do this, it is necessary to make some important preliminary observations. The term "laity" (from the Greek *laikos*), is a most unfortunate one. For while it is maintained that the term merely distinguishes the generality of Christ's faithful from those in Holy Orders and from religious, it leaves in its wake and in the lives of those so identified, an abiding sense of non-specialist in sacred matters and even in holiness. A rose by any other name may smell as sweet, but it is not the same of names given to human beings. This is certainly true of African cultures where the name given to a child often marks the destiny wished for the child or the circumstances surrounding its birth. The rampant practice of title-taking also stems from the importance attached to names.

The position of the laity in the Church is ambivalent. The foundational document for understanding the laity as people of God is *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) of the Second Vatican Council. I call this a foundational document because all the other conciliar and post-conciliar documents on the laity, stem from this dogmatic understanding of their place in the Church. The first chap-

ter of the document deals with the mystery of the Church, the second with the universal call to holiness, the third with the hierarchical nature of the Church, and the fourth, the laity in the Church.

Despite the emphasis that by virtue of baptism and confirmation, the laity form part of the people of God - with equal rights and dignity; that they are called, though in a different way, to the same holiness as clergy and religious (cf. *LG*, ch. V), or perhaps because of this emphasis, the laity are placed in a very ambivalent state in the Church. As the people of God, they belong to a Church which is distinct from secular society. But as laity, they are ordained to live in secular society and to live "secular lives" (*LG*, no.35), the "secular character is proper and peculiar to them" (no.31). The secular world constitutes the proper sphere of their activity; it is understood, of course, that they are to "sanctify" this world by the witness of their lives and win it for Christ. The laity thus have one foot in the Church and the other in the secular, non-sacred world which the Church views with suspicion. They end up belonging neither to the one nor the other.

Moreover, in the Church, they are viewed as the direct objects of the teaching, ruling, governing and guiding activities of the clergy who "toil for them", particularly the bishops. The implication is that they are never really to be regarded as fully mature Christians in the Church, since they remain perpetually under the pastoral care of the clergy. Yet these immature Christians are assigned the great and difficult task of sanctifying and winning the secular world over to Christ; they are the most direct representatives of the Church in this secular world. Secondly, though they have the mission to proclaim the Gospel as a baptismal right, and not by a mandate from the clergy; though they initiate and carry out projects in the secular world, in all this they are viewed as helpers and collaborators of the clergy. Any evangelistic activity they undertake must be sanctioned by the clergy, most specifically, by the bishops who are the successors of the apostles.

The general picture of the laity which emerges in *Lumen Gentium* and subsequent documents reminds one of Esau after Jacob had stolen the paternal blessings of Isaac (cf. Gen 27:27-40; esp. vv 28-29, 39-40). This impoverished state of the laity in the Church is the result of what I consider the monopolization of the Christian heritage by the clergy, and to some extent the religious. Despite the emphasis on the universal call of all to holiness, and on

The implication is that the laity are never really to be regarded as fully mature Christians in the Church, since they remain perpetually under the pastoral care of the clergy. Yet these immature Christians are assigned the great and difficult task of sanctifying and winning the secular world to Christ.

the fundamental equality of all God's people by the Church, most lay people, in Africa and elsewhere, do not believe that holiness is for them. Their lived experiences in the Church, particularly their exclusion from certain sacred areas of the life of the Church, leads them to internalise the belief that they are not meant to live a life of holiness. Holiness is meant for priests and religious.

Yet, lay people are 90% of the Church, the

people of God. They have an inalienable right to membership in Christ's body (cf. 1 Cor 12:27); they are integral branches of his Vine (John 15:1-8); and their very bodies are the dwelling place or temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19). However, their permanent treatment as infants in the Church, makes it difficult, if not psychologically impossible for them to claim their God-given status and make it the organizing principle for their lives.

In the New Testament, all Christ's faithful followers were given one and the same identification: as those "called" (*kletoi*), "sanctified and set apart" (*hagioi*, or "saints"), or "brethren/siblings" (*adelphoi*). They saw themselves as a people set apart from the world to offer prayers, thanksgiving, sacrifice or praise to God. They engaged in mutual and self instruction and in the proclamation of the Gospel. This was their communal task as the new priestly people of God (cf. 1 Pet 2:1-10). Any differences between them lay in the area of ministries (cf. 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11): apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, good leaders, and those with the gift of speaking in tongues. The question of class distinction between clergy and laity did not arise. Furthermore, these gifts were given primarily for the building up of the community, not for personal status and self-aggrandisement. Today, most, if not all of these gifts have been appropriated by the clergy, for the benefit of the laity.

If one were to press this question of the status of the laity further from the New Testament perspective, one would have to concede that almost all New Testament Christians were lay people in their Synagogue. Jesus himself was regarded as an uneducated layman, who hailed from a God-forsaken village, Nazareth, in an equally God-forsaken region, Galilee (cf. John 1:46; 7:41, 52). His parentage did not count for much even in the eyes of his fellow Galileans (cf. John 6:42; Matt 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-30). Mary of Nazareth, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary Magdalene, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Phoebe, indeed almost all the Christians in the New Testament known by name were of the laity in their church. Peter and John actually astonished the members of the Sanhedrin by their assurance in proclaiming Christ as the expected Messiah "considering they were uneducated laymen" (Acts 4:13). This fact is important. Recognition of it might greatly help to put things in their right perspective in the current discussion of the status of the laity in the African Church, and indeed of the universal Church.

SELF-PERCEPTION OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH: THE NIGERIAN EXAMPLE

The Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST) in Enugu, Nigeria, held its third Missiological Symposium in November 1992, on the theme: the Priest in Nigeria. D.D. Dodo, current chairperson of the National Laity Council of Nigeria (NLCN) gave a major paper on "The Priest in Nigeria: A Layman's Perspective". It was my task to respond to this paper. Of interest here is the fact that the views expressed by Chief Dodo were gathered from laity across Nigeria. As the chairperson of the NLCN, the speaker travelled extensively all over the country. He attends international meetings of the Laity Council and has co-edited, with Prof. A. Ojo, *The Role of the Layperson in the Church in Nigeria*.

This next section is largely based on the relevant portions of my response. As in the documents of the Church, the laity define themselves in relation to the clergy. They simply accept the definitions which the Church gives them, not only in the documents of the Second Vatican Council mentioned earlier, but also in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, especially Canons nos.204, 207, 225 and 230. They welcome the new privileges which the Church after the Second Vatican Council has given them, for example, allowing them to preside over liturgical prayers and to distribute Holy Communion (cf. Canons nos.230 and 225, respectively).

Priests and laity are divided into "pre-Vatican II" and "post-Vatican II" categories, depending on a person's response to the new privileges given to the laity by the Council. While there exist some "post-Vatican II priests", the general situation is that most priests view the "opportunities" given to the laity by the Council as "an intrusion, invading (their) traditional power"; hence they are "not ready and willing to allow a layman to play his new role; this results in conflict of interest, confusion and suspicion". In short, not only is there ambivalence in the position of the laity as spelled out in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, but even the positive breakthroughs in favour of the laity embodied in these documents run into problems on the level of implementation. The paper of Chief Dodo simply describes this situation as "Vatican II and the 'Confusion'".

THE YOUNG CHURCHES IN AFRICA

It has been said that the Churches in Africa are fragile, infantile, weak. We discussed this: we know that the term young Churches is questioned, and the Africans themselves prefer to speak of Sister Churches.

We think that we should speak rather of weakened Churches, because they are directed from outside: the directives come from Rome, consultations are often just words. The Churches and their function are conditioned by money. Should we not admit that we find it difficult to accept a mature, developed, adult Church?

- Are we responsible for what we have begun? When I say "we" I think of our missionary and religious institutes. What can we really do to make "those who consider themselves as our children" stronger, in better health, better developed?

- On the occasion of the African Synod, could not religious congregations initiate a common project? Formation centres for lay religious and religious women and lay people are lacking in Africa. Too often, formation takes place in Europe and in Rome. Let us move to create a memorial to the African Synod - more visible than a document - a formation centre.

(Group)

Defining the laity's identity in the Church in an historical perspective, the author used the vivid imagery, of first opening window blinds, then windows and finally the doors of the Church to the laity. At first the laity saw themselves as standing outside the drawn window blinds of the Church looking inside at what the priests were doing. Gradually, the window itself

was opened so that they could be better observers and objects of priestly ministry. With the Second Vatican Council, they feel that the doors have been thrown open wide to them. Theoretically, at least, they are viewed as full participants and authentic share holders in the Church. Now that they have been brought inside the Church as full members, they do not simply want to observe what the clergy are doing; they want to know why and for what purpose. More important still, they want to participate in building up the Church and in shaping what is happening. In other words, they are not satisfied with seeing the secular world as the proper or even exclusive sphere of their activity. They want to participate within the Church itself, even in its administration. Those who want this are the "post-Vatican II laity", while the "pre-Vatican II laity" want to maintain the status quo of leaving Church affairs to the clergy.

How The Laity Feel in the Church

The feeling of the laity in this ambivalent situation is one of a deep sense of helplessness and frustration. The vocabulary of being "allowed", "helpless" or "not being allowed/given permission" dominates the section of the paper which describes clergy/laity relationships. This sense of helplessness is registered in two ways.

First, the author cites and comments on Canon no.391 thus:

"The Catholic Diocesan Bishop governs the particular church entrusted to him with legislative, executive and judicial powers, in accordance with the law (Canon no.391). In a democratic system of government, these powers are shared by the three arms of government. So if one is looking for democracy, he should not come to the Catholic church because it is not there."

Second, he presents the frustration of the laity by the vivid image of a deeply slumbering person who is suddenly awakened from sleep and urged to get ready for a race. But once the person is wide awake and has exercised enough for the race, he/she gets on the mark waiting to take off. But instead of the gun shot that should start the race, he or she is simply told that the

whole exercise was just a joke!

In the African context, the picture of the Catholic Diocesan Bishop established by Canon Law reminds one of some of the military regimes in Africa. They make the law by decrees, apply it according to their interpretation of it, or lay it aside at will. They deal most severely with those who they regard as breakers of the law. Those caught breaking the law are often powerless before the very law that should protect them, because the law makers control all three arms of government. The Church would rightly criticise as dictatorial or totalitarian, any civil government that arrogated all three powers unto itself.

But in the Church itself, the situation does not only obtain; it is considered as canonical. How does this situation square with the notion of the Church as the People of God? Part of the

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reason is that God's authority is quoted in support of it. *Lumen Gentium*, for instance, is anxious to underscore that the distinction between clergy and laity in the Church is/was established by God and Christ. We know, however, that in the current form in which we have these two classes in the Church, the practice arose from the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313), by which Constantine made Christianity the State religion, and his subsequent placement of the leaders of the Church on the same footing as secular princes. Some scholars see this Edict and its follow-up action as the conversion of Christianity to gentile ways - ways Jesus strongly counsels his disciples not to imitate (cf. Mark 10:42-45). Yet today, this distinction has become the tradition of the Church. But fidelity to our Gospel origins and the discipleship of Jesus, invites us to seek authentic solutions to the situation. How should this be done?

THE CALL FOR A NEW ECCLESIOLOGY

What is required to bring a radical change to this situation is commitment to the sound aspects of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council which sees the Church primarily as the people of God. It may be recalled that the First Vatican Council had two main items on its agenda with respect to ecclesiology, namely, the Church as hierarchy and the Church as communion. It first developed the nature of the Church as hierarchy; but before it could begin work on the Church as communion, the war for the unification of Italy came, and put an end to the Council. As a result, the communal aspect of the Church had to wait till the Second Vatican Council before it could be developed. The notion of the Church as the people of God marks the completion of the interrupted work of the First Vatican Council.

Meanwhile, all the structures, theology, Canon Law, priestly formation programmes, prayers, liturgical life and even Church edifices were based on the notion of the Church as a hierarchical institution, according to the one-sided ecclesiology of the First Vatican Council. Hence, though the picture of the Church has been completed and balanced on paper, we are still living out the structures, mindsets and attitudes formed by the lopsided ecclesiology of the First Vatican Council. It is like new wine in old skins, and most people believe that the old is better.

This, then, is the problem: how to convert our theologies or theology of Church as the people of God and Body of Christ into a programme of action and interpersonal relationships, especially between the clergy, religious and laity. One way to do this might be to drop the designation "laity" altogether and return to the Gospel/New Testament practice of referring to believers as "Saints" or brothers/sisters, etc. More and more, the laity are rejecting the label given to them, because of its pejorative connotations. New Church structures, organizational structures, and manuals of priestly formation are also needed, as well as formative and renewal programmes for laity, clergy and bishops, to help the people of God as a whole to internalise this new ecclesiology.

These new programmes would emphasise such models of the Church as Body of Christ, vine and branches and the notion of one flock

and one Shepherd. In this way, none would lose sight of Christ as the irreplaceable leader of his people, irrespective of their role in the Church. The authority of the people of God acting in council would balance, that of any individual leader, if not surpass it. The dignity of the successors of the Apostolic Church would be highlighted as that of the "successors of the apostles" has been over the centuries. The ministries within the Church would be concretely and sufficiently diversified to enable people to exercise more effectively their share in the priesthood of Christ, as the New Testament Christians did (cf. 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:11-12). This will help to shift the current emphasis on the differences between the clergy and the laity (a kind of in-fighting) to focus on a collaborative approach to preaching the Good News.

This kind of emphasis does not mean that there will be no leadership roles in the Church. No human organisation can exist without visible leaders. But the leadership offered in this new ecclesiology will approximate more to that offered by Jesus himself than by the kings of the gentiles or the religious leaders of his time.

The ministries within the Church would be concretely and sufficiently diversified to enable people to exercise more effectively and in practice their share in the priesthood of Christ, as the New Testament Christians did.

But the leadership offered in this new ecclesiology will approximate more to that offered by Jesus himself.

Such leadership will seek above all to enable all God's people to grow individually and as community into that fullness of the maturity of Jesus himself (cf. Eph 4:13; Heb 12:22-24). It will seek to empower the people for active service and responsible proclamation of the Gospel, and think less of itself as being called to act "in the service of the people".

To become effective, this new ecclesiology requires personal and communal conversion on the part of all God's people: lay faithful, priests and bishops. The call to share in Christ's

Our group deplored the exportation of young African men and women to religious congregations in Europe.

- We are concerned about the criteria on which funds are made available for training programmes in Africa by the central organisations of the Church and in particular believe that the funding of the on-going formation of sisters and the laity should be given a much higher priority.

- We felt that the pastoral care of AIDS victims should be urgently addressed and should be a matter for very serious consideration at the coming Synod.

- The future of the African Churches lies in their youth who are being increasingly alienated. SEDOS members should give serious consideration to programmes for youth; the apostolate of youth should be a matter of deep concern for the Synod.

- Women are the strength of the African Churches. They should be empowered in every possible way by the Church.

- The group felt that the images of Africa portrayed in the media focus on the negative aspects of Africa and fail to communicate the joy of this continent. Members of SEDOS should do something about this in their own communications media.

(Group)

priesthood, common or ordained, carries with it the invitation to do with and in one's life what Jesus did at the last supper "in memory of him". On the part of the clergy in particular, this will require that instead of infantilising the sheep or thwarting them, every ordained priest will assiduously seek ways of breaking the

bread of his life so that others may feed and have fullness of life. The priestly vocation seen in this light is indeed a most noble one, but few there are who really understand it.

According to Cardinal Willebrands, the three steps to the hierarchy are baptism, confirmation and communion. Paul VI, in my view, makes a similar point when he defines the hierarchy as the social and human structures of the Church bound together by the Holy Spirit, or grace and charism with the bishops in the forefront. If we can come to see hierarchy as the call to work together, in communion with Christ, or with Father, Son and Holy Spirit into whose family and life we were all baptised, we will have come a long way to living the new ecclesiology. This would help to eliminate the dichotomy between the current conception of priest and laity in the Church. It will also help to release some of the energy now concentrated at the top and diffuse it into the rest of the body to energise and empower it for mission.

Thus far we have been discussing the laity, people of God in the universal Church and in African reality. The plight of the laity in Africa is not conceptually different from that of the laity in other realities - European, Asian, American.

What needs to be noted for the interest of this group is that the hierarchical structure of Vatican I which informed the ecclesiology of the Church also informed the organisational set up of religious congregations. Like mother, like child, as the saying goes. Hence we need to ask:

1. Have our individual congregations and religious congregations generally been influenced by the "People of God" ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council?

2. Does the category of "laity" also exist within our own congregations? Who do we classify in that category and why?

3. How can religious by the gift of their special charism in the Church, help the Church in Africa to live this new ecclesiology, drawing strength also from its cultures which are essentially communal in character and people oriented?

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH

Teresa Okure, SHCJ

What is woman in God's scheme of creation? In African cultures? The answers to these questions will guide our discussions on the role of women in the African Church, and indeed in the universal Church.

GOD'S SCHEME OF CREATION

According to Genesis, the first woman created by God was called Eve (*havvah*), from the same root as *hayyim*, meaning life, "because she was the mother of all the living" (cf. Gen. 3:20). What is remarkable is that the woman was accorded this name immediately after the fall, just after the pronouncement of the punishment of death over the man, because of human sin (cf. Gen. 3:19). The name did not make her "mother of all the living". Rather, the name grew from the fact that she was the mother of all who live.

It would seem that recognition of the woman's role as mother, one who bears, fosters, brings forth and sustains life became necessary at the very point where humanity was confronted with death as the destiny to which its action led. The sin that led to death brought disintegration: "unto dust you shall return;" but the woman's name, signifying life, brought hope and the promise of victory over death to humanity in this doomed situation. Recognition of her role was aided by the fact that God attached the promise of his salvation to the woman, in a passage that has come to be recognised as the *proto-evangelium* (cf. Gen. 3:16).

In God's plan, therefore, woman is a symbol of life and hope, not the cause of death, as has been taught throughout history in Christian theology, especially in patristic writings. The Church's teaching about Mary and devotion to her as Mother of our Redeemer, confirms that both protology (creation) and eschatology (the

last age) emphasise the unique role of the woman as the channel through which God offers humanity life and hope in a doomed situation: "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children" (Gal. 4:4-5).

AFRICAN CULTURES

In most, if not all African traditional settings, the woman is perceived primarily as the one who bears, brings forth, nurtures and sustains life. Several African men have composed songs in praise of the mother, without corresponding ones for the father. The album "Sweet Mother" was very popular in the 1970's and spread to other African countries. When the composer was taken to task for his partiality, he produced an album called "Good Father".

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Hardly anybody heard of the album; it lacked inspiration and the composer regretted having undertaken it. Another well known album in the 1960's noted that if the wife and the mother were drowning, a man would save his mother, since there can only be one mother in his life. The album did not raise the question of what would be done if a husband and a father were drowning!

In most African traditional societies, the married woman was identified primarily as: the

The Churches of Africa must trust themselves; they cannot refer constantly to their received heritage or to external causes. They are capable of inventing, creating, breaking with old models (ex. the formation of priests and religious men and women).

The central administration of the Church must trust them more. It is an ecclesial problem. Diversity is not sufficiently recognised. We must give Africa back to the Africans; give Africa its vital space. Authority must not be seen as power, but as a service. This is evangelical logic.

We would like the bishops to go beyond the Instrumentum Laboris. We would like to see a going out to Christians; go back to them and let them express their expectations, as Christ did with those who came near him: "What do you want me to do for you?"

We should draw out a new approach in Mission - no longer a strategy of expansion, but something more gratuitous. Let us reach the lives of the people and listen to them.

We stress the increasingly important role that religious women will play and we should be concerned about their formation. The Church must take an interest in mass media - magazines, television, videocassettes - which have a great influence on the young, on families.

All those who work in Africa stress the abilities and resourcefulness found among lay people and especially the importance of women, their strength, their ability to speak. They must have a greater place in the Church. There are many reasons to hope.

(Group)

mother of ...", not "the wife of ..." (or Mrs.). This practice still obtains today in village settings. Unlike the title, "Mrs", which subsumes the wife into the husband, "mother of" empha-

sises her dignity as a bearer of life. Among my people, the Ibibios, for instance, the woman retained her name after marriage and did not change it to that of the husband. In some Nigerian cultures, the highest respect that can be paid to a woman is to call her *Nne* or *Eka*, meaning mother.

Some African women theologians see this traditional practice in a pejorative light, and feel that the woman was valued only because of what she could produce - a child. But in my view, this was not how our people saw her. To them life and in particular a child was valuable, real wealth. The names given to children illustrate this: *Akaninyene* (more than riches), *Owoediimo* (a human being is wealth). The woman who brought forth this wealth was herself a treasure. Whatever the case, the woman in African cultures was very closely associated with life, as in the Genesis biblical account.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we turn to God's scheme of salvation in the New Testament, we meet the same consistent identification or association of the woman with life, with bringing forth, fostering and protecting life. Salvation has to do essentially with God giving us new and lasting life through Jesus Christ. This new life is the reverse of that given to Adam and Eve in Genesis, which ends in death, because of human sin. In beginning the scheme of salvation, God took women first into his secret, Mary of Nazareth and Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:26-56). Mary's association in this giving of life is particularly unique in that hers was the human body from which Jesus took our human nature. God entrusted his Son to her in a most unique way.

After Jesus was born, began his ministry and right up to his passion, death and resurrection we find women playing important life-sustaining roles in his life. The wise men from the East found him with Mary his mother (cf. Matt. 2:11). This mother became the living archive of the mysteries surrounding him (cf. Luke 1:19, 51). When he seemed to have delayed launching out on his mission, with the understanding that his time had not yet come, his mother succeeded in convincing him to get started. As a result he worked his foundational "sign" by which he revealed his glory/true nature to his disciples (cf. John 2:1-12). It was

yet another woman who recognised the closeness of Jesus to his mother in character and integrity (cf. Luke 11:27).

According to the Gospel narratives, only women seemed to have understood what his mission was about. They followed him and provided the type of self-giving, not grabbing discipleship, which he inculcated in his followers (cf. Luke 8:1-3). They ministered to Jesus and the disciples and sustained their lives with their own provisions while the male disciples were asking him what they would get out of following him (cf. Matt. 26:27; Luke 24:21 Acts 1:6). To conclude from such passages as Luke 8:3, that women are meant to be only housekeepers for priests and bishops is to miss the whole point of the mission of Jesus and of the Lucan narrative.

As in the circumstances of his birth and public ministry, so at the end, in his passion and resurrection, women played outstanding roles in the life of Jesus. The women understood when his hour had come, and so prepared his body beforehand for burial. This is how Jesus himself

All those who work in Africa stress the abilities and resourcefulness found among lay people and especially the importance of women, their strength, their ability to speak. They must have a greater place in the Church. There are many reasons to hope.

understood his anointing by Mary of Bethany and the unnamed women in the Synoptics (cf. John 12:1-8; Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). A foreign woman, Pilate's wife, sought to prevent him from being condemned to death (cf. Matt. 27:19). The women of Jerusalem wept for him with broken hearts as their men dragged him to Calvary for crucifixion (cf. Luke 22:27-32). His mother and the women who followed him all the way from Galilee stood by and suffered with him at Calvary, the first real altar of sacrifice in the Christian dispensation (cf. John 19:25-27; Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:49). They alone of his close disciples knew where he was buried, and sought to perform the last rites for him (cf. Luke 23:55-56; Mark 15:47; Matt. 27:61).

DIALOGUE: INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH AND AFRICAN CULTURE

We wonder about the dialogue between institutional Church and African culture; because Msgr. Anselme Sanon, in his analytical approach to the challenge, said that for Africans, the Church appears as a religious phenomenon well organised according to a European, Western, Latin and modern model of society, coming with the means of the North.

In that context, where is the place for a responsible laity, where is the dialogue between the parish priest and the catechist situated. Even if the latter were charismatic, his lack of general and theological awareness does not permit a true dialogue on an equal footing, also the catechist depends financially on the priest. How can we change the structures of dialogue in the Church? Who will change those structures?

Mass Media

There is another question - the role of mass media in Africa today. From the beginning of the democratic era, the Africans have begun to speak up more and more. They are fearlessly expressing their understanding of the present situation in Africa. They do so through the means of social communication: radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, films (especially in Burkina Faso and Senegal), painting.

Where will we situate dialogue if we ignore the crises in Africa today? Where will we situate inculturation? There is also the terribly negative role that the mass media play, especially with the young. We must be aware of this reality.

(Group)

And so it happened that as women were the first to know about his incarnation and to be

personally involved in it, they were also the first to know about his resurrection (cf. Matt. 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-2). The beloved and most devoted Mary Magdalene was personally commissioned by Jesus to evangelise his apostles and first disciples: to proclaim to them the Good News of his resurrection. He also entrusted to her the full meaning of this Good News, namely, that from thenceforth all believers were his blood brothers and sisters (cf. John 20:11-18).

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

When we move from the time of Jesus to that of the early New Testament Church, we find women actively playing the same life sustaining role in this first Christian community. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and several women featured prominently among the foundational *ekklesia* of the disciples who waited in prayer and received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:1-4, 17). In Jerusalem, as later on in Europe, women made their houses available as ecclesial buildings for groups of believers. The house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, constituted a well known place of meeting such that once Peter was released from prison by the angel at night, he knew where to find the brethren (cf. Acts 12:12-17). This house probably became the meeting place for the new eschatological community after their numbers had outgrown the space in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 2:1; Luke 24:33-49; John 20:2, 19, 26). Or was the Upper Room initially in this house?

Similarly, Lydia, the first convert of Europe offered her house as the headquarters for Paul's evangelising mission in Europe (cf. Acts 16:11-15, esp. v 15). As a result, there developed a partnership between her, Paul and the people of Philippi such as never existed again between Paul and his converts (cf. Phil 1:3-11; 4:10-20). It is interesting, too, that among the people

whom Paul mentions as his first co-workers in this community there are two women: Evodia and Syntyche (cf. Phil 4:2-3). That was not all; by offering her house to Paul, Lydia challenged him to live up to his theology that as a believer in Christ, she, a Gentile woman was now truly like a blood sister to him. Hence, they could both lodge in the same house and share table fellowship. Paul's later statement in Galatians 3:28, that those who are in Christ have to transcend barriers of race, sex and class must have grown from this concrete experience.

Nor shall we forget the sustained teaching and life-giving ministries of such women as Priscilla/Prisca, whose house was also a church and who is often ranked ahead of her husband (cf. Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-26; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3-5); Phoebe, the deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, who spent her life of discipleship ministering to "a great many people" (Rom. 1:1-2); and the litany of other women whose praises Paul sings in Romans 16:6-16.

This list is by no means exhaustive. The literature on the contributions and ministries of women in the early Church is explosive. What has emerged is that women played far greater roles in the life of the early Church than has hitherto been properly recorded in the New Testament, recognised through the centuries, or by the contemporary Church. A point often not sufficiently emphasised in these studies, perhaps because of polemic reasons, and the fact that the Church tends to relegate the role of women to house keeping and management of children, is that the ministries of these women was centered squarely on sustaining and fostering life. This as we shall see later is evangelisation understood in its most fundamental and gospel sense. What is required is a correct re-reading of the meaning of "the Good News" as recorded in the New Testament, not efforts to play down the ministry of women recorded in the Gospels and New Testament as a whole.

WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH

RELEVANCE TO THE QUESTION AT ISSUE

What, one may ask, has the above survey to do with the question of the role of women in the African Church? For me it has everything to do with it. We are discussing the role of women in

the African Church in the context of the African Synod. The theme of the Synod, we recall, is "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelising Mission Towards the Year 2000: 'You Shall Be My Witnesses' (Acts 1:8)". In the New Testament perspective, evangelisation, proclaiming the Good News, is fundamentally an activity which entails "mothering": giving

birth, sustaining life and nurturing it into full maturity, the maturity of Jesus himself (cf. Eph. 4:13; Heb. 12:23).

This is what Jesus meant when he stated in John's Gospel that the reason for his coming on mission to our world was so that human beings might have life in all its fullness (cf. John 10:10). He articulated the same in Luke's Gospel on the occasion of his inaugural discourse (cf. Luke 4:18-19). Jesus did not merely speak of mothering as the goal and purpose of his mission. He lived this out in his entire life. To cite a few basic examples, Jesus gives life by feeding us with his body and blood daily in the Eucharist. The Fathers of the Church believed that the Church was born from his riven side on the cross. His primary charge to Peter, his successor, was that he should feed his little lambs and tend his shearlings, even as he had fed him and the other disciples after his resurrection (cf. John 21:1-23). In this, Peter is to follow his example even to the point of laying down his life (cf. John 21:18-19; 10:15-18).

If one is tempted to belittle the ministry of women in the New Testament as being one of humble chores and housekeeping, then one needs to recall that Jesus himself undertook this type of ministry and counseled the same to his disciples, both men and women. He cooked for his disciples even after his resurrection (cf. John 21:9-14). He washed their feet as a supreme mark of his love and commanded that they do the same to one another as a sign or identity card that they are really his disciples (cf. John 13:1-17, 34-35; 15:9-12). In all this, Jesus was imaging women and demanded the same of his Church, which has no other mission than to continue Jesus' own of fostering fullness of life in all peoples. If something has gone wrong than with the role of women in the Church, it is not with the mission of Jesus but with the way the Church has understood and practised this mission over the centuries in a male-dominated and overly hierarchical Church. Looking at the role of women in this Church in the New Testament, which role is in essence in line with that of Jesus, might help to restore the needed balance. The statement of John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* that women are in a very special way entrusted by God with life has consequences for the Church as a whole, which may not be readily obvious, given the current tendency to identify the Church and the imaging of Christ with governance, power, control and guardianship of the deposit of the faith and the

protection or safeguarding of apostolic traditions.

If the role of women in the universal Church, as witnessed by the New Testament, is to foster and sustain life, or in the case of Eve in the Old Testament - to bring life and hope to an otherwise doomed situation, then it follows that the African Church cannot be fully alive unless it integrates this role of women fully into its bosom and makes it the mainstay of its approach to evangelisation. Unfortunately, history and the present do not show that the African Church has fully understood and appreciated the indispensable role of women in this regard.

As the role of women was played down in the course of history, so was it played down in the evangelisation of Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, the name of Bishop Shanahan is almost a household word in the evangelisation of Eastern Nigeria. History books speak of the

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contributions of the Rev. Fathers, laymen, catechists. But rarely does one hear much of the work of education and human development that was carried out by the Rev. Sisters. With the Protestants, the situation is somewhat different; the name of Mary Slessor towers above all other names in this region. On the other hand, Mercy Oduyoye of Ghana once recounted at a meeting of African women theologians held at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, how her mother used to spend most of her time gathering and preparing people for the work of primary evangelisation. Yet, when the history of the Church in the area was written, her mother was remembered only for having been an excellent cook.

It is interesting that two religious congregations that have since become fully international were founded by women in Nigeria, namely the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) and the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy

PANEL

I appreciated the insights Bishop Sanon and Sr Theresa shared with us. One of the points that both of them indicated is the diversity of realities or situations in Africa. They stressed its complexity, and I think and hope that this awareness should make us more attentive in our approach to dealing with the realities. It is about time that we avoid the common generalisations that we make about Africa.

Pope Paul VI in "Africae Terrarum" (1967) Addressed this question of inculturation. Twenty-five years later, we are still asking ourselves what we should do about it. The whole question of the laity is met with confusion and opposition. There is resistance and we feel hopeless about it. Again, women are supposed and expected to be quite and submissive by following what her partner/master tells her. It is proved theologically that she should not aspire to be ordained a priest. Yet it seems that the future has reserved some surprises for us. There are situations in certain societies (countries) where the Catholic Church is made up mainly of women.

In one parish in Latin America, where our sisters work, 136 adults were baptised two years ago; only four were men, the rest were women. Again this year out of 104 only 3 were men. Unless things change radically, the situation will continue in the same way. That particular local church will be made up of women. Will the Church continue to have the same attitude and the same position on ordination? In the name of theology or ecclesiology there seems to be a firm position not to change.

For me the issues concerning the "Laity" and "women" are very urgent. I wish we would let go of our traditional position and mentality and take risks in facing these challenging realities.

Sr Libanos Ayele, SMC

Child Jesus (HHCJ), both of which had members of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ) as their first formatresses. Parallels to this can be found in other parts of Africa. But for "the mothers" - our natural mothers and the Rev. Mothers, most of us in Africa would never really have had a solid grounding in the Catholic/Christian faith. Through their ministry these women were giving birth to the people of God as Christ meant it to be.

Today women in Nigeria continue their work of people building in all types of ministries: teaching, nursing, social work, leadership development services (DELES) and parish ministries. Catholic women have organisations such as the Christian Mothers and Catholic Women Organisation (CWO). But for the most part, they tend to limit their ministry to looking after bishops and priests, collecting money for Church projects and bazaars and playing police women to young girls with regard to their choice of husbands, their relationship to priests and their manner of dressing in church. In all this they are very faithful to the Faith which they received from the missionaries. Through the charismatic and Catholic renewal movements, a number of lay women are involved in prayer ministry, where they do solid spiritual counselling, mend and reconcile broken families, and engage in deliverance from evil spirits as Jesus did in the Gospels.

Yet another group of women, in Nigeria and beyond, are involved in the work of theological education, in seminaries, universities and theological institutions, such as the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA). These women challenge themselves, their colleagues and students to rethink the Faith they received in the light of the Gospel and the sound values of their people and to reappropriate the original message of the Gospel, becoming accountable and responsible for its taking firm root in Africa. Raising people's consciousness concerning women's place in God's plan of creation and salvation both within and outside the institutions where they serve, in Africa and beyond, is also an integral aspect of their ministry.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH IN AFRICA

While all these activities are being carried out by women in the Church, the "official" Church does not seem to be able to recognise the significant role which women have to play if the Church is ever to grow and attain the

maturity to which God destines it in Christ. A significant example in this is the current process of the African Synod. The *Lineamenta* of the Synod was completely oblivious of the fact that the role of women in humanity and in Church and society is a serious issue today. Its language remained exclusive, even though most, if not all African languages are by nature inclusive. Men religious were given a nod, women religious, not one that I could discern.

As a result of reactions, the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod now highlights the role of "men and women" in a number of places. It has made efforts to use inclusive language in some sections, and has included one paragraph on women, more correctly, "The Situation of Women" under Justice and Peace (no. 120). The recognition that the issue of women in Church and society is a justice issue without which there can be no true peace, is to be lauded. But the way in which this issue is raised in the *Instrumentum Laboris* leaves one very disappointed. Half the paragraph is a citation from *Mulieris Dignitatem*, highlighting the traditional male view of women as people ordained by God to look after children (no. 30). For the rest, the document simply states that "it is also reported that the tendency persists to regard women as inferior to men and that this can be found even in the Church". One gets the impression that the official Church itself does not really believe that there is discrimination against women in the Church today. Hence the prospects of its doing something at the Synod to rectify the situation remains very slim. Women have not been consulted in a systematic way in this Synod process. But it is hoped that women will at least be invited to attend the Synod, not only as observers, but also as *periti*.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

There is one sustained and basic thesis concerning the role of women in the Church, the African Church as well as the universal Church. The role of women has to do essentially with sustaining and fostering life, building up people or undertaking human development after the manner of Jesus. Though given naturally to women, this gift is not tangential or accessory to the life of the Church. It stands at its very core, in terms of its self-understanding and the purpose of its existence, all the more so that the Church, traditionally called "mother" has the singular vocation of being the sacrament of Christ in the world.

This role was given to humanity at creation and in the history of salvation through the woman. It continues to be the same today. If contemporary human society and the Church, in Africa and elsewhere, are in a confused and morally disintegrating state, it is because for centuries these two central institutions have ignored the contributions of women, so necessary for their authentic development. The way to get out of the mess is to open up gratefully to the gift of life which God is waiting to give through the ministries of women, in full partnership with men in all areas of human life. For the Church, this will require putting into practice a new ecclesiology modelled and rooted firmly in Christ: life-giving mother, or Vine who makes the branches fruitful (cf. John 15:1-8, 17). This ecclesiology will be different from the current one where concern with power, authority, rank, controlling and ruling dominate.

For the immediate interest of the members of the SEDOS family, it might be profitable first to examine the extent to which this christocentric ecclesiology constitutes the

After listening and reflecting upon the various issues raised, my conclusion and question is. Why do there seem to be so many contradictions between what is written in the documents of the Church and the practices or actions of the same Church?

Sr Libanos Ayele, SMC

organising principle of each congregation, inspires the relationship between male and female congregations and the organisational structure of SEDOS itself. Secondly, to what extent are those congregations who serve in Africa conscious of the vital role which women play in the building up of the Church and the nation in this continent?

Thirdly, how can member congregations of this family, individually and collaboratively, best help African women to bring their God-given talents to enliven and enrich Church and state in this continent? Who concretely are these women? Where or in what concrete situations in life can this help be best offered to them?

*And the Church in Africa shall be called Mother
For she shall give fullness of life
to all her children.*

PASTORAL EXPECTATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN SYNOD

Teresa Okure, SHCJ

Two key words in the theme of the Synod are *evangelisation* and *witness*. Both words are action words and people oriented words. Our pastoral proposals will also be people oriented.

First, let us look at the two words. **Evangelisation**, has to do with proclaiming the Good News to human beings so that they can know, feel and accept it as good news. The

One inescapable truth about the shepherd/sheep relationship is that it is the sheep who lead the shepherd. Visually it is the shepherd who leads the sheep. But in actual fact, the needs of the sheep for pasture, water and shelter determine where the shepherd leads them. Unless the shepherd allows himself to be led by the real needs of the sheep, the sheep will not survive.

news is, of course, good in, by and of itself. But since it is destined for human beings, the believing receiver needs to experience it as good for him or her. I have developed this point further in an article, "A New Testament Perspective on Evangelisation and Human Promotion", in *Evangelisation in Africa in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects*. Edited by Justin S. Ukpong (Catholic Institute of West Africa Press: Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1992).

A **witness** is a person who personally sees/witnesses an event or action, is convinced about the nature of the event/action, makes a judgement about it; is able/willing to testify to

it even under oath, and is ready to suffer the consequences. This definition of a witness is well illustrated in the lives of Peter and his companions after Pentecost. They had been with Jesus during his public life and had personally witnessed to his life, deeds and teaching. The Resurrection convinced them of the truthfulness of his claims. The Holy Spirit built them up, sustained their faith and judgement and enabled them to proclaim boldly and loudly that Jesus was the Christ, God's agent of salvation. Not even threats and persecutions by the highest ruling body, the Sanhedrin, was able to stop them. We have seen their boldness ourselves through the liturgical readings of this paschal season.

Jesus is the Good News that we proclaim. He is and remains the Chief pastor and primary evangeliser in our times. So we study him very closely and attentively in order to learn from him the nature, content and method of evangelisation. I would like to emphasise the need to learn from Jesus his pastoral methodology. We do not do this sufficiently, yet the issue is very important. If we are carrying out his mission, we need to do it his way, since he is the way, the truth and the life. (cf. John 16.6)

As the primary evangeliser, Jesus saw himself as the Good Shepherd. Jesus knows each sheep by name (each sheep is unique to him); he looks after them so that none is exploited by opportunists and egoists or stolen by thieves; he gives each sheep full freedom of movement; he gathers all his sheep into a unity which is sustained by love modelled on his own example (cf. John 13:34-35); he feeds and sustains each sheep with his own life laid down for them. Each of us can continue this reflection by reading meditatively John ch., 10 against the Old

Testament background of Ezekiel ch., 34 in the light of Jesus' entire life.

One inescapable truth about the shepherd/sheep relationship is that it is the sheep who lead the shepherd. Visually it is the shepherd who leads the sheep. But in actual fact, the needs of the sheep for pasture, water and shelter determine where the shepherd leads them. Seen in this light, existentially, it is the sheep who lead and the shepherd who follows. Unless the shepherd allows himself to be led by the real needs of the sheep, the sheep will not survive. His leading the sheep is not arbitrary.

The same applies in a mother/child relationship. Jesus' evangelising activity is essentially one of mothering. In a traditional African family, it is the child who sets the pace of life in the family. Parents, especially mothers, have to adapt their pace of life to that of the child, for the sake of the child. If they do not, the child will grow up to be emotionally and psychologically disturbed, if he or she survives at all. In my Ibibio culture, for instance, even standing quarrels have to be settled before the child is born. Later on all speak baby language and play baby games; in short, the members of the family deliberately make themselves fools for the sake of the child. In this way the child is enabled to grow up in an atmosphere of love, affirmation and full acceptance to become a balanced and responsible person, one that has confidence in its own human reality.

Jesus promoted the human development of his disciples by liberating them from sin, isolationism, and making them an integral part of himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17-19; vine and branches John 15:1-8). He enabled and empowered them with the gift of his spirit and left his entire life's work to them, "young", immature and unreliable as they were.

Moreover, he left them free to carry out this mission as his witnesses according to their strengths, weaknesses and limitations, their personal and communal convictions. He provided no blue print or ready-made answers to guide them in such important questions as the inclusion of the Gentiles and as to who or what was God's ultimate means of salvation, himself or the Torah. He trusted that their three or so years of companionship with him and the enabling presence of his Spirit were sufficient to help them make the right decisions. Through

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN TO AFRICA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COMING SYNOD?

The African Synod will be held at Rome. Could we not ask the organisers to do what ever they can that the African people - next to the African bishops - could be present at the Synod through their own representatives, not only as observers but also as speakers, as witnesses. Not because we do not hear the African bishops, but because lay-people, women, have a voice and a witness of their own, that could be an indispensable contribution next to the words of their bishops.

(Group)

their efforts to discern the right line of action in these matters, the disciples grew mature in their faith and assumed full and successful responsibility for the mission.

Jesus applied the same method in dealing with people even during his lifetime. He always

Jesus enabled and empowered them with the gift of his spirit and left his entire life's work to them, "young", immature and unreliable as they were.

asked those who came to him to articulate their needs. When they were healed or cured, he attributed the cure to the person's own faith, not to himself. Similarly he did not preach at sinners. Instead he shared table fellowship with them. His solidarity with them, respect for their persons and enabling presence in their lives, gave them the necessary power to effect changes in their lives of their own accord (cf. Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10).

PASTORAL EXPECTATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN SYNOD

In short, Jesus' disciples and audience were the primary route which he travelled in his work of evangelisation and the goal of his mission. What of the Church in Africa? If the Church in Africa is to continue Jesus' mission effectively and build up mature Christians to serve as Jesus' witnesses, it must learn to allow the African Church, African Christian Catholics to assume full responsibility for their faith. In what follows we shall try to identify the categories of people who need to be built up by the Church for this witnessing activity as well as areas of focus.

God's People Called The Laity

Often when we speak of the laity we give the impression that they are illiterate, ignorant and

If the Church in Africa is to continue Jesus' mission effectively and build up mature Christians to serve as Jesus' witnesses, it must learn to allow the African Church, African Christian Catholics to assume full responsibility for their faith.

unskilled people. But among these laity are professionals: doctors, lawyers, architects, psychologists, professors, theologians, parents and heads of families. The Church needs to recognise the various gifts of these people and make use of them in the work of evangelisation or rather create opportunities for them to use their gifts in this work. Because they live life in "the secular world", they can become more effective than the clergy and the religious in its evangelisation. There is urgent need to equip Christ's faithful through solid theological education to bear witness to Christ in our times.

Bishops and Pastors

The Church in Africa is described as a "young" Church; pastors are also seen as young and inexperienced leaders no matter how old they may be. The predominant feeling one gets, rightly or wrongly, is that the old Church is "watching" these young church leaders, not "watching over" them. As a result they become

crippled. Whatever initiatives they may have are stifled by fear of repercussions. This is not how Jesus prepared his Apostles for leadership in his mission. The older Church needs to learn to trust leaders in the African Church believing that they have full faith in Christ and can assume full responsibility for the Church in the continent.

Women

The strength of a nation lies in its women who are uniquely entrusted by God and nature with the formation and upbringing of children. There is a saying that to educate a woman is to educate a whole nation. In Africa, one has only to look around to see that women are there with the children: in the churches, in market places, in the schools, in the streets, in refugee camps. When the men go away the women are there with the children. In Africa, most women are the breadwinners of the family. They bear the burden of their husbands as well as of their children.

It is therefore very necessary for the Church in Africa to enable women in every way to personally experience the Good News and to equip them to become effective agents of evangelisation. For those who are mothers, their work of evangelisation of the child begins in the womb, in so far as the mother's dispositions affect the child in the womb. By taking a bold and courageous step to enhance and include women in its pastoral team, the Church in Africa can help the universal Church to overcome its traditional and deeply ingrained phobia concerning women. Through his phobia, the Church in the past has undermined and excluded a most powerful resource that God has given it for the work of evangelisation. This needs to change.

Religious Men and Women

The *Lineamenta* of the African Synod hardly recognised the existence of religious men and women. The idea the Church projected was mainly that of bishops, priests, deacons and seminarians working for the people. Yet, we have in religious congregations a rich and dynamic power and energy for evangelisation. The past and present history of evangelisation in Africa testifies to the great work undertaken by religious congregations on behalf of God's

people. The Church in Africa is challenged to see religious as integral members of the one ecclesial family of God. Discriminatory distinctions between diocesan and regular clergy as between indigenous and international congregations is unhealthy. In God's family there are no indigenous and non-indigenous persons. All are God's children with equal rights and dignity.

Youth

Africa is known for the youthfulness of its citizens. The youth form a very large majority of the Christian population. But currently this sector of the population is virtually neglected by Church and State. It is a volatile group. In Nigeria it is said that the only group that Babangida really fears are the university students. In identifying agents of evangelisation,

The Lineamenta believes that the Church in North Africa was overrun by Moslems because no efforts were made to inculturate the faith, or to translate the Bible into the local languages initially. True as this may be, I believe that the real cause was failure of the Church to equip the people to be responsible for their faith at the grassroots level.

the Church needs to address as a matter of urgency the apostolate of the youth and to the youth. Soon this youth will become the elders of tomorrow. Unless something is done soon, they will carry their frustrations and lack of faith into the leadership positions that they will occupy tomorrow, starting with the family.

The Family, Primary Local Church

Though I have kept the family to the last, it is by no means the least. If the Church in Africa is to survive into the third millennium and beyond, then it must undertake as a matter of urgency the apostolate of the family. It must treat and effectively equip the family to serve as the foundational local Church, which the conciliar and post-conciliar documents of the Second Vatican Council say that it is. The family is the primary context in which a child experiences life, religious and otherwise. If parents are not deeply grounded in their faith, they will

We encourage conferences of religious or mixed groups to approach the Bishops who will go to the Synod and share with them on matters concerning the Synod.

We are especially thinking of those UNSPOKEN matters/issues which are present in real life:

- Marriage in Africa.
- "Eucharistic famine" - people do not receive communion because of marital problems.
- New forms of Eucharist ministers who might be able to consecrate the Eucharist for the people etc.
- Rituals/blessings/celebrations to accompany us on life's journey in a pastoral way.
- birth; initiation; marriage; illness; death; harvests suffering, etc.
- The need for conversion to poverty for the sake of the Gospel given the circumstances in Africa.

Regardless of what happens in the Synod we must move with others to alternative ways of being a Church in Africa. Either to take the lead and/or enable leadership in this matter.

How to further the quality of on-going theological formation in Africa for lay people, religious and clergy is of concern.

We must:

- find ways to increase possibilities for this - be creative about the use of existing buildings, etc.
- set up services for funding - e.g. each missionary congregation should make this a priority in terms of funds available.

Finally - PRAY with others for the liberation of the Spirit in Africa and for the courage among the people and ourselves to move forward for the sake of the Gospel.

Finally, following the Synod we hope that our Bishops will evolve a process of post-synodical sharing and planning that involves those who participated in the preparation for the Synod.

(Group)

not be able to provide a faith context for the child as it grows up and imbibes other values from them. Later contacts with the teaching of the Church will convey these teachings as some-

REGARDING THE AFRICAN SYNOD:

The Synod will lead its own life. But it will be a moment in which Africa will be in the forefront of public attention. It may be a moment to stress particular needs of Africa.

The group proposes to SEDOS: In collaboration with other African related organizations like AFJNE and IDOC to organise - during the Synod and in the margin of it - informative activities that bring particular situations and questions of Africa to the fore.

Collaboration of people who participate at the Synod could be sought and activities scheduled when participants at the Synod can be present. The issues could be organised in relation to the major themes of the Synod: evangelisation, dialogue with Islam, justice and peace, information on Africa. Neglected and forgotten themes can be taken up.

To all of us: We should encourage our sisters and brothers and other people to approach their Bishops who will participate in the Synod and to share their concerns with them.

(Group)

thing that is outside real life, or difficult to integrate into real life.

The need to equip the family to serve as the primary local Church becomes very necessary in Africa today with the increasing threat of amoral secularisation, materialism and Islamisation. The *Lineamenta* believes that the Church in North Africa was overrun by Moslems because no efforts were made to inculcate the faith, or to translate the Bible into the local language. True as this may be, I believe that the

real cause was failure of the Church to equip the people to be responsible for their faith at the grassroots level.

It is said that the Church in North Africa at the time had 600 bishoprics, most of which were vacant. That Church also boasted of great theologians: Augustine, Cyril, Cyprian, Origen, Tertullian, Clement. But it would appear that the weight and faith of the Church remained at the top. Hence when the invaders came, the people simply exchanged one set of leaders for

Today we need to extend the concept to include the unification of Africa. We are all aware of the multi-dimensional fragmentation of Africa in terms of: ethnicity, tribalism, North, South, East, West, Central; Angolphone, Francophone and Lusophone. But a united Africa would be a liberated and energised Africa.

another. They even felt better under the new masters and religion since it gave them ample room for participation and for exercising personal responsibility for this religion.

It is my personal belief that the main reason why the Jewish religion is able to survive repeated national disasters is because it is the religion of the family. Parents assume full responsibility for passing the faith on to their children. "You shall hold and teach it to your children to the third and fourth generation". Even the Passover feast, equivalent to our Easter, is a family feast, surrounded by solemn opening and closing assemblies. When their sacred institutions - priesthood, kingship, Temple - were destroyed, they were able to keep up their faith wherever they were deported or scattered.

The same applies to Islam. It is often said in Nigeria that every Moslem is a custodian of the Islamic religion. Parents take the Islamic education and formation of their children very seriously. Many rich Moslems spend their own money in propagating their religion. The same cannot be said of the majority of our Catholics, who feel inadequate about educating their children in the faith and so leave it to catechists or Reverend Fathers and Sisters.

It would be sad to carry this approach to evangelisation into the third millennium. The charismatics and African independent churches are well ahead of the Catholic Church here. Unless Catholic families are enabled to assume full responsibility for their faith and the primary

Africans are by nature a people of the word. Hence they take the word of God very seriously. There is need to make good translations of the Bible available at affordable prices for people in their local languages.

education of their children in this faith, a responsibility to bear witness to Christ by life and proclamation wherever they may be, the Catholic Church in Africa has very little hope of growth in the future. People will continue to exodus to those churches and religions where they feel, among other things, that they can exercise an adult faith.

AREAS TO FOCUS ON AT THE SYNOD

In addition to focusing on people, the Church in Africa also needs to focus on certain key areas that affect its people.

Unification of Africa

A key aspect of Jesus' mission was to gather into a unity his scattered sheep or all the scattered children of God (cf. John 10:16; 11:52). These passages are generally interpreted in the context of ecumenism. Today we need to extend the concept to include the unification of Africa. We are all aware of the multi-dimensional fragmentation of Africa in terms of: ethnicity, tribalism, North, South, East, West, Central; Angolphone, Francophone and Lusophone. But a united Africa would be a liberated and energised Africa. A united Africa is synonymous with an evangelised Africa. The Church in Africa needs to identify and apply ways of harnessing the huge human and natural resources of the continent as part of its efforts to proclaim the Good News to the peoples of Africa.

Socio-Political Justice

The 1974 Synod of Bishops saw concern for social justice as an integral aspect of

Three objectives seem important: promotion of inculturation, the development of communion between Churches and within them, a great evangelising thrust. To do so, it is of capital importance to have greater freedom of speech for all the people of God, particularly among the laity. Thus the need for attitudes, even initiatives, aiming to confirm their gifts and give them confidence in order to draw out a true awareness and thus channel commitments into action.

The formation and development of Small Christian Communities, centred on the meditated and shared Word of God, is a place and a method to do this. But, it is also indispensable that the missionaries allow themselves to be evangelised, converted by the Word, and thus review their attitudes, behaviour and practice.

Proposals:

- The Synod should express the faith, hope and mission of the Church in Africa with regard to the questions and sufferings of the African peoples, with regard to the human challenges that the latter must face, with regard to the situation of the young.

- The Synod should express the faith of African Christians and the Small Christian Communities.

- Local Churches in Africa should call on competent lay people, men and women, to study human problems and seek Christian answers for them.

- Some of these competent lay people as well as African theologians, should be invited to the Synod.

- A second round of consultation of the Christians in Africa should be organised.

- The Synod must speak to the universal Church and to all people of good will, in order to express before everyone the Church's viewpoint on the situation in Africa, to share its faith, its hope and its commitment to live in peace with all people.

(Group)

proclaiming the Gospel. Why is the Church in most African countries today not championing socio-political justice? Often the Church itself is accused of injustice to its workers, women, people with gifts and talents among the clergy and the faithful. To serve as the champion for social justice (not just justice and peace), the Church needs to excel in administering justice to the various categories of its members. It also needs to equip the faithful to claim their rights, social and political, and not to live as refugees in their own countries. The faithful, not simply the pastors in the Church, should be empowered to practise social justice and to speak out against injustice. Then most of the evils afflicting Africa would be eliminated.

Biblical Apostolate

Africans are by nature a people of the word. Hence they take the word of God very seriously. There is need to make good translations of the Bible available at affordable prices for people in their local languages. Given the danger of fundamentalism in reading the Bible, there is also need to provide simple practical guides. More important, the people should also be encouraged to do a critical reflection on their own lives and contexts to ensure that their personal response to the Gospel can serve as "Good News" to others even as did that of the early Christian communities.

Means of Social Communication

The importance of using the means of social communication in evangelisation was mentioned

several times during our discussions. This cannot be over-emphasised. Most people in the rural areas of Africa believe what they hear through the media to be "gospel" truth. In 1973, SECAM held a conference in Ibadan on the means of social communication. Great resolutions were taken, but very little has been implemented since then on a continental scale.

At present, the Church restricts its proclamation of the Gospel to homilies in church on Sundays. But using the means of social communication will enable it to reach people in their homes, offices, car parks and at market. In this way the Church will be following the pastoral methodology of Jesus who preached to people in the synagogues, in their homes, in the streets and wherever people gathered.

The proposals highlighted in this presentation are by no means exhaustive. The one point which they underline is, as was said at the beginning, that we need to study Jesus, the primary evangeliser, very closely and make the African people and their real needs the primary route of our evangelising activity. This will entail allowing him and his Spirit to continue to carry out the mission through us, in their own way. A successful evangelisation will leave in its wake a strong and dynamic African Church where all its mature members will in turn become committed evangelisers. If the African Synod succeeds in bringing this about, it will have done very well.



THE CHURCH CHALLENGED BY THE AFRICAN SITUATION

Bishop Anselme Sanon

WHAT AFRICA?

The old African continent is no longer in "the limelight" of present concern. A feeling of disappointment is more prevalent. In these circumstances, prejudice and generalization run rampant.

Africa remains a continent of contrasts geographically, but especially on the cultural, sociological, political and economic levels.

And yet, Africa remains a diversified whole, multiple and one. Unity is not only continental. It is political, linguistic, sociological and psychological. We speak of "Negritude, African mentality, authenticity, African personality, Africanness", and recently the *Institut des Peuples Noirs* (IPN: Institute of Black People) has been set up. It is to be a reference and promoter of the values of Black people. In speaking of Africa care should be taken to state which Africa is referred to: sub-Saharan, Central, Southern or Eastern Africa.

WHAT CHURCH?

In this diversified but not disparate Africa, which remains "multiple and one", the Church is even accused of having different faces. These seem to be due less to the depth of evangelisation than to the transfer of models by missionary institutes.

The evangelising institution, sometimes unknown to the propagators of the faith, channeled a style of Christianity which reflected that of the countries from which the missionaries came. Christianity is in the minority and Christian communities are only tolerated in

certain countries; in others Christian communities are quasi in the majority (Lesotho, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi) and there are regions where Christianity is an influence without being dominant.

There is also a current of unity that circulates, facilitated by institutions such as the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar. Since Vatican II, Africans have aspired to a unity and a coherence on the continental level.

The alert historian, or even the attentive observer, who wants to follow the trail of the

The fact remains that today Africa is a laboratory, as was the case no doubt before the invasions and bleedings of slavery, and before colonial domination. An almost predictable rupture is taking place which makes of the African world an incandescent laboratory trying both for the Church and for modernity.

moments and dates of this modern evangelisation of Africa, has a certain reference in the archives of the missionary institutes, Propaganda Fide and the colonial powers. But does that render an account of the Acts of the Apostles inscribed in the struggles and the daily life of local communities? The Africa of oral tradition has its accounts of evangelisation inscribed in the living memory of the Christian communities. It is waiting for its historians. This aspect must be remembered in order to

associate the point of view of the evangelisers to that of the evangelised in developing the truth of history.

The fact remains that today Africa is a laboratory, as was the case no doubt before the invasions and bleedings of slavery, and before the colonial dominations. At the moment when missionary evangelisation and colonising mod-

ernity dared to congratulate themselves on their **saga**, everything tended to the contrary. An almost predictable rupture is taking place which makes of the African world an incandescent laboratory trying both for the Church and for modernity. The Latin writer did not know how right he was when he penned these words: "From Africa, always something new". But, at what price?

ANALYTICAL APPROACHES TO THE CHALLENGES

The terms are in vogue: challenges, stakes and strategies. For us a challenge appears as a situation which forces a person or a group to rise up and surpass itself at the risk of losing confidence in itself.

At this level of analysis, the Church appears in Africa as a religious phenomenon,

well organised according to the model of a Latin, modern, Western European society, coming with the material means of the North. It is faced with situations that are sometimes trying for it.

A well-known magazine of the Church of Nigeria, listed these challenges for the Church: inter-religious dialogue; the defense of justice; openness to the mission *ad gentes*, social involvement; youth; economic independence; growing materialism; the phenomenon of sects and fundamentalist groups. Along with these there is the emergence of living ecclesial communities, traditional marriages, cohabitation with Islam, inculturation and charismatic renewal groups.

Let us say that all these are signs of a global phenomenon: Africa's confrontation, on African soil, with different currents affecting evangelisation - traditional and modern. Can Yahweh tell us something today: I see - God sees - the misery of my people?

Economic Models and Programmes

The poverty and impoverishment of the continent are pointed out by everyone. The list of causes grows longer: natural catastrophes; armed conflict; insecurity and lack of peace; urbanization; programmes of structural adjustment, servicing the foreign debt.

These causes are due to foreign factors beyond the control of the continent: a trade economy - which engenders the tension between food production and profit; the deterioration of exchange rates; the deterioration of the social fabric (rural and human); the rejection of appropriate local crafts; the transfer of the products of western technology with the appropriation of the technology itself. Let us

SHARE ECONOMIC RESOURCES

The economy seems to be a strong controlling factor in our evangelising mission. Out of a sense of justice, many of our congregational administrations have had to review and revise their attitudes, criteria and policies for allocation of funds. Some have made an initial infusion of resources, followed by decentralised stewardship, administration and accountability. Why does the central administration of our Church continue to remain so centralised (controlling) regarding common economic resources, at the risk of falling into grave injustices towards other nations and peoples including its own Church personnel?

The invitation to lead and evangelise as Jesus did had a strong impact on our group members. We have gratefully received the message and feel it should be emphasized. We also considered the application of Jesus' methodology to congregational leadership and reflected on how the use of such a method would be truly life-giving to our communities.

(Group)

add to this list the lack of competent and qualified human factors.

Political Aspirations

Africa is on the move. The current seems to be inspired from the West. Recent events show that the Marxist model weighs heavily in the balance. The void that ensues makes countries express their political stakes in other ways. The different African situations can be defined by: those who accede to independence; areas of armed conflict; blocked democratisation processes; countries submitting to the constraints of the P.A.S.; peoples writing new constitutions; countries which have achieved social peace; areas of racial, racist and religious violence. There is a calling into question of the State and power without legality or normality of vertical authority. The crumbling of social democracies and the shaking of Western democracies, all contribute to creating this void or political stagnation.

The democratisation of Africa tends to a national contract (or charter) that serves as a base for national unity. It is sought in slow and laborious dialogue. In other words, the process of social peace passes through peace in the hearts through reconciliation. Some signs can be noted: men, more or less new, emerge; national conferences are held; international civil servants return to their own political arena; The Churches are asked for their contribution; and the non-governmental sector is consciously associated to the social programme.

The Cultural Factors

At a time when uniformity reigns, culture is rising, not as the culture of a class or a dominant nation, but as an unavoidable dimension of our humanity and of each society. The international world is multicultural, intercultural. This factor will no doubt be a salient trait of the 21st century.

In Africa, the frameworks of cultural traditions have been strongly shaken: ethnicity, language, the family, religious traditions and rituals, modes of daily life. But cultural awareness is not new, we have sung Negritude, the African manner - its originality, authenticity, Africanness. The Institute of Black People wants to be the place of awareness which highlights the traits of the unity of the Black or Negro conscience by underlining its identity and openness in spite of the humiliations of history.

In reality, the confrontation is as complex as culture itself. In fact, where is the balance to be established, within the parameters of culture, in relation to technological modernity and a mercantile economy, Latinness and Arabness? Before being a theological concept, inculturation is anthropological, implying both social and cultural dimensions.

The Social Domain

In an analysis of social phenomena, we note: galloping demography; urbanization of cities-villages; youth; the rise of women; associative phenomena; socio-cultural impoverishment in the areas of education, health. Social and cultural disintegration occurs to the detriment of

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In reality, where is the balance to be established, within the parameters of culture, in relation to technological modernity and a mercantile economy, Latinness and Arabness?

rural life and is more marked on the outskirts of the cities-villages. The calling into question of the traditional is generalised within older institutions and in social behaviour, especially in urban areas. In this context, mechanisms of solidarity and protection become lax and prove to be inadequate. There ensues psychological, social and organisational poverty that are determinant factors in material impoverishment.

The Sphere of Religion

There is a growing movement that impels Africans toward their mysterious or spiritual sources. The text of the constitutive Congress of the IPN recognises that religion is a source of inspiration for Black civilisations, including traditional African religions and those which are non-African.

In meeting the Voodoo priests recently, Pope John Paul II said: "Vatican II recognised that in the various religious traditions, there is something true, something good, seeds of the Word". So-called animist or pagan religions aimed at seeking the spirits and the Spirit through the experience of initiation and cosmobiological rites. On the basis of its profound religiosity, Black Islam has shed light on the name of the unique God without being able to go beyond a ritualistic and symbolic mentality.

Fundamentalists, especially Islamic but sometimes Christian, are at times breakers of idols or amalgams of their practice. A text by Father Boulad, SJ., distinguishes six (6) faces of Islam, from laicising and modernizing Islam to the mystic (Sufism) and popular Islam; going through official or hierarchical Islam to political, fundamentalist Islam. Someone asked him if the same division could not be found in our modern Christian world.

CHALLENGES TO THE AFRICAN CHURCHES

The picture painted above helps us understand the complexity of the African situation where is being played out the present and the future of the kingdom of God, through the Churches, for the good of African Christian humanity. The Church certainly cannot be a Church at rest; it is being challenged. These challenges come from various areas. Does it not seem that God is saying: "I have seen the misery of my people".

The conciliar current that certain African voices wanted to actualise for the Church in Africa has become a synod movement: the special Synod of Bishops for the Evangelisation of

Evangelisation of A Continent by Itself

The so-called African Synod progresses not without ambiguities. On the one hand, Africans are as silent as the voiceless while agents in university circles and elsewhere speak, sign documents including analyses and summaries in their name. On the other hand, the expectations of the African Churches, like all aspirations, are confused while the discourses want to be clear, bearing on: the strength of the African Church and its type of relationship with Rome (Peter, the Roman curia, Latinness); moral or pastoral problems, especially marriage (the family, polygamy). There is disappointment expressed at not seeing exposed those questions that smell of foreign expectations: the pill, married priests, communities without a priest, lay ministries.

The Church in Africa is lucky that the Gospel can be received by societies that join their will for cultural identity and their aspirations for human and social progress. The Synod can introduce this dynamic.

"Synod" means walking together and could very well be the "council tree" of the family. In that circle, no one says that the other is right or wrong; each one states what he has not done, admits what he has done and why he did it. The objective is clear: How is the Church of Africa going to become aware of itself, of its responsibilities, with its means and its limitations, to evangelise its own continent.

Africa. This ambitious project is in its first stages. We know the five articulations of the *Instrumentum Laboris*: evangelisation, achieved through the proclamation of the Good News; the process of inculturation; inter-religious dialogue; human promotion and finally the communication of the message through words, actions and witness.

As the African proverb says: "While someone washes your back, wash your own stomach". The Church of the missionaries was a church that had its back washed by reinforcement in personnel, money and equipment. Just as when the colonial blanket was removed, the underdevelopment became apparent, so the exhaustion of the missionary implantations has

laid bare the frailty of the African Churches. For the most part these are theologically, spiritually and economically underdeveloped in spite of the fervour of their faith.

Religion in the Cultural and Economic Sectors

One of the elements of the Synod document escapes most of the commentators - the dynamic that supports the chapters. The document revolves around three axes: *religion* (traditional, evangelising) permeates the *cultural* and *economic-political* sectors. Africa remains true to itself whenever it unites culture-agriculture and worship. This dynamic makes certain civilisations uncomfortable. The "Working Document" of the African Synod has adopted the following approach:

Evangelisation (I)
of Culture (II)
of religion (III) (worship)
human promotion (IV and V)

Evangelisation is a project of Church and society. The cultural void of the West in the face of crushing economic growth and without any other aim but progress, has led societies to where they are today. Evangelisation of the modern world, values, dialogue peace, culture as proposed by the Synod document, is announced in a series of first steps: The Church in Africa is lucky that the Gospel can be received by societies that join their will for cultural identity and their aspirations for human and social progress. The Synod can introduce this dynamic.

The Newness for The Church of The African Situation

The bi-millennium Church is an expert in humanity; but a humanity on the move. This supposes a constant renewal of its experience in contact with human realities. The aspect of newness contains two ideas:

- 1) "*neos*" is what is recent, actual, in vogue;
- 2) "*ekainos*" is what has not yet been discovered; what is new and gives a permanent dimension to the real.

Up to now, the Church has occupied itself with and has been concerned about Africa. But has Africa had or taken the time to express itself as Church? With the exception of the Churches in Egypt and Ethiopia, the Churches

PANEL

Sister Teresa referred to the fact that we come from an authoritarian, hierarchical Church tradition. She also talked about the same authoritarian attitude being present in Nigeria. This is being challenged by society. The democratisation process going on in many African countries might rub off also on the Church and Church authorities. Such authoritarian leadership is not according to the Gospel of Jesus and it has to be challenged. Leadership is a ministry, a service within the Christian community.

Since Vatican II we speak of the Church as a communion, a theology of communion, but we have not begun to put that into practice. We have not yet drawn the conclusions of such a theology. And I say "we", because each one of us, beginning with myself, have to be more converted to this vision of Church as Communion and to the way of dialogue. The Church, and that is all of us, has to get back to the radicality of the Gospel; we have to refocus on communion, dialogue and service, practiced by Jesus of Nazareth.

Formation of Future Priests

Are we perpetuating the training of future priests as a separate caste? It is basic for the training of future priests that the idea of a serving ministry takes central place: priesthood is ministry in the centre of Christian life, not outside or above. For such formation, we need not only professors in scripture, theology, etc., but we need formators who can impart a real spirituality of priesthood as service. It is also important that a profound theology of communion be inculcated, and that seminarians learn how to relate to and work with the people, to spread the Good News together. Training of the faithful is important - but seminarians have to learn how to train the faithful.

(Cont.)

(Panel cont.)

FORMATION OF LAY LEADERS

Sister Teresa said that we have to become conscious of how the Spirit is forming the people. Just as at Pentecost, the Spirit empowers people to witness to their faith, so we have first of all to recognise and accept the Spirit at work in lay people. In theory this is not new, but in practice, what Vatican II has to say about this has not yet trickled down in many places in Africa and on other continents. This reality of recognising the Spirit at work in people expresses itself surely in Small Christian Communities, when people feel accepted and free enough to express themselves. Where such basic communities do not exist, we should work with all possible means to establish them.

On the other hand, lay people also need skill-training, formation in precise skills to perform indeed certain ministries within the community; and to perform them as well and properly as priests, so that such lay ministry will be accepted by the people. People do not want second hand services.

Looking at Africa we may see negative aspects both in Church and in Society. What strikes me about Africa is the joy, the happiness, the celebrations, the exuberance, the lively liturgy, the enthusiasm which is overwhelming there. That is why, after a few years here in Rome, I want to go back to Africa. There is life in Africa; there is a future for Africa.

INCULTURATION

The question of inculturation is not static but always in flux - like culture itself, changing and dynamic. Inculturation is not going back to archaeological or museum realities; modernity is more and more a way of life in Africa. One has therefore to blend things. However, real inculturation will have to be done by Africans themselves.

Fr Daniel Corijn, OMI

south of the Sahara have bearely celebrated their first centenary. Many communities are at the catecumenal stage, reacting for the first time to the echoes of the Gospel. Others are neophytes, still living in the memory of their baptism. Moreover, these Churches or dioceses are rarely well established in personnel, finance and ecclesial institutions - seminaries, novitiates, institutes and universities.

Our leaders and future formators are educated far from home, in the diaspora, without unity of thought, dispersed and often uprooted. Communities develop presenting new situations more comparable to apostolic age communities than to the present Church.

We are the Gospel for our peoples and for the whole Church, that is to say, the Good News; because the Gospel is not reduced to texts but it is the lived proclamation of this Good News. A situation arises where God is present, makes himself present and renders conversion imperative. We bring to the consciousness of the Church the experience that it

Up to now, the Church has occupied itself with and has been concerned about Africa. But has Africa had or taken the time to express itself as Church?

had of the catecumenate, of neophytes, of Christian initiation. While living the first centuries of our evangelisation, we reenact the evangelical account; we continue the Acts of the Apostles in the footsteps of the Risen Lord. The situation is not easy because the Church has the feeling that it has reached the fullness of Christian experience and the apostolic tradition. It seems to get inspiration more from the past than from the future of human history.

Vatican II's openness to the nations, in recognising their language, cultures and religious traditions remains a risk for the Church. Will she be able to say that the Church is being inculturated where God is present, incarnating its Work in new dialects, becoming African in its African members? Taking such a risk is possible only if the Church believes with all its being in the Holy Spirit. New choices are imperative.

Among them:

- Translation of the Word into different languages;
- Revision or composition of new liturgies, not the simple adoption or adaptation of fossilised ritual formulas;
- Taking into account the theology of the sacraments where the Council of Trent left off by stripping it of its symbolic dimension;
- A new look at the theology of the communion of saints, of the baptismal fraternity which was part of the first Christian revolutions;
- The presence of the Spirit in the world and in the Church.

That is what Vatican II promises in the Decree "Ad Gentes" (No. 22) when it says that everything must be submitted to a new examination, a new investigation.



THE CHALLENGE OF INCULTURATION

Bishop Anselme Sanon

Since Vatican II, the Church has courageously taken a new look at itself, at its past and present and especially at humanity and culture: traditional and modern, secularised or religious. Likewise, it has turned a new look at the other religious traditions, recognising in them that search for traces of God in the conscience and heart of men. (P. Gravrand). Concepts and attitudes have gradually taken shape through meetings, dialogue and inculturation. Attempts in missiology have spoken of expectations, adaptation, inculturation.

The Synod document, the *Lineamenta*, followed by the answers to the questionnaires, all

After having affirmed and recognised the seeds of the Word in the Greek and Latin cultures, the Fathers of the Church from Africa come to recognise the global reality of these cultures and their more or less great ability to express the Faith.

approach these points with more or less accuracy. Thus the *Instrumentum Laboris*, faithful to the dynamics of the African Synod, revolves around evangelisation by the paths of culture, inter-religious dialogue, human promotion (17-20).

Much is said and written about inculturation. The reality of culture is permanent in humanity; but the modern Church's awareness is recent. This awareness was activated by the Church's contact with modern cultures as well as traditional African cultures.

The Church and Culture

The document of the International Theological Commission and the publications of the

Pontifical Council for Culture, especially articles by Father Herve Carrier, SJ. explore this connection. What follows is an outline which would need further development:

If God speaks to me, let him speak in my language; Revelation occurs through human means (Heb. 1:1-3).

The prologue to St. John's Gospel (Jn. 1, 1-8) shows us the Incarnate Word turned toward God (in Theon) and coming into this world moving towards humanity. Thus, in the Person of the Son, the Divine being and the Human becoming of Jesus are united. It is a gratuitous Incarnation; God coming to seek out and save what he had created in his image and likeness.

The Word became incarnate; he became man, knew the paths of humanity in their fullness.

After having affirmed and recognised the seeds of the Word in the Greek and Latin cultures, the Fathers of the Church from Africa, especially from Egypt (Alexandria) come to recognise an important element in the meeting of cultures: it is the global reality of these cultures and their more or less great ability to express the Faith.

At this level, surprisingly, the primitive Church borrowed a great deal from various cultures, notably:

- Initiation into the mysteries becomes the place for expressing baptismal practice and faith. Through the symbolism of initiation-enlightenment, the community lives and achieves the fullness of its Christian birth and confirmation.
- The dogma of the divine maternity of Mary, mother of Jesus, supposes a whole cultural reflection on her person and her relationships transposed on the level of Faith and the realities of divine grace (Council of Ephesus).

- The personality of Christ, Word of God and Son of Man, is also defined through a cultural reflection, or better, through a mutual exchange between Faith and philosophical culture of the time;
- We can also mention the creation of the term fraternity (*adelphotes*) which does not exist in biblical Greek and in Hebrew, it is different from Philadelphia (brotherly love).

The Gospel appears then as a leaven of social, cultural, moral, spiritual and intellectual transformation.

Two schools of thought had difficulty in understanding each other: the ascending theology of Alexandria and the descending theology of Antioch.

For the first, the Word came down into human nature; for the other, the Word assumed human nature.

We had to wait for the 5th century and the Council of Chalcedon to define the formula: "Jesus Christ, true God and true man."

In the person of Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, God keeps the fullness of his rights, and in the man Jesus, humanity is not mutilated. At that time, reflection turned its attention more on the human and spiritual faculties of the human person, that is, soul, body, spirit, heart, and intelligence.

Along the way, the Church progressively took on the surrounding cultures to express the tenets of its faith. Strong challenges came especially during the 15th century from the Americas and India. Missionary expansion spread without any real effort at inculturation, in spite of warnings from church officials.

Without neglecting the human and spiritual dimension of the person, the modern world insists on the socio-cultural dimension. All research takes into account social psychology, ethno-sociology, social and cultural anthropology, allowing a better approach to the human phenomenon.

Research in inculturation cannot be done without sociology or recourse to anthropology which opens the way to dogma and theology.

The second principle of inculturation is anthropological discernment undertaken in the

light of the Gospel, notably of man created in the image and likeness of God (Gn. 1,26). It is a question of detecting and revealing, in the heart of man and culture, the profoundly human truth that is hidden there in order to evangelise the culture by rooting the Gospel in the cultural.

We must avoid the danger that awaits those who, starting with sociological results (ex. African marriage) approach what they consider practical applications with biblical and theological quotations.

The principal areas of inculturation are sketched in the Synod document, the *Instrumentum Laboris*. Inculturation is a process

Missionary expansion spread without any real effort at inculturation, in spite of warnings from church officials.

It is a question of detecting and revealing, in the heart of man and culture, the profoundly human truth that is hidden there in order to evangelise the culture by rooting the Gospel in the cultural.

(56), essential to the translation of the Bible (57), the domain of liturgy (58), pastoral work (59).

Some specific elements in the *Instrumentum Laboris* which stress inculturation are:

- The Church as family (of God; the family as domestic church (25,38);
- Parish - structure of communion (59);
- Theological research (African theology) (60);
- Catechesis (44);
- Living small Christian communities (45);
- Formation (27, 28, 29, ff).

Disputed questions have not been forgotten:

- The diversity of peoples and their cultures (64);
- Modernity, especially urbanization in the face of new mentalities (65);

- Marriage and family life (68);
- Priestly formation and religious life (69);
- African spirituality (70);
- Health services and healing (71);
- Ancestors and the communion of saints (72);
- Traditional African religions (73);
- The Church as family and fraternal communion or fraternity developed in the *Lineamenta*.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* appropriates the descriptive definition of inculturation presented in the extraordinary Synod of 1985 (c.6) and repeated in *Redemptoris Missio* (52). The word, inculturation, means an intimate transformation of authentic cultural values by their integration

We have to recall, as the document does, that inculturation is not a new missionary methodology for a new phase of evangelisation. It is a new awareness, a logical demand of the incarnation, an urgent historical moment.

into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in the various human cultures" (49). Inculturation concerns Christology before ecclesiology. In fact, it is a matter of redemptive incarnation; Jesus is glorified, of course, but his incarnate person continues his suffering presence in humanity today and his redemptive, saving strength redeems not only individual persons but also cultures, societies, nations.

We have to come back to the axis: religion, culture, economy; or again, cult-culture-agriculture, to measure the anthropological field of the culture which is social, economic, political, religious, spiritual and even mystical. Thus we have to aim at:

- a culture of development and human promotion;
- a culture of justice, peace, human rights and the human person;

- a culture of economy;
- a culture of politics;
- a culture of religion and spirituality.

For all those areas concern human beings and society; they have a human dimension. They are our field of evangelisation. They constitute the place of inculturation.

Going back to the methodical and pedagogical process of inculturation, we can underline the following stages:

- Stage of sociological surveys;
- Stage of anthropological elaborations;
- Dogmatic, Christological moment (Council of Chalcedon: 451);
- Review of theological explanations or conclusions;

Pastoral applications

This moment is derived from the third principle of inculturation: ecclesial communion (*communio ecclesiae*). "We hold the same thing but not in the same manner."

The working document for the African Synod evokes:

- The dogmatic foundation of inculturation (17,49);
- The theological aspects (50,52,60);
- It sketches the field of pastoral applications (53,54);
- The acceptance of their validity (66,61) without forgetting the possible reactions (62).

In conclusion, we have to recall, as the document does, that inculturation is not a new missionary methodology for a new phase of evangelisation. It is a new awareness, a logical demand of the incarnation, an urgent historical moment (*kairos*) for the proclamation of the Gospel and the credibility of the Church in Africa; but it remains a never ending process.

To stop the process, as the Western Church experienced for a while, is to lack part of the mission of evangelisation and to lack fidelity to the Lord and his Spirit, the master of our lives and of history.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

At certain periods in the life of the Church, the whole people of God were theologians, such as in Alexandria and Carthage. In fact, the Church raised the level of the theological awareness of the people of God to the measure that the latter became capable of making their spiritual reading from daily life. This was theology in action, where words become reality in the experience of faith and where Christians are made by building the Church. In this order of ideas, we propose five perspectives as being propitious to the birth and growth of our churches; it is a way for them to appropriate what they live. They are missionary dimension, solidarity, fraternity, spirituality and "synod-ness."

MISSIONARY CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH

For us, the missionary character of the Church expresses the dimension, the permanent being and the moral obligation that flows from the mission of evangelisation (Mt. 28 and Mk. 16). This dimension takes on a particular note in the period that we are going through. In fact, the logical consequence of the period of missionary institutes is the taking over of their activities by the local churches. Between the period of implantation and that of real foundation, there is a 'rupture', which gives birth to the local, diocesan or particular church by permitting its advent. We can speak of a period of succession, of transition. It demands much flexibility, tact in dialogue and mutual confidence.

St. Paul's Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles give many examples. What awareness of itself does the local or particular church have? What respect do we give it? If we respect the bishop, the successor of the Apostles in the apostolic college, the same respect is due to the local Church, as shown in the Epistle to the Romans and the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

This missionary character of the Church expresses a clear awareness of being Church, born through evangelisation, maintained by it, and intended for that purpose. This missionary dimension is the spreading of the Good News,

first of all within the local Church, and then by its diffusion through its works and finally by its expansion to other horizons (10,13) Missionary-ness and apostolicity mingle as a river refers to its source.

The Churches of Africa must recognise themselves and be recognised as churches, for they are admitted to the same heritage from Christ. The problem of the translation of the Bible concerns not only a text, but also the birth of a new tradition. The apostolic tradition must continue to develop an African tradition in the area of liturgy (African liturgy), catechetics (experience of catechists and catechetical manuals), in ways of being Church, pastoral organisation and socio-charitable services.

Communities without a priest experience the lack of Eucharist (eucharistic famine, hunger). It seems that these communities would be first of all communities of the Word and prayer. From there would flow ministries, including sacramental ministries.

The time of missionary, of transition implies a covenant, an ecclesial contract whose spirit is solidarity in the Church; a partnership between missionary institutes and the local Church. This mutual willingness demands measures for accompaniment involving dialogue and coordination.

Specific forms this would take are:

- the administration of apostolic personnel;
- the acquisition and administration of financial resources obtained in the name of the mission. Here we must mention training in church economics and the administration of public (political) things as an indispensable part of Christian education. The liberation of women is largely conditioned by this.
- the promotion of vocations. The same grace of the call addressed to the local Church marks sons who respond as diocesan priests or as candidates for religious and missionary life.
- the strategic places where the presence of the Church is committed to the future; for example, schools that are less and less accessible to poor families;

PROPOSALS REGARDING THE FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AND PRIESTS.

Regarding the formation of priests and religious the question seems not to be so much regarding the quantity of the formation; it is the orientation of it that is questioned and that should be examined:

- *The inculturation and insertion of the formation itself.*
- *Its relation to real life situations of the people.*
- *Political education and formation regarding justice issues.*
- *The spiritual formation related to all this.*
- *The strategy of Propaganda Fide to bring people to Rome for their formation through its scholarship policy.*

To all our institutes: Each of us should encourage and sustain formation in Africa itself.

- *We should examine our own scholarship policies (favouring formation in Africa: sometimes congregations are requested to help in particular cases).*
- *We should review where we send our own members to get their formation.*

Our group proposes to SEDOS: to convoke a meeting or forum for the persons who are in charge of formation in our respective institutes and congregations. The purpose is to exchange experiences, orientations, and to see what can be done. A first meeting should indicate possibilities for further initiatives and orientation of the reflection.

(Group)

- theological reflection and its elaboration, notably linked to inculturation;

- setting up, achieving and evaluating pastoral and socio-pastoral programmes;

- promoting human rights through programmes for justice and peace (19). The Churches have to define the conditions and demands of their participation in the process of the present democratisation of Africa.

- greater access, by local churches, to the mediation powers of communication. At the moment, it is restricted. Media and communication are not developed. Subscriptions to missionary magazines are financially onerous. A local communication network isn't developed, but the mission is communication (20; 130-132).

In conclusion, we should work together as Church to develop and make the Church.

Solidarity in The Church as Communion and Family

Solidarity is the new name for peace, according to John Paul II in the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Solidarity is based on communion. It is the concrete form of communion in the Church. Communion (*koinia*), was fundamental in the primitive Church. It implies, among other things:

Opening to other Churches within the large Church; an awareness of being sons and daughters in the same Church by the circulation of the same life of Christ that makes of us, not pieces but living members of the Church family; a willingness to bear the joys and sufferings of the whole body.

Pope John Paul II insists that this communion must be affective and effective. The theology of communion is a theology of relationship and we know the importance that relationship has in the African mentality. We expect that each one of us recognises Christ present: in his own human body, his sacramental body, the Eucharist; his fraternal body, the other, a brother or sister in faith and the Eucharist.

Fraternity

Fraternity (cf. 1P. 21-22), expresses the fact of being brother or sister in Christ; brothers and sisters in the Church. In short, fraternity, living fraternal communion and charity was very strong in the Churches of Africa and Syria.

We can say that the Church is a fraternal hierarchy and that it creates fraternity among nations. It is fraternal thanks to the Word, to the Faith and to the sacraments that mold the ecclesial family. In this perspective, the problems of relationship within the hierarchical Church can have a happy ending only if the Church is a fraternal hierarchy within which family attitudes are alive: father, mother, relationship of fraternity. These attitudes find their normal expression in: inter-human and social dialogue; inter-religious, inter-confessional and ecumenical dialogue; inter-cultural dialogue, nourished by a fundamental attitude of fraternity within each church and toward the churches.

Spirituality

The traditional African vision bears a desire, a hunger for an integral, total life. This perception of African society is in opposition to modern society. Evangelisation itself has not always responded to this profound vision by which faith wants to relate to culture, social, economic and religious life.

Synodality

"Conversation is a gift" says an African proverb. In the old African Church, there was a tradition of synodality. In the year 200, we find it in the Churches of Africa; in Carthage, Alexandria, Egypt and Hippo. Contrary to the Churches of Rome, and especially of Gaul, the Churches of Africa loved to meet, often in Synods or councils.

Dialogue, *palabre*, in the African tradition, means that the word is central to give birth and to bring to maturity personal life and the life of social relationships. *Synodality* says that in the Church of Christ, the Word of God is central for the life of communities and relations among the Church. In its light dialogue comes to strengthen communion and unity.

What Church?

In the recession noted in Africa today, the Church could appear as a refuge to the detriment of her evangelisation mission, for to be

converted in Christ is to choose to be responsible before others (family, social group, associations and organisations). It is to choose to live according to God; and for the African Churches, it is to stand a man on his feet, remembering that the Glory of God is the living person. It is to put African societies on their feet and not be a refuge for them.

At present in the dynamics of the coming Synod, the Churches in Africa must renew this choice for a culture of life and hope. To do so, they must be committed to: evangelisation as missionary witness; a pedagogy of fraternal relationship in dialogue; openness to traditional

What has permitted Africa to survive many dramas imposed by history is the dynamism of this spiritual vision: the Spirit and the spirits are present, thus a trusting opening to life, a basic choice for a culture of life and hope. This hope lasts to this day and we must confirm it by calling on the spiritual vision of the African societies.

and modern communication, and a fight for justice, peace and human promotion, in order to be responsible for building Africa through its sons and daughters.

One of the essential demands is still the search for an authentic spiritual life and the witness of a life of holiness in communities and in families - for the saints are the true witnesses and profiles of the Church. We ardently hope that the Church will be invited by the Synod to be witness and leaven of hope and life in a prophetic way, by unveiling the grace of God hidden in African realities; in presenting the ultimate dimension (eschatological or critical) of each situation; in being the moderator in dialogue; in being trusted to be at the heart of all the situations with which our societies are faced.

AFRICA: QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS TO THE CHURCH

A RESPONSE TO THE SEDOS SEMINAR

Libanos Ayele, SMC
Godfrey Odigbo, CSSp

The annual SEDOS seminar at Villa Cavalletti in May 1993 was very important for us, as Africans, because of its theme: "Africa: Questions and Proposals to the Church". The Seminar was a great opportunity for the 125 participants, representing 52 missionary institutes, to reflect on the work of evangelisation in Africa today in view of the

One cannot but wonder at the number of beautifully written documents and statements on inculturation that exist both in particular Churches in Africa and in the universal Church. However, the state of the reality of inculturation in most parts of the African Church leads one to ask whether church authorities are really serious with the issue of inculturation.

forthcoming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Many of the institutes have African members. The participants were able to draw from the rich experiences of the various institutes to help identify some of the common pastoral concerns within Africa that need urgent attention at the Synod.

The assembly listened to six thematic presentations shared between Bishop Anselme Sanon and Sr. Teresa Okure, SHCJ. Participants shared in language groups - English, French and Spanish following the presentations.

Listening to Bishop Sanon's reflections on inculturation, one could understand that, even though something has been done to foster the process of reciprocal and critical interaction between the Christian faith and some aspects of African culture, this process has not been very effective. There appears to be some painful discrepancy between theory and practice. One cannot but wonder at the number of beautifully written documents and statements on inculturation that exist both in particular Churches in Africa and in the universal Church. However, the state of the reality of inculturation in most parts of the African Church leads one to ask whether church authorities are really serious with the issue of inculturation. For example, the Documents of Vatican II and Pope Paul VI in his message "*Africae Terrarum*" in 1967 expressed what should be done. Yet more than 25 years later we still seem to be asking what should be done. One would like to see a real change of heart during the Synod and a strong resolve in the African Church and the universal Church to remove the obstacles, real and imaginary, on Africa's road to inculturation. One would wish the Synod to translate all the speeches and written documents into plans for concrete projects that will facilitate the process of inculturation and launch the Church in Africa into the third millennium. In the area of liturgy, for example, there should be concrete projects for developing African rites for the celebration of the Eucharist and marriage that will correspond more to the African genius, religious sense and way of celebration.

THE LAITY

A closer examination of the history of many particular Churches in Africa shows the indispensable role the lay faithful have played

and are still playing in their growth and development. We should be aware of the confusion, frustration and sense of helplessness many members of the laity experience in some parts of Africa when they wish to fulfill their role in the Christian community in response to their baptismal vocation and the call of Vatican II. They are looked upon by some members of the hierarchy as rivals. Again, one sees an unhealthy tension between theology, church structure and praxis. Many of these lay Christian faithful are professionals and specialists in their various fields. Given adequate formation in their Christian faith they can be very effective agents of evangelisation.

It will be important for the Synod to recognise the position and role of lay faithful, men and women, in the future of the African Church. It should take up as a major pastoral priority a programme in all countries for their proper formation to equip them to take their place in the ecclesial community and society.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Women in Africa still labour under cultural and religious prejudices, and these attitudes exist also in the African Church. As "mother of the living" it is her principal and unique role to transmit and foster life in every sense - physical, religious and cultural. As safeguards and transmitters of culture and more attuned to human values, women can play very important roles in the evangelisation of Africa in this stage of its cultural evolution. The statistics of church attendance by women and the abounding evidence of their devotion, dedication and loyalty show that they are the main supporters of many local churches in Africa.

During the Synod, one would like to see a "conversion" in the prevailing attitude towards women. There should be a programme of formation for women in their "motherhood" role both in the physical and spiritual sense. They should be properly equipped to function as catechists and perform other ministries in the Church. They should be given due representation in councils and be involved in decision making at various levels of the Church's life.

AN ECCLESIOLOGY OF COMMUNION

Through common reflections and sharing, we became more aware that one of the most

fundamental problems of the African Church is the type of ecclesiology and model of Church being lived out in the particular Churches and in their relation with the universal Church.

For inculturation to become a reality in the African Church, an ecclesiology is demanded which makes room for legitimate diversity in the experience and expression of faith of particular Churches within the one universal Church. True inculturation demands an ecclesiology which recognises that the universal Church exists in and through particular Churches. Every particular Church, in the bond of union with Peter and other churches, is fully Church. The Bishops belonging to the College of the Apostles under Peter have a divine mandate to rule in their various dioceses and are not delegates of the Pope.

A recommitment to the implications of a theology of communion will mean that the Church in Africa will be allowed to take her place as an adult member of the universal communion and enter into serious dialogue with the

During the Synod, we hope that the universal Church will give the African Church the encouragement, trust and confidence she needs to take up the challenges facing her as she goes about resolving her problems.

complex African reality. During the Synod, we hope that the universal Church will give the African Church, the encouragement, trust and confidence she needs to take up the challenges facing her as she goes about resolving her problems. This will involve the freedom to transform inherited church structure and organisation, to develop contextual African theology and spirituality, pastoral methods, new liturgical rites, priestly and religious formation programmes for her evangelising mission in the third millennium. This type of relationship between the universal Church and the African Church will be more in keeping with the example of Christ, who did not give detailed and controlled instructions to his disciples on how to set about their work. Rather, he allowed them to live through these problems as they made the effort to resolve them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A lived theology of the Church as the family or people of God, in the spirit of Vatican II will enable the Church in Africa to give lay men and women their rightful places in local Church communities. It will lead to the formation of a people of God who diverse ministries involving more lay faithful. It will in turn ensure that candidates for ordained ministry are formed for

The youthfulness and joy that vibrate in these African Churches are life-giving! It is our hope that this youthfulness and hope will find the chance and condition to flourish and be fertile during the Synod.

collaborative ministry with lay people and religious in parish teams. The laity will no longer be seen by some members of the hierarchy as rivals, but as indispensable collaborators for the building up of the Church.

THE ROLE OF MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

The African Church is built on the work of missionary institutes who planted and nurtured the seed of this particular Church. Reflecting together on the present situation of the African Church awakened genuine interest and concern for Africa and moved some of the participants in the seminar to do some self-questioning. Missionaries in the past cannot be blamed for bringing with them a model of church which was then quite widespread and which is still one of the problems of the African Church. However, there is no excuse today, after

Vatican II, to keep representing such a model. Through their solidarity and in the spirit of communion, missionary institutes still need to provide the African Churches with resources and personnel for primary evangelisation, and special apostolates such as the formation of the laity - men and women and the youth. The African Church also needs specialists to help her in research to promote renewed pastoral efforts.

Some missionary institutes have African members. Are these members accepted and treated as adult partners in the mission of the evangelisation of Africa? These institutes should give their African members the kind of inculturated formation that will enable them to live out their vocation in their African culture.

CONCLUSION

One of the points stressed by both Bishop Sanon and Sr. Teresa was "Hope", a "look beyond difficult situations." We think that one of the common characteristics of the local Churches in Africa is youthfulness, a youthfulness which transmits hope. The youthfulness and joy that vibrate in these churches are life-giving! It is our hope that this youthfulness and hope will find the chance and condition to flourish and be fertile during the Synod in spite of the conflict situations that exist in the continent.

While the announcement of the venue for the Synod was welcomed by some, it instilled fear and reservation for its "Africanness" in others. May our faith in the ever present and active Spirit transform these feelings into renewed enthusiasm to work and pray for the success of the Synod. We believe that God who has already given many signs of the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church in Africa will achieve his purposes for this continent.

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NEWS

SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR 1994

Next year's Cavalletti seminar will be dedicated to Asia. It will be the first part of a wider programme continued in other one-day sessions. Under the main title: *Asia: Challenges to The Church*, we shall reflect on the pastoral realities of the Churches in INDIA, CHINA AND JAPAN, facing the third millennium. Other areas, like South East Asia, Indonesia, Oceania, will be taken up later on.

SEDOS - SYNOD FOR AFRICA

Following the request of the participants of the seminar in Cavalletti the Executive Committee has started to prepare for our members some activities on the coming synod for Africa. We are all invited to accompany this major event of the African Church with our prayer and reflections. This Synod, which is a grace for the African Church presents to our congregations an opportunity to consider our own options as religious working in Africa. According to your wishes, we hope to facilitate a few conferences which can illuminate us about the different aspects of the Synod - an event that will become a missionary programme for us.

We shall offer you a more detailed information before Christmas.

VISITS TO SEDOS

We had the appreciated visit of the General Secretary of *Pax Christi Internationalis* in Brussels, Mr. ETIENNE DE JONGHE. Mons. JOHN MUTISO-MBINDA, from the *Pontifical Council for Unity* visited us together with Dr. CHRISTOPHER DURAISINGH from the World Council of Churches in Geneva. At the beginning of October we shall, together with a few other members of the Pontifical Council of Unity, visit the missionary department of the WCC in Geneva. This sharing has become a tradition for SEDOS.

CONGRATULATIONS

We have received news of the election of a few new Superiors Generals. The SEDOS family expresses you the best wishes and our prayer:

Instituto Missioni Consolata:

PIETRO TRABUCCO;

Suore Missionarie Di Nostra Signore d'Africa:

MARIE MC'DONALD;

Missionari CICM (Scheut):

JACQUES THOMAS.

COMING EVENTS

93/203

WORKING GROUPS

September 13	AFRICA
October 5	SUDAN
October 6	ZAIRE
October 7	EASTERN EUROPE
October 12	THE PHILIPPINES

Place: SEDOS Secretariate; via dei Verbiti, 1

Time: 16.00 p.m.

October 28

ACCEPTING THE OUTSIDER:

THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN EUROPE

Speakers: Mark Raper, SJ; Jef van Gerwen, SJ

Place: Brothers of the Christian Schools; via Aurelia 476

Time: 9:00 - 17:00 p.m.

December 7

SEDOS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

INCULTURATION IN AFRICA AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Place: Brothers of the Christian Schools; via Aurelia 476

A full-day session

1994

May 17 - 21

SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR

ASIA: CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

Place: Villa Cavalletti
