

Vol. 26 No. 3 & No. 4
Double Issue
15th March - 15th April

SEDOS

bulletin 1994

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THE KAIROS OF A SYNOD

SEDOS - Via dei Verbiti, 1 - 00154 ROMA - TEL.: 5741350 / FAX: 5755787
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EDITORIAL

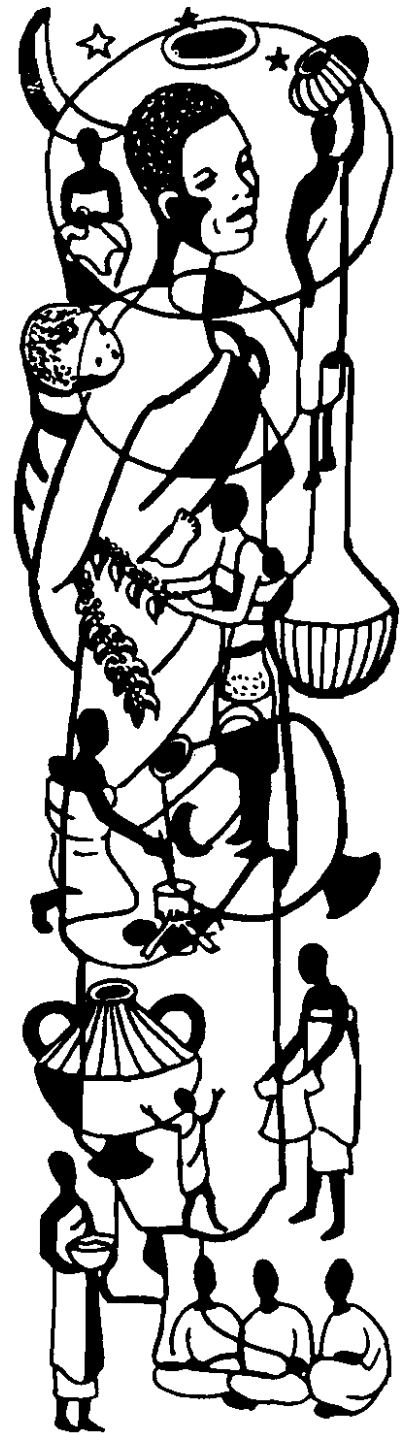
SEDOS is happy to present to you this double number, entirely dedicated to the Special Synod of Bishops for Africa. When we sent out our invitation in November, we did not expect that so many would help us to compose this special edition. We thank all the collaborators who give this Bulletin a distinctively "African" character.

*The 'Special Synod for Africa' is, there is no doubt, a very decisive moment for the African Church. The Synod will be held in Rome, but its message and its effect must come back to Africa and become the source of a renewed mission of the Church in this promising continent. We believe that the Synod, through and beyond all the documents and proposals of the bishops, should become a moment of grace and renewal for all congregations working in Africa. That is why we gave our own Symposium here in Rome the title "**Africa: the KAIROS of a Synod**". At this turning point of the century, when Africa is facing serious challenges which will define its future, the meeting of our Church leaders is a unique opportunity. May the Synod, through the leading presence of the Spirit, become a real KAIROS for the local Churches in Africa.*

*We start this number with an "**Admission of Guilt**" which was sent to us by a German based group called 'Kindugu.' Many were and are the heroisms of Christians in Africa, but this is also a moment for recognising mistakes committed. Then we have a look at '**Traditional Religions**' in order to place ourselves in the realities of Africa. The articles on '**Evangelisation**' and the different perspectives of '**Inculturation**' bring us to the very center of our missionary task. An important part of this mission in Africa today, is the question of '**Islam and Dialogue**'. '**Formation**' and '**Communication**' are other essential dimensions of our apostolic presence. Three articles reflect on the '**Role of Women**' in this hour of Africa.*

*Several theologians present briefly aspects of '**African Theologies**' which interpret in faith the realities lived by their Christian communities. The problems of '**Justice and Peace**', '**Structural Adjustment Programmes**', and '**Refugees**' have become part of our mission. After an article on the phenomenon of '**Urbanisation**', we can read of the many possibilities the '**Biblical Apostolat**' could offer in Africa. Two testimonies on the difficult moments lived by the Churches of Zaïre and Burundi conclude our special '**African**' SEDOS Bulletin.*

P. Walter von Holzen, SVD



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ADMISSION OF GUILT

We, Christian men and women from Europe, gathered in Initiative Kindugu, salute the entire Church of Africa on the occasion of your Synod 1994.

With you we desire this Synod to become a milestone on your journey towards being a truly African Church. As Europeans we have reason to turn to you:

In grief and pain we acknowledge the countless wrongs inflicted on African people.

We are ready to identify ourselves with the sins of our ancestors.

We have begun to examine the ways in which we ourselves up to this day have taken part in the oppression of and contempt for your dignity and self-determination, politically, economically, ecologically, culturally and even ecclesiologically.

We confess having both individually and communally contributed in various ways to existing social structures as well as to ecclesial paternalism.

We regret not always having played our part to undo such injustice. It seems impossible to assess the extent of such sin or even to redress it.

We dare ask for forgiveness of yourselves and of your ancestors only before God and His son Jesus Christ who reconciled us to Himself and to one another through His own suffering and death.

We are resolved never to let the memory of our wrongdoings fade but to strive for conversion with courage and self-denial. God alone can bring about the healing. With you we beseech Him for it.

May God instil in you the conviction and determination to realise the call Pope Paul VI expressed in Uganda in 1969, namely deeply to root the Christian faith in African soil. We are becoming increasingly aware of the far reaching demands this call makes on all of us. Christians everywhere in the world are in need of the revelation God desires to make through the African Church. We need and we want to learn from you because we are convinced that God's Spirit has entrusted you with new and wonderful gifts.

Signed among many others, religious, clerics and lay people:

Pedro Casaldáliga, Erwin Kräutler, Bernhard Häring, Notker Wolf, Peter Hünemann, Wolfgang Hoffmann, Giuseppe Alberigo, Norbert Greinacher, Walbert Bühlmann, Hans Küng, etc.)

NOUS NOUS RECONNAISSONS COUPABLES

Nous, chrétiens et chrétiennes d'Europe, réunis dans l'initiative Kindugu, nous saluons fraternellement toute l'Eglise d'Afrique à l'occasion de l'ouverture du Synode de 1994. Avec vous, nous souhaitons que le Synode marque une étape décisive vers une église africaine.

Nous, hommes et femmes d'Europe, nous avons tout lieu de nous adresser à vous:

Tristes et peïnés, nous nous reconnaissons coupable de vous avoir offensés et d'avoir péché contre l'Afrique. Nous sommes prêts à endosser les fautes et les crimes commis par nos ancêtres et nous les assumons. Nous avons commencé en particulier à faire un examen de conscience approfondi pour savoir dans quelle mesure nous-mêmes sommes encore complices de l'oppression et du mépris de votre dignité et liberté, que ce soit dans les domaines politique, économique, écologique, culturel ou même à l'intérieur de l'Eglise. Nous confessons d'avoir contribué à la fois individuellement et tous ensemble de diverses manières au maintien des structures sociales injustes et au paternalisme ecclésiastique. Nous regrettons de ne pas avoir tout fait et de continuer à ne rien faire pour changer cette situation.

Personne ne sait ni mesurer ni réparer les conséquences de ces péchés et de ces fautes. Ce n'est que devant Dieu et grâce à la justification par la mort du Christ que nous pouvons oser vous prier et prier vos ancêtres de nous pardonner.

Nous nous efforcerons de ne jamais effacer de notre mémoire ces événements passés et de lutter courageusement et avec renoncement pour une conversion. Ici seul Dieu peut guérir. Prions-le de nous accorder cette guérison.

Que Dieu vous donne la conviction profonde et le courage de mettre en oeuvre la parole que vous a adressée le Pape Paul VI en 1969 en Ouganda: "Vous pouvez et vous devez avoir un christianisme africain". Nous prenons de plus en plus conscience que cette parole s'adresse aussi à nous d'une manière pressante. Nous autres chrétiens et chrétiennes hors d'Afrique avons tellement besoin que Dieu se révèle à travers vous. Nous devons et voudrions beaucoup apprendre de vous. Car nous sommes convaincus que l'Esprit Saint confie à l'Eglise d'Afrique la réalisation de grandes et nouvelles merveilles.

DIALOGUE WITH AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Aylward Shorter

A basic problem has been the failure of the Catholic Church to recognise African traditional religions (ATR) as coherent systems of beliefs and practices, and therefore as potential partners in genuine dialogue. "Adhesion", rather than "conversion", has characterised evangelisation. Converts adhered to new Christian beliefs, without renouncing or confronting traditional religion, only a short list of unconnected customs identified by priests and catechists as incompatible with Christianity. Dialogue has been neglected and is now more than ever necessary.

Dialogue with ATR is demanded by evangelisation. It is required by the evangelisation of culture (inculturation), because religion

Nothing can replace the serious study of ATR and the re-education of African Christians concerning ATR. Refusal to take ATR seriously and to dialogue with it is a major obstacle to evangelisation/inculturation in Africa.

is by definition a cultural system and, indeed, the core of culture. Inculturation cannot take place without taking note of the religious values, beliefs and practices of ATR. These are the very values which must be upheld in the power of the Gospel against the secular world technocracy. Dialogue with ATR is essential if there is to be any deepening of Christian faith in Africa and any African cultural expression of the Gospel.

Prejudice and ignorance on the part of Christian authorities needs to be overcome. ATR was traditionally articulated through the tribe, its structures and its leadership. However,

since colonialism and political independence, there has been a loss of visible structures and roles in the tribe. This has affected the traditional practice and organisation of African religion. ATR has begun to take new forms, especially in new religious movements, therapeutic communities and within mainline forms of Christianity. Nevertheless, although traditional practice is now attenuated, it must be remembered that the scope of ATR always transcended tribal boundaries. Traditional religious beliefs and rites unite many different African peoples.

This means that ATR must be studied by limited comparative analysis, according to culture regions or clusters, rather than through particular research or generalising surveys. It also means that ATR must be studied historically in order to observe the reciprocal influence of ethnic groups and the growth of theological scale.

It is not enough to take an eclectic or atomistic approach to ATR, in which "elements" or "components" are identified and labelled for further Christian use. Rather, there must be a genuine encounter with, or experience of, ATR by Christians, either in genuine ATR worship contexts or in reflection on their own life experience. Such encounters should then be seen as offering a relevant challenge to Christian beliefs and practices. Such encounters should also be supported by formal study, particularly when inculturation projects are in hand.

Nothing can replace the serious study of ATR and the re-education of African Christians concerning ATR. The "study groups" proposed by *Ecclesiae Sanctae* and by successive directives of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue should be created without delay. Refusal to take ATR seriously and to dialogue with it is a major obstacle to evangelisation/inculturation in Africa.

EVANGELISATION

Gotthard Rosner, Superior General, M.Afr

Throughout history the word evangelisation has received different meanings. It was used for the preaching of the word of God; it could be a synonym for the mission of the Church itself or it could signify the implantation of the Church in a mission country.

Today the idea of evangelisation is seen in a broader perspective. It is linked to the term "the reign of God", the loving authority of God over all aspects of life. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the forthcoming African Synod says: "For the Church, evangelising means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new" (n. 11).

Evangelisation is, therefore, the major theme of the Synod. It contains different facets: proclamation of the Good News, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and involvement of the Church in the means of social communication.

Evangelisation is not a conquest, but an encounter. It takes place wherever Christians work together with people of good will to make a better world or, in Christian terms, to realise the plan of God.

God's Dream of Mankind.

The first pages of the Bible (Gen 1 and 2) speak of this plan of God. The text does not tell us how and when the world was created, but what kind of relationship there should be between God and people, between people themselves and between nature and human beings.

God created light first, a symbol for harmony and order which drives away the darkness (chaos). Everything in our world should be penetrated by God's light which belongs to the essence of creation, because God himself is light.

The harmonious relationship which should exist between mankind and God is expressed through different images: The garden in which there is plenty of water, fruit trees and precious stones. There, God is walking with the first human beings in the evening breeze. Man is made out of clay, fragile, but also a piece of art made by the great artist, God.

Man and woman are equal: both are created by God, coming from the same material. They live in peace and harmony together ("they were naked") and are one with nature.

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Of course, we know that this ideal situation never existed, neither in ancient times nor in our modern ones. But it is the duty of all human beings to strive towards this dream.

The Reign of God.

In order to express a similar idea as in Gen 1 and 2, Jesus uses the term "kingdom of God". To proclaim its arrival is the central theme of Jesus' mission (Mk 1:14-15).

In "Our Father" we pray:

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

According to the Hebrew use of parallel sentences, the second line repeats or explains the first one. Where is God's kingdom? There, where God's will is done. The will of God realised in Jesus is according to Jn 10:10 to bring

life to people, life to the full. The kingdom contains, therefore, an aspect of liberation. When John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus in order to ask him if he is the one to come, Jesus replies: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor" (Mt 11:1-5). The reign of God has come with Jesus Christ, and it belongs to the poor and the lowly and those who suffer for righteousness (cf. Mt 5:3; 5:10; Mk 10:14).

Consequences for Evangelisation.

Although "evangelisation will always contain as the foundation, centre and at the same time summit of its dynamism a clear proclamation that in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 27), it does not limit itself to the proclamation

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of the word of God. In order to come a step closer to God's dream or to hasten the arrival of God's reign, other methods than preaching might be used and God's presence must be discovered in other religions and cultures.

Evangelisation is basically an encounter, a dialogue with others which makes us discover and admire God's work in them. When evangelising others we must be aware that we are marked by deep-rooted prejudices and need conversion ourselves. We must try to discover the truth found in other religions and cultures, and get rid of the idea that we alone possess the truth. We must recognise the dignity of each person and treat everyone with respect. We must be willing to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Finally, we must discover the Word of God through whom all things came into being and through whom all beings received life, life that is the light of men and shines in the darkness (cf. Jn 1:2-4).

Through evangelisation something new will be born in us and in others: God's presence among us.



L'INCULTURATION

Daniel Mellier, SMA

Du chapitre qu'y consacre l'*Instrumentum laboris*, je remarque quelques-unes des "questions soulevées" et des "perspectives d'avenir": transformation de la culture par extension du modèle industriel; brassage culturel dans les milieux urbains en extension; vœu d'unification des nations et d'ouverture à l'universel contraire à l'enfermement dans des particularités culturelles étroites; difficultés tenaces à résoudre dans des secteurs institutionnels comme le mariage, le sacerdoce et la vie religieuse; urgence de l'action socio-politique de libération, de réforme, d'organisation de la société, de promotion des droits humains, comme question à la vie de foi et à la mission de l'Eglise.

Je livre ici ce que m'inspirent ces éléments, pour la problématique de l'inculturation.

1. L'identité de la CULTURE, dans un tel contexte, ne se décide pas de l'extérieur, par construction intellectuelle. Personne ne peut dire "elle est ici ou elle est là", parce qu'elle n'obéit plus aux modèles théoriques connus. Elle est globalement tout ce qui inspire, règle et oriente la pensée et l'agir des Africains d'aujourd'hui, y compris les contradictions et la confusion éventuelle que cela présente. Le modèle traditionnel est effectivement ébranlé par la modernité, tout en continuant à fonctionner pour une part; mais qui définira sa dimension et sa force réelles? Le modèle "industriel" s'impose, c'est vrai, mais jusqu'à quel point? Nous sommes au cœur d'un phénomène d'acculturation où rien n'est plus complètement homogène ni encore équilibré.

Pourtant, au cœur de cette apparente confusion et de cette prodigieuse mobilité, les Africains continuent de se poser les questions essentielles à leur vie et d'en chercher les réponses: un peu partout, en Afrique ou en Europe, dans la sagesse d'hier ou le savoir d'aujourd'hui, le tout formant toujours système. Car la vie est système. Même si ses éléments

semblent hétérogènes et mal liés, pris ensemble, tant bien que mal, ils font vivre!

L'Inculturation n'a pas alors à se faire avec les uns plutôt qu'avec les autres parce que les uns seraient plus "authentiques" que les autres. La foi doit se comprendre à l'intérieur du système tel qu'il est, dans toutes ses composantes, autant dans la relation à l'invisible, l'expérience de la sorcellerie, le désir de la force et de la santé que dans les modes de vie urbains, la loi de l'économie de marché, l'expérience du chômage et les luttes pour une démocratie d'Etat.

Le modèle "industriel" s'impose, c'est vrai, mais jusqu'à quel point? Nous sommes au cœur d'un phénomène d'acculturation où rien n'est plus complètement homogène ni encore équilibré.

2. Pour ce faire, L'EVANGILE ET SA TRADITION DE LECTURE doivent être interrogés librement, de l'intérieur de ce contexte d'existence pour qu'en sorte une Parole neuve qui traverse tous les champs de vie, tels qu'ils sont, dialogue avec leurs questions et conduise à y découvrir ou redécouvrir la réponse de Dieu en Jésus-Christ, comme projet d'humanisation véritable. On peut espérer alors que "la spiritualité (qui) refait surface, même chez les chrétiens, à certains moments fondamentaux de la vie" (70) aura été évangélisée, c'est-à-dire prise en compte dans la vision de la foi.

L'inculturation ne peut être qu'une véritable interprétation de l'Evangile et des lectures qu'en fait la Tradition dans le contexte culturel de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui, par tous ceux qui participent à cette culture de l'intérieur et en sont les sujets. Elle sera cela ou ne sera jamais.

3. De ce point de vue, sa première condition de possibilité est la LIBERTE de réaliser cette interprétation. Liberté de droit par rapport aux lois ecclésiastiques prétendant définir universellement l'orthodoxie et l'orthopraxie. Et c'est par la "manière" catéchétique que s'inscrit, dans la conscience chrétienne, le sens de cette liberté ou au contraire son refus. C'est dire l'attention critique qu'on doit y porter. Liberté pratique aussi par rapport aux traditions ecclésiastiques (liturgiques, dévotionnelles, artistiques, disciplinaires, etc...) qui sont trop souvent imposées dès le départ comme voies nécessaires de la vie chrétienne. Une liberté à accorder non seulement aux responsables patentés de la pastorale et de la théologie mais aussi et d'abord à toute la communauté chrétienne, car c'est d'abord en ses membres que la culture est la plus remuée par la vie actuelle et sait ce qu'elle cherche.

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Qui dit liberté dit confiance. Confiance pour croire que ces communautés, dans ce "vide" de formes étrangères où on les laissera, pourront créer lentement leur christianisme à partir du fonds symbolique, religieux et social qui organise actuellement la vie de leurs membres.

créer lentement leur christianisme à partir du fonds symbolique, religieux et social qui organise actuellement la vie de leurs membres. Porte ouverte à "l'infidélité évangélique"? Oublierait-on que c'est le sens commun de la foi des fidèles, celui qui se garde dans des communautés, qui est le premier rempart à l'infidélité?

4. Une telle inculturation n'ignore alors pas mais vient au service des TACHES SOCIO-POLITIQUES que la situation du continent propose, comme un défi, au christianisme. Parce qu'elle est faite à partir du système qui est opératoire actuellement, et qui n'isole pas de la "culture" les réalités de la dictature, de la pauvreté, du Sida, de l'effort économique, ou démocratique, etc... Ces réalités sont d'une part approchées et agies dans un ensemble de

représentations et de logiques culturelles plus ancien qu'elles et, d'autre part, elles agissent en retour sur lui pour le restructurer et redéfinir le questionnement culturel actuel de l'Afrique, qui les intègre. Si donc l'inculturation fait naître de l'Evangile une parole de sens dans ce questionnement-là, alors elle permet à la foi de devenir réellement "puissance de salut" aussi bien pour le "religieux" que pour le "politique" de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui.

5. De la même façon, cette démarche évite à l'inculturation d'emprunter les chemins DE PARTICULARISMES CULTURELS PEU VIABLES, qui font échec à des unités sociales plus larges. Car elle est le fait non d'individus mais de groupes humains discernant par expérience, dans la dynamique de leur existence quotidienne, les exigences et les voies de l'ouverture à l'universel et pouvant faire concrètement le partage entre le donné sûr à garder du patrimoine propre et la nouveauté de l'étranger à accueillir, pour construire l'avenir.

L'inculturation: non "une nouvelle méthode d'évangélisation"; non seulement "un concept" (67); mais d'abord un esprit: croire que le mystère du Christ est une Parole libre de l'Esprit pour tout peuple qui l'accueille librement.



MISSION AND INCULTURATION

Godfrey Odigbo, CSSp

Introduction

As the Bishops of Africa gather for the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops in union with the universal Church, they will be focusing attention on certain pastoral concerns of the continent. It is hoped that this Synod will help the Church in Africa to gain a deeper understanding of her evangelising mission in the continent and a keen awareness of the challenges facing her in this task.

This short reflection will seek to look at the goal of the Church's mission in Africa and the problem of the inculturation of Christianity, which is generally acknowledged as one of the main challenges facing the African Church. We shall then look at some of the areas that need the urgent attention of the Church for inculturation in her evangelising mission today in Africa.

Mission

The idea of mission has been developing very much after Vatican II. Mission has its origin in the mission of God and its focus is the reign of God, which Jesus himself proclaimed and the Church is its sacrament and servant. It starts with God's plan to communicate himself to all human-beings of all ages as an outpouring of his love. Thus, the mission of the Church in Africa is at the service of this mission of God to reveal and communicate to the African men and women in their historical situation, salvation through Jesus as planned and fulfilled by God who "wants all men to be saved" (1 Tm 2:4). In the spirit of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* it means bringing the Good News into all the strata of African humanity and through its influence transforming Africa from within and making it new. It seeks to convert through the power of the Good News "both the personal and collective conscience of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. To be able to achieve this goal the Church would have to take root in Africa and really incarnate herself among the African people.

Hence, one can see the importance and urgency of inculturation today as the Church passes from a missionary Church to an African Church.

Inculturation

For the purpose of our reflection here we would like to describe inculturation in the mission of a particular Church as "the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal". By "culture" we mean the way of life of a people, their social symbols and rituals, art, language, social relationships, organisations and ideologies that guide their concrete choices in economics, politics, etc.

Inculturation is a dialogue between faith and culture. When the Church in her evangelising mission brings the Good News of Christ to a people the Christian faith starts a history, a pilgrimage with the people. It dialogues with their culture in such a way that it does not destroy their authentic values and patrimony. Nor does it simply adapt itself superficially to some elements of their culture. It rather takes root and flesh in the particular culture to purify, redeem and transform it. The culture thus assumed by the Christian faith, in turn enriches the Christian faith, in accordance with the particular genius, authentic values, talents and resources of the people, with new forms of expression of the Christian experience in the life of the universal Church.

Inculturation has its beginnings in the New Testament Church. The early centuries of the Church's life witnessed a massive inculturation of Christianity as it passed from its birth in the Hebrew culture to become the religion of the

Empire so culturally diverse from its original milieu.

In Africa Christianity has experienced enormous expansion in modern times. However, some internal and external factors, such as the old prevalent theology and method of mission, colonialism, and Euro-American cultural domination, which did not allow a real effort at proper inculturation to take place from the beginning of Christianity in modern Africa. This has continued to pose a major problem in the life of African Christians and in the mission of the Church in Africa today.

This challenge posed by inculturation in Africa was highlighted by Paul VI in his address to African Bishops in Kampala in 1969: "Must the Church be European, Latin, Oriental or must she be African?... you may and must have an African Christianity". Since this statement of Paul VI there have been endless pronouncements and documents both from the particular Churches in Africa and from the universal Church emphasising the necessity and

African theologians ought to be allowed and encouraged to reflect on the African understanding of reality, the Gospel message and the faith experience of African communities and express these in the languages of the African people in communion with, and for the eventual enrichment of, the universal Church.

urgency of inculturation. Unfortunately, one notices a disquieting level of hesitation, even nervousness manifested at times in some quarters of the institutional Church when some attempts are made to translate some of the beautiful statements into concrete reality. Perhaps the hesitation could be explained by some fear that inculturation might bring diversification which might be a threat to communion in the Catholic Church. At times the hesitation is caused by the claim that the African people are not yet ready for it. It could also be caused by the tendency among some of the people to resist any change in the way the faith has been handed down to them. Often inculturation is accepted in the minds of many but not in the heart.

One would earnestly like to see the

forthcoming Synod bring about a real change of heart and a firm resolve both in the universal Church and the African Church itself to rise up against any postponement of the concrete demands of inculturation under the pretext of the difficulty, delicacy and risks that are bound up with it.

We shall now attempt in the following section to look at some of the many areas that need urgent attention for inculturation.

Some Tasks Ahead

Catechesis

During a recent "*ad limina*" visit of the Nigerian Bishops, in December 1993, the Pope pointed out the necessity of proper catechesis among the Christian people. In this regard any failure to inculturate catechesis would condemn most of our Christians to living a divided Christian life. In some regions of Africa, e.g. IMBISSA, there are already some new initiatives. In a good number of other areas people are still using translations of the Tridentine catechism. The appearance of the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not, however, remove the challenge facing the African Church.

The challenge is to seek ways of proclaiming the Gospel message according to the African way of thinking and methods of communication, as well as create suitable catechetical materials based on the life experience of our African peoples. This ought to help present Christianity as a way of life, as an experience, and not as a bookish religion where all the questions and answers are neatly and systematically written down in a catechism and not in the hearts of the people.

African Theology

Closely related to the problem of catechesis is the issue of African theology. There seems to be an unwritten law among many Western theologians that when anybody speaks or writes on specific subjects concerning Christianity, he or she must be expected to employ the vocabulary, categories, style and systems adopted in Europe and America for that to be accepted as valid and orthodox Christian theology. This seems contrary to the pluralism in theology and expression of the one Christian faith that is evident even in the New Testament writings.

African theologians ought to be allowed and

encouraged to reflect on the African understanding of reality, the Gospel message and the faith experience of African communities and express these in the languages of the African people in communion with, and for the eventual enrichment of, the universal Church. Recognition and genuine appreciation should be shown for the significant progress being made already in some quarters in such areas as African Christology, ecclesiology and the theology of communion. Regional centres for theological research need to be promoted more.

African theology must of necessity speak meaningfully to the Africans today in their socio-economic and political situation and attempt to give an answer of hope to the anxiety and anguish of the people many of whom suffer from exploitation, tribal wars and the refugee problem.

Liturgy

Some work has been done here, perhaps more in some regions of Africa than in others. One thinks of the rite for burial in Southern Africa, the efforts to produce rituals for Christian initiation in Burkina Faso, the adaptations of the Roman rite for the celebration of the Eucharist in Cameroon and Zaire. It is hoped that the Zairean Mass, officially approved by Rome, will be given its rightful place during the celebration of the Synod in Rome. Nonetheless, many African Christians would like to see the Synod give greater encouragement and fresh impetus in the spirit of Vatican II to new initiatives for deeper inculturation of the liturgy. This should go beyond mere translation of the Roman rite and official texts, the insertion of African elements in a Roman structure or the use of African music and musical instruments. Such new initiatives should lead to the eventual creation and development, for example, of African Eucharistic prayers and truly African rites for the celebration of the Eucharist, the other sacraments and sacramentals side by side the Roman rite.

Formation of Agents of Evangelisation

The success of inculturation in the evangelising mission of the Church in Africa depends very much on the formation of the pastoral agents especially the African priests and religious. For a long time the programmes for the formation of these people were designed in Europe and America. Also most of the lecturers and formation personnel were either from these

countries or trained in them. This has the natural consequence that the curriculum, study and teaching methods were heavily western and sometimes alienated these agents from the African culture. This situation needs to be addressed urgently. Where this has not been done, the curriculum and other aspects of formation need to be revised to respond to the African culture and historical situation and needs. Training of African lecturers and formators in and for the African context should be given priority attention. Formation centres and regional institutes for African studies and research will be of great help. With all these, the future generation of agents of evangelisation

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in Africa, whether African or expatriate, will be rooted in the African cultural setting and have deep appreciation for the African language, tradition, religion and cultural values. Thus, they will be in a better position to contribute to the dialogue between the Christian faith and African culture.

Conclusion

The many tasks and challenges for the inculturation of African Christianity which fall on African Church leaders, clergy, religious, laity and missionaries alike who are irreplaceable and indispensable. Many see the forthcoming Synod as a special moment of grace for the Church in Africa - *Kairos*, a chance to decide and act for the profound incarnation and definitive implantation of Christianity in Africa. If we should fail in this endeavour on the threshold of the third millennium the very future of a deep, mature and flowering African Christianity may be compromised for centuries. We trust in the presence and power of the Spirit to prevent this. We pray and trust also that the African Church will have the space, power, freedom and courage for necessary creativity and research and enjoy the trust, confidence and solidarity of the universal Church, which are indispensable prerequisites for her success during and after the Synod.

INCULTURATION DE LA VIE RELIGIEUSE EN AFRIQUE

Marie Angèle Kitewo, SND

Introduction

Encore de l'inculturation! Telle fut ma première réaction à l'invitation de contribuer au bulletin SEDOS en partageant quelques réflexions sur le thème de l'inculturation de la vie religieuse en Afrique. Puis un proverbe m'est venu à l'esprit, il peut être traduit comme suit: "C'est à l'endroit, continuellement léché par la pointe de la langue que se trouve le dard". ("Gána gákwééndáánga nsoongi lúaimi, gá géna myaangu") (culture koóngo)

En d'autres termes, si on revient à maintes reprises sur le thème de l'inculturation, c'est qu'il contient des richesses insoupçonnées, peut-être, des trésors à découvrir. Il est certainement considéré comme un élément de fond dans toute vie chrétienne et religieuse qui se veulent authentiques et vraies.

Concernant la précision du thème, j'ai négligé de me référer à l'expression "en Afrique"; il n'existe pas en effet de "culture africaine", mais plutôt des cultures en Afrique.

Ma réflexion s'organise autour de deux points:

- 1) La complexité et la nécessité de l'inculturation.
- 2) L'insertion dans "sa" propre culture. et ce à partir d'exemples vécus.

Une conclusion se dégage, sorte de prise de conscience qu'en tant que fait social, l'inculturation requiert le concours de tous les membres dans un dynamisme toujours renouvelé.

1^o COMPLEXITE ET NECESSITE DE L'INCULTURATION

Il arrive quelquefois qu'après une longue et profonde réflexion organisée sur le thème de l'inculturation, le débat se termine sans avoir apporté la clarté escomptée. L'ambiguïté demeure, si elle n'est pas accrue!

Les difficultés naissent de la complexité du thème lui-même, qui se prête à plus d'une interprétation. L'importance ici n'est pas de trouver satisfaction dans une définition bien élaborée, mais de considérer l'inculturation comme un profond problème de pastorale, tant pour la vie religieuse que pour toute proclamation de l'Evangile. En d'autres termes, il semble que l'inculturation soit d'une nécessité indéniable pour un équilibre de la personne et du groupe; elle conduit progressivement à une vie religieuse épanouie et unifiée.

Des frustrations enregistrées çà et là chez certaines religieuses africaines, confrontées à des problèmes vitaux, prouvent que l'unification est loin d'être réalisée. Elles se sentent encore étrangères sur leur propre terrain.

Pensons, par exemple, à la réaction d'énervement ou de colère manifestée par une religieuse africaine lors de la maladie d'un proche qui a besoin d'être aidé. Cette attitude de la religieuse est peut-être, si on l'analyse en profondeur, une réponse négative à un style de vie imposé, ou davantage, un refus, comme instinctif, des principes qui règlent sa vie de communauté. Elle les conteste et en souffre, car ils expriment une conception étrangère à celle de sa culture d'origine.

En fait, la religieuse souhaite venir en aide à

la personne en question, mais une "présence invisible", mais réelle - celle d'une autre culture - semble la contrôler, voire la dominer et l'empêcher d'agir.

Il importe de savoir que si l'inculturation se voit comme une relecture dynamique de l'évangile vécu, il faudrait alors prendre au sérieux les composantes du sol où le message évangélique est semé.

Une relecture faite aujourd'hui dans plusieurs pays d'Afrique se caractériserait par des couleurs tout à fait propres. Dans un Zaïre, un Soudan, un Angola, etc... actuels, un des aspects dominants du vécu évangélique doit nous rappeler ce cri de Jésus: "J'ai pitié de cette foule, car voilà trois jours qu'ils restent auprès de moi et ils n'ont pas de quoi manger" (Mt 15,32).

Nous pouvons paraphraser ce passage en changeant quelques mots: "J'ai pitié de cette population, de ces familles... car voilà de longues années de souffrances qu'elles endurent... elles n'ont pas de quoi manger"...

Comme pour les disciples de Jésus, les religieuses autochtones expérimentent leur incapacité de trouver une réponse adéquate à partir de la réalité de leur vie. - "Où trouverons-nous dans nos structures de vie religieuse de quoi étancher notre soif?"...

En plus de l'expérience impuissante devant certaines situations, cette question trahit aussi la peur de s'engager sur des voies nouvelles. "Où trouverons-nous dans ce désert...? Jésus cherche à soulager, à "fortifier". Les disciples effarés pensent à "rassasier" cette immense foule!

Dans nos maisons religieuses, les réflexions de ce genre ne sont pas rares: "ce que l'on fera pour l'une, il faudra le faire pour chacune". "On créera des antécédents" comment agir?"...

Encore une fois, tout en traduisant la réalité des choses, ces réflexions ne sont rien d'autre que la manifestation de la peur de nous lancer sur des sentiers nouveaux. Des sentiers que nous devons créer nous-mêmes.

Divergence d'interprétation du concept et hésitation dans l'engagement sont les obstacles majeurs à l'inculturation. Nous nous crampons à des formules et posons alors les mêmes questions: quoi ? qui ? comment ? Mais creusons-nous le sujet?

Une autre difficulté provient aussi du fait qu'il n'y a pas de distinction entre l'agent et le bénéficiaire. Les deux se confondent dans la personne qu'est la religieuse autochtone dans son contexte de vie. N'est-il pas plus facile d'évaluer ce qu'on a fait pour les autres et les autres pour nous que d'analyser sa propre vie, ses propres recherches et celles de son groupe?

Mais l'aspect positif de cette "fusion" - agent-bénéficiaire - est la rencontre directe des valeurs évangéliques et celles des cultures vécues par des autochtones, dans la mesure évidemment où ceux-ci, celles-ci représentent l'identité réelle et profonde de leurs races, ethnies ou nations. Cela devrait être une garantie afin d'éviter de tomber dans les erreurs reprochées au christianisme colonial et au style de vie religieuse d'avant Vatican II.

Aujourd'hui, dans une vie religieuse qui se veut ouverte aux cultures, nous ne pouvons parler de l'inculturation que dans la mesure où l'intéressée (la religieuse autochtone) connaît, apprécie et continue à se nourrir des valeurs de sa culture.

Divergence dans l'interprétation du concept, difficulté quant aux méthodes, rien de cela n'altère la nécessité de l'inculturation.

2^o INSERTION DANS SA CULTURE

Vue comme "rencontre des valeurs", l'inculturation nécessite à la fois un lieu où cette rencontre se réalise et une forme d'expression pour se concrétiser.

Si l'on regarde le passé, on constate que chaque congrégation religieuse qui s'est installée dans un nouveau territoire, a apporté avec elle à la fois son expérience vécue de l'évangile (charisme) et les éléments de la culture dans laquelle elle a vu le jour.

Les nouveaux membres qui y entraient, adaptaient un nouveau comportement tracé une autre culture. La formation, ou plutôt la transformation des sujets fut le résultat des efforts conjugués des responsables aussi bien que ceux

des bénéficiaires. Tout cela est réalisé dans un cadre coupé de toute réalité culturelle.

L'on peut se rappeler que la pénétration chrétienne des sociétés noires s'est caractérisée principalement par la négation de toute valeur ancestrale. Des générations entières ont été influencées et formées dans cette mentalité.

Le progrès réalisé par des études sociologiques et anthropologiques n'a pas encore tout à fait réussi à changer la vision de l'autochtone, invité à la dépréciation de sa culture.

Les années se sont écoulées, il est vrai, certaines structures sociales ont changé. Mais les réminiscences de cette dépréciation culturelle sont encore présentes, malheureusement. Les religieuses autochtones n'en sont pas immunisées.

Aujourd'hui, dans une vie religieuse qui se veut ouverte aux cultures, nous ne pouvons parler de l'inculturation que dans la mesure où l'intéressée (la religieuse autochtone) connaît, apprécie et continue à se nourrir des valeurs de sa culture. Dès lors, la nécessité de s'y enraciner afin de rendre aux symboles et représentations leur signification. Ces retrouvailles permettent le dialogue entre le fondement évangélique et les formes d'expression adoptées dans la vie religieuse.

La rencontre des valeurs évangéliques avec les cultures se réalise à travers les traditions recueillies et vécues dans la fidélité. St Paul le souligne quand il s'adresse aux Corinthiens "Pour moi, en effet, j'ai reçu du Seigneur ce qu'à mon tour je vous ai transmis". (1 Cor 11, 23 sv.) Il va sans dire que la transmission des traditions est assurée par les personnes qui en sont dépositaires.

Comme il a été mentionné plus haut, l'inculturation a besoin de formes d'expression pour se concrétiser. La langue est l'expression par excellence de toute culture. Elle en est le véhicule.

En ce qui concerne nos religieuses autochtones, la connaissance de la langue maternelle pose des problèmes pour bon nombre d'entre elles. Cette lacune est plus particulièrement remarquée parmi les religieuses africaines appartenant à des congrégations missionnaires.

Beaucoup de ces religieuses dans la trentaine et la quarantaine ont des difficultés à s'exprimer correctement (à écrire surtout) dans leur langue maternelle.

Les raisons de cette ignorance linguistique ne sont pas toujours négatives. Néanmoins, le handicap est réel et freine l'approfondissement du message évangélique.

Quelle culture?

La réalité est que nos communautés religieuses sont formées de membres provenant de diverses cultures. Même si toutes sont Africaines ou de la même nationalité. Dans l'effort pour une inculturation, un dépassement est demandé à chacun. Il s'agit de l'élaboration d'une nouvelle forme de vie: celle basée sur l'Evangile. Elle se distingue par des éléments puisés dans des cultures représentées, ou non, par les membres. Elle devient le corps du message qui assure l'unification de vie en religion.

La culture, notre culture d'adoption devient celle que St Paul définit par ces termes d'être Juif avec les Juifs, Grec avec les Grecs.

CONCLUSION

A titre d'un simple partage j'ai essayé de souligner la complexité du sujet, la nécessité d'une culture qui soit nôtre.

L'inculturation n'est plus un événement qui doit arriver, elle est là avec son dynamisme, et déjà elle porte ses fruits. La religieuse autochtone se reconnaît davantage elle-même dans son lien avec Jésus-Christ et avec la famille de ses ancêtres. Appelée à être ouverte au monde, elle découvre dans sa propre culture des richesses neuves, expressions de l'amour de Dieu qui lui permettent de se situer dans sa congrégation, dans son peuple et de s'ouvrir à d'autres cultures.

L'évolution des religieuses autochtones au Zaïre en est un exemple frappant. Actuellement responsables de communautés ou de groupes divers, elles établissent des relations avec des congrégations nationales ou internationales. Leur liturgie, expressive de leur foi et de leur culture, les insère dans l'Eglise universelle.

VIE RELIGIEUSE AFRICAINE ET MISSION

L. Kasanda Lumembu, CICM

1. Questions délicates

Parler d'une "vie religieuse africaine" et de sa participation spécifique à la "mission" de l'Eglise est une entreprise délicate et parfois périlleuse. On se met d'emblée devant deux questions incontournables. Existe-t-il déjà une vie religieuse "africaine"? De quelle "mission" s'agit-il, celle qui découle de la nature de la vie religieuse ou celle que la pratique lui attribue? Ces questions pourtant importantes provoquent facilement des incompréhensions et des soupçons tant de la part des autorités hiérarchiques des Eglises locales africaines que de celle de certaines autorités religieuses.

Malgré leur délicatesse, ces questions ne peuvent demeurer des tabous. Alors que l'Eglise qui est en Afrique se prépare à célébrer l'Assemblée spéciale du Synode des Evêques consacrée aux problèmes de l'évangélisation du continent, il est normal que cette structure qui se trouve dans son sein et qu'on appelle vie religieuse soit prise en considération afin qu'elle réponde aux attentes du Seigneur.

2. Impressions générales

A part les anciens essais de l'ancienne Eglise du nord aujourd'hui complètement disparue et des actuelles pochettes de religieux et religieuses coptes d'Ethiopie, il est hasardeux d'affirmer qu'il existe déjà une vie religieuse africaine. Ce qui existe très largement mérite plutôt d'être qualifié de "vie religieuse en Afrique". La nuance entre ces deux qualifications est certes pertinente. En effet, tout ce qui se vit en Afrique ou tout ce que les Africains adoptent n'est pas nécessairement africain. L'exemple de la vie religieuse est très éloquent à cet égard. Elle a été apportée en Afrique sous forme d'un paquet bien ficelé qu'on présente et qui doit être accepté comme tel. Des tentatives d'adaptation n'ont jusqu'ici touché que l'emballage laissant le contenu et l'expression intacts. C'est donc un

produit qu'on doit consommer sans autorisation d'y ajouter d'autres condiments à son goût. Le vrai problème réside sans doute dans la compréhension de la nature même de la vie religieuse et de son caractère anthropologique et spirituel.

La vie religieuse en Afrique existe sous ses diverses formes. Elle est diocésaine et de droit pontifical, féminine et masculine. Cependant sa mission au sein des Eglises particulières n'est pas facile à percevoir ni à définir. Sa présence semble se justifier surtout en tant que force d'action pour répondre efficacement aux besoins pastoraux. C'est du reste la raison majeure qui motive la plupart des appels adressés aux Instituts de droit pontifical et la fondation de plusieurs Instituts diocésains de femmes. Cette mentalité qui a longtemps régné a également contribué, pour une large part, à rendre la mission de la vie religieuse diffuse et confuse.

3. Réflexions et propositions

Tout vie religieuse, qu'elle soit chrétienne ou non-chrétienne, est avant tout un produit d'une recherche humaine et religieuse. Elle prend naissance au sein d'un peuple et d'une société et porte leurs aspirations et leur sensibilité, leur contestation et les pistes pour leur perfectionnement. En effet, elle est la voie suivie par des personnes, toujours minoritaires, qui éprouvent un vif désir de faire l'expérience du "Mystère" et du "Sacré". Ces personnes se mettent à l'écart de la société - en situation liminale - pour être à l'abri de ses influences et par le changement que le Sacré produit en elles, se constituent en force de contestation de ses erreurs et ses failles. Ces personnes finissent toujours par attirer un petit nombre d'admirateurs qui veulent les suivre et les imiter, parmi lesquels sortiront des disciples auxquels ils légueront leur propre mode de vie et le rôle qu'elles avaient joué.

Ce phénomène existe aussi au sein de l'Eglise catholique depuis l'ermite Antoine et le cénobitique Pacôme. Leur recherche s'est centrée sur Jésus-Christ, son message et sa mission et s'est transmise aux générations chrétiennes de tous les temps, de toutes les cultures et de toutes les sociétés. Il appert par là qu'une vie religieuse sera vraiment locale si aux exigences de la conversion à Jésus-Christ et à son message s'ajoute la note de contestation des sociétés et de leurs cultures spécifiques. Il y a là un vrai besoin de revêtir la recherche d'un substrat humain spécifique.

Suite à ces considérations il se pose un problème sérieux en ce qui concerne la vie religieuse en Afrique. D'une part, on devrait se demander si une fondation religieuse peut être considérée comme sérieuse si le fondateur ne communique aucun héritage spirituel à ses disciples. Et d'autre part, on devrait chercher des voies et moyens pour rendre local un charisme

En effet, tout ce qui se vit en Afrique ou tout ce que les Africains adoptent n'est pas nécessairement africain. L'exemple de la vie religieuse est très éloquent à cet égard. Elle a été apportée en Afrique sous forme d'un paquet bien ficelé qu'on présente et qui doit être accepté comme tel.

qui a pris naissance sous d'autres cieux. L'avènement de la vie religieuse africaine est conditionné par la réponse à cette double considération. Les chercheurs de Dieu ne manquent pas en Afrique. Ce qui fait défaut c'est la liberté dans l'Esprit pour que ces personnes puissent exprimer toute la richesse de la recherche qu'elles sont appelées à faire par l'Esprit.

4. Quel genre de mission ?

Le vie religieuse est une structure dans l'Eglise et non une structure d'Eglise. Dans ses origines, elle rassemble des chrétiens laïcs pour la sequela Christi et n'est donc pas nécessairement liée aux structures hiérarchiques de l'Eglise. C'est dire que sa fonction n'est pas ministérielle mais symbolique. Elle est en effet un symbole pour l'Eglise locale et un symbole pour le monde. Dans l'Eglise, elle est une présence qui doit faire face aux déviations à la

fidélité à Jésus et à son message pour inciter cette Eglise à rentrer dans le droit chemin de Dieu. Et, dans le monde elle se confronte aux signes inéquivoques de l'ordre originel ou de l'ordre eschatologique. Sa mission première est d'être une parabole existentielle racontée par l'Esprit Saint dans le temps de l'Eglise et les réalités concrètes d'une société et du monde. La vie religieuse doit donc se distinguer d'une autre structure dans l'Eglise par sa recherche de Dieu à la lumière du message de Jésus-Christ, par le souci pour l'avènement du Royaume, par l'exemple de vie chrétienne qui interpelle leurs frères et soeurs chrétiens et les pousse à la fidélité à Jésus-Christ et aux enseignements évangéliques, par la contestation vécue de tout ce qui, dans leurs sociétés, s'oppose au plan salvifique de Dieu. Les oeuvres que les religieux et religieuses entreprennent ou acceptent ne devraient pas être le but final de leur présence mais des canaux par lesquels ils deviennent une parabole existentielle.

L'histoire des Eglises d'Afrique donne l'impression de favoriser le fonctionnel au détriment du symbolique. La vraie mission de la vie religieuse deviendrait plus palpitante si l'espace nécessaire était accordé aux religieuses et religieux pour exprimer la nature propre de leur vocation chrétienne.



INCULTURATION DU MARIAGE CHRÉTIEN

P. Meinrad Hebga, SJ

"la morale chrétienne", au profit d'une morale au rabais. Et par "morale chrétienne", "mariage chrétien", il entend la loi canonique qui prescrit aux baptisés de contracter mariage "in facie Ecclesiae", c'est-à-dire devant un prêtre dûment mandaté. Or le décret du concile de Trente, "Tametsi" rendant obligatoire cette procédure remonte seulement à 1563. Encore fut-il ignoré par l'ensemble des communautés catholiques, si bien que Pie X, en 1907, se sentit obligé d'en prendre un autre, "Ne temere" qui n'entra en vigueur que le jour de Pâques 1908. On peut se demander où étaient "la morale chrétienne" et "le mariage chrétien" des débuts à l'aube du XXe siècle. Toutes les unions matrimoniales entre chrétiens furent-elles, pendant 19 siècles, contraires à la loi divine? Or si l'Eglise, pendant une si longue période de temps, a considéré comme sacrement le mariage des baptisés européens en dehors de la forme canonique, ne pourrait-elle pas montrer la même tolérance à l'égard de baptisés africains, empêchés parfois, malgré eux, de se marier tout de suite "in facie Ecclesiae"? Il s'agirait d'une mesure transitoire, prise dans l'esprit du gradualisme qui fut en honneur dans les églises anciennes. Nul ne s'en prévaudrait pour justifier le mariage à l'essai, encore moins pour légitimer la polygamie. Ainsi éviterait-on l'apparence même du "Deux poids, deux mesures" en ce domaine sensible.

D'autre part, était-il nécessaire d'imposer aux Africains, dont les lois d'exogamie sont parmi les plus sévères du monde, le comput des degrés de parenté introduit dans le droit canonique par Alexandre II en 1065, et qui est tiré, non des saintes écritures, mais de l'antique droit germanique? (Jan Van Driessche: L'Empêchement de parenté en Droit coutumier africain, Desclee 1959). L'universalité reviendrait-elle à un uniformisme ramené au modèle européen? L'apôtre Jacques déclara au concile de Jérusalem qu'il ne fallait pas inquiéter ceux qui, du paganisme, se sont convertis à Dieu". (Ac 15, 19).

Voilà, parmi bien d'autres, deux sujets de réflexion à l'intention des pères et experts du "synode pour l'Afrique". Le problème de l'inculturation africaine du mariage chrétien est l'un des plus cruciaux pour les stratégies de la nouvelle évangélisation de notre continent.

Les autorités romaines ayant décidé qu'au lieu d'un concile africain célébré en Afrique, comme le "concile hollandais" fut célébré en Hollande, nous n'aurions droit qu'à un "synode pour l'Afrique" tenu à Rome; les mêmes autorités ayant jugé bon d'ignorer les suggestions d'Instituts Catholiques tels que ceux de Kinshasa et de Yaoundé touchant l'Instrumentum Laboris, force nous est de faire contre mauvaise fortune bon cœur, et de tirer le meilleur parti possible de ce qui nous est finalement octroyé.

Personnellement, je souhaiterais que les pères et experts qui seront en majorité non-africains, dépassent l'horizon étroit de la culture occidentale qui, en dépit de quelques concessions mineures consenties aux autres aires culturelles, reste la norme imposée à la planète sous la rubrique de l'universalité, tant dans la formulation de la règle de foi, que dans le législation canonique et la célébration liturgique.

Notre préoccupation est particulièrement vive, quand nous constatons que l'on n'a accordé aucune attention au grave problème de l'inculturation africaine du mariage sacramentel. La façon un peu lestée dont on effleure les questions qui risqueraient de remettre en cause la suprématie culturelle de l'occident ne peut qu'inquiéter et troubler des catholiques attachés au christianisme universel, il est vrai, mais désireux de ne pas s'aliéner, de ne pas s'euro-péaniser pour être sauvés. Celui qui nous vivons aujourd'hui n'est pas culturellement oriental et juif (ce qui serait un moindre mal), mais foncièrement occidental. Notre visée n'est d'ailleurs pas une utopique parité avec ceux qui sont légitimement fiers d'avoir maîtrisé le macrocosme et le microcosme, et qui, après Dieu régissent "le ciel et la terre". Elle est plus modeste: obtenir une approche théologique du mariage traditionnel africain dans l'esprit d'ouverture, de tolérance et de gradualisme dont l'Eglise fit preuve en Europe pendant 19 siècles.

Dans un article paru dans la Nouvelle Revue Théologique (Nov.-Déc. 1992), le P. Nothomb fait un mauvais procès aux théologiens africains et au card. Malula, en insinuant que l'inculturation africaine de la célébration du mariage réclamée par eux, reviendrait à brader

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM CO-EXISTENCE

Veronica Openibo, SHCJ

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN VALUES

Apart from the African Traditional Religions which still exist in most parts of the continent, the two main religions in Africa are Christianity and Islam. Both are foreign to this continent but we know that Christianity spread to Africa in the mid-first century and Islam in the sixth century, within the first decade of its foundation. It is important to note that even before the advent of Christianity and Islam, Africa was (and remains) culturally and religiously pluralistic. In the traditional African setting there is in general a community spirit, a co-existence within the society of various traditional believers and worshipers. In the past the differences usually did not degenerate into tension, hatred or conflict, largely because of in-built values and norms of tolerance and reciprocation in a given society. Honour and respect for Almighty God (the owner of the skies), the divinities, for life and after life, and for the entire creation are enshrined and expressed in the great value placed on positive and constructive relationships at all levels with the Creator and with all creatures, including the environment.

RELIGIOUS COLONIZATION

It is sad to note that in some parts of Africa the followers of the two religions, Christianity and Islam, often have a problem co-existing. In areas where Christians and Muslims coexist peacefully there are inter-marriages and of course in one family there could be Christians and Muslims. For example, in Yorubaland in Nigeria, even the great Chiefs' families have both Christians and Muslims among their members, and the ruler can be chosen from either of the two religions. Unfortunately, this type of peaceful co-existence does not exist in many

parts of Africa though the two religions profess to believe in peace, in respect for the human person and above all in the human being's total surrender to Almighty God. The problem comes from some of the basic tenets held by groups of ardent fanatics within the two religions. Despite the fact that in the *Hausa* speaking areas of Africa, Christians and Muslims use the same name, *Allah*, for God, fanatic Muslims hold the view that all Christians are unbelievers. Likewise, there are fanatic Christians who say that no Muslim will get to heaven. There are great efforts among these groups to make converts and to limit all forms of relationships to members of their religious group only. The problem is further complicated by certain ambitions evident within the two groups: Muslim fanatics working tirelessly toward the complete Islamisation of Africa, and some Christian groups campaigning for the complete Christianization of the same continent. Vigorous proselytising is being undertaken by both groups. A lot of money is being pumped into Africa for development and for luring young people to become fanatics of one or other religion. For example, in the largely Christian areas in Nigeria, huge Islamic colleges have been constructed.

As a result in the midst of Africa's numerous post-colonial, socio-political and economic problems another form of colonization is taking place. Some Religious leaders are being bought over, or their silence, when the donation of more money for development is conditional upon the number of converts made. Rather than joining hands as human beings to face and cope with the problems of democracy, military take-over, dictatorship, unemployment, homelessness, currency devaluation, inflation, deforestation, disintegration of family ties, illiteracy, etc., the people are roused and manipulated in order to create further tension and enmity or simply to create fear and suspicion of the other

religion. This can lead to religious riots. These fanatics are exploiting difficult situations for their own sectarian purposes. For example, in the North of Nigeria the origin of many religious riots has been traced to political or ethnic rivalry, and unemployed have helped to fuel the unrest. In many of the predominantly Muslim areas it is said that it is easier to climb the socio-political and economic ladder if one becomes a Muslim. Presumably the Muslims feel the same in predominantly Christian areas. Religious co-existence and tolerance, qualities that used to be a mark of African society, have been eroded as a consequence of such pressures. Countries like the Sudan, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Tanzania, Somalia, Mali, Egypt, Mauritania, to name a few, are experiencing this kind of religious tension. There is a great need therefore to face squarely the challenges of peaceful co-existence.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

The major challenges for peaceful co-existence lie in the following areas:-

A. Cooperation

When Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk got the award for their courage in launching out to abolish apartheid and to fostering peaceful co-existence in South Africa, they both knew the struggle was not ended, that the challenge still continues. Shortly after the award was made, in an interview with reporters, Mandela was asked if he trusted de Klerk to keep to the promises he had made for the future of South Africa. I was elated by Mandela's unequivocal response. He said that for him it is not a question of trust; that he knows the peace process cannot be achieved without the full cooperation of de Klerk.

Likewise, the co-existence of Christians and Muslims cannot and will not be achieved unless there is full commitment by both groups to non-violence, and complete cooperation for the development of each nation and for the continent as a whole. It is necessary that each feel the need of the other in the struggle to build up a loving, God-fearing nation, and that each sees the basic goodness in the other if the aims and objectives of a developing nation are to be achieved. The challenge, then, of co-operation presupposes ability to look to a wider, more general, "good" than that of any particular group.

B. Communication

The challenge of communication is for Christians and Muslims alike to see the need for honest dialogue. This requires listening attentively to God-*Allah*, the communal peace-loving God, to each other, being open to the exchange of thoughts and ideas, giving information, and expressing true feelings easily. All these add up to an undertaking that can be difficult, but one which is very rewarding. Some religious riots in Nigeria for example, were averted because of honest communication that took place among the religious leaders. Many others could have been stopped if there had already been a habit of peaceful dialogue as a channel of communication. As an example of the latter, a famous Christian preacher-healer from Europe was invited to a Muslim city, Kano, in Nigeria, for a revival meeting which was attended by thousands of people from both religious groups. Shortly after the healer left Kano there was a big religious riot during which many Christians and some Muslims lost their lives. It was alleged that the Muslims started the riot because

Likewise, the co-existence of Christians and Muslims cannot and will not be achieved unless there is full commitment by both groups to non-violence, and complete cooperation for the development of each nation and for the continent as a whole.

they were afraid some of their followers would become Christians. If there had been sincere communication/dialogue and trust on both sides, each would have been able to listen to the other and some reasoned discussion would have taken place, instead of opposing groups obstinately upholding a particular view-point, even to the point of killing each other rather than give way. Supposedly, as a result of this incident, even now, three years later, we are aware that Christians from Europe and America are heavily penalised if they visit Nigeria. Rigorous visa demands are imposed especially when applicants state that they are priests or religious, or are planning to visit churches or religious houses. Communication continues to resolve this issue. The key to peaceful co-existence is sincere communication/dialogue.

C. Compromise

When differences are settled by mutual concessions, there is peaceful co-existence. The challenge is contained in each group's readiness to move beyond its own strong point of view to what will actually build up the community and nation. When J.J. Rawlings told the Muslim leaders in Accra to relocate the central Mosque in another area of the city because their Friday worship was disrupting the flow of the traffic, they did so peacefully. The old Mosque was then bulldozed. In 1984, part of our convent of the Sisters of the Holy Child in Bauchi, a very Muslim town in Nigeria, was bulldozed to make room for a highway. After long negotiation with the Government (which by the way was very inhuman and closed to any compromise) our Sisters were forced to move after part of our compound and the parish's maize and vegetable crops had been bulldozed. No other provision was made for our accommodation. We felt helpless and unjustly treated, especially since no compensation was ever given to us for the value of our property that was destroyed. In another incident, a well known Nigerian Islamic scholar, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi known as "*Imam without compromise*", was quoted in a weekly magazine in 1987 as saying, "Christianity is nothing", and that Nigeria would have to be split rather than allow itself to be governed by a Christian. Later in his autobiography, Gumi took pains to explain what he meant by "Christianity is nothing", namely that the religion as practised today is a negation of its original teaching. But then he did not explain why a Christian could not rule Nigeria when Christians constitute half of the country's population. Around that time, a well known Christian leader reacted to Gumi's latter statement by saying Nigeria would be burnt down if Christians were not allowed to head the Government in Nigeria. Explosive statements and uncompromising attitudes such as these make peaceful co-existence difficult. Recently a Sudanese top Government official was asked why Christians were being persecuted in the Sudan and why Islamic law has been imposed on the whole country. He retorted that Sudan is predominantly Muslim and that he saw no reason why Islamic law should not be enforced. No wonder, then, that the ethnic domination by the Tuaregs and Arabs of Islamic dominated Northern Sudan has been effected under the cloak of religion. Thousands of Christians from the South have been rendered homeless, their towns and villages bulldozed to make way for ethnic domination. Sharia laws and punishments have been imposed on the entire country and

job opportunities denied people because of their religious affiliation. There is little or no evidence of any kind of compromise. Much fruitless dialogues has taken place but no perceptible headway has been made. In such a situation we cannot speak of genuine co-existence. When tolerance is absent we need to face the challenge of compromise.

D. Collaboration

Finally, collaboration is important for peaceful co-existence. Africa today is faced with so many societal evils -- urbanisation, homelessness, joblessness, inflation, illiteracy, appropriation of wealth by the rich, AIDS, to name only a few. The impact of IMF demands on debtor nations is crippling most African countries. If it is true that human beings turn to faith as a shield from troubles then the deep faith and profound commitment of true believers, Christian and Muslim alike, in each nation, should be a great energising force, enabling both sides to collaborate in building a just, loving, and peaceful society. Common projects amongst women's groups, youth movements and other unions formed across religious boundaries, when fully supported can indeed enhance the full collaboration needed for peaceful co-existence among Christians and Muslims.

CONCLUSION

This realisation can help us to see that the major challenge of Christian-Muslim co-existence is for adherents of each religion to be faithful disciples, to follow wholeheartedly in the steps of their founder. Since Jesus and Mohammed both taught the value of peace, respect for the human person and surrender to the will of God, there is no inherent incompatibility between Christianity and Islam. The challenge is in becoming true Christians and true Muslims.



FEMMES RELIGIEUSES EN DIALOGUE AVEC L'ISLAM

Maria del Pilar Benavente, MSOLA

La préparation du Synode Africain aura été, pour l'Eglise d'Afrique, une occasion de s'interroger sur la manière dont elle répond au défi de l'Islam. Cette occasion aura-t-elle été suffisamment saisie par les Eglises locales et les Congrégations religieuses? L'Islam, en effet, est un défi pour l'Eglise. Il l'est, d'abord et tout simplement, parce qu'il existe et qu'il constitue, pour beaucoup d'hommes et de femmes africains, un chemin pour vivre la rencontre avec Dieu. Il est un défi parce que, souvent, des chrétiens et des musulmans, unis par des liens de famille, de nationalité ou de culture, vivent sous un même toit ou travaillent et collaborent sur le même terrain économique et politique. Il l'est peut-être encore davantage à la fin de ce XXème siècle car, selon les contextes dans lesquels il évolue, il présente des visages très divers et parfois contradictoires.

C'est parce que nos expériences de rencontre avec l'Islam peuvent être très diverses qu'il est difficile de parler du dialogue avec l'Islam "en général". Dans un échange entre religieuses venant de plusieurs pays d'Afrique, les unes parleraient plutôt d'une expérience positive et signifiante d'amitié et de collaboration avec des musulmans; d'autres exprimeraient la souffrance des minorités chrétiennes victimes de violences de la part de leurs compatriotes musulmans, ou encore l'inquiétude de voir un Islam qui s'impose par la force; d'autres auraient beaucoup à dire d'un cheminement ensemble où, grâce à la foi de l'autre, on a découvert un Dieu toujours plus grand et qui dépasse tout ce que l'on peut dire de Lui...

La situation de l'Islam en Afrique, comme d'ailleurs celle du Christianisme, varie beaucoup d'un pays à un autre, d'une région à une autre: au Maghreb il est majoritaire et pratiquement exclusif; en Afrique Occidentale, son importance numérique n'exclue pas l'existence

d'une Eglise locale qui, même minoritaire, joue un rôle clé dans la vie sociale. Dans d'autres régions, l'Islam peut être minoritaire à côté des Eglises chrétiennes dont les institutions ont un grand poids dans la vie du pays.

Face à cette mosaïque quelles sont nos convictions à nous, femmes religieuses? Quelle question l'Islam pose-t-il à notre manière d'être chrétiennes et missionnaires? Quels défis nous lance la présence de l'Islam? Si le propre de notre vocation missionnaire est d'aller "au-delà des frontières de l'Eglise" il y a pas de doute que là où est l'Islam, là aussi peut être notre place; mais alors quelles conséquences cela aura-t-il sur les choix de nos insertions, sur notre formation théologique, sur notre relation au Dieu de Jésus Christ?

Femmes avec les femmes

Nombreuses sont les religieuses qui, vivant dans un milieu musulman, pourraient témoigner de ce **DIALOGUE DE VIE** qu'est l'amitié, la collaboration et le travail avec des femmes musulmanes.

Comme femmes, nous avons la chance et le privilège de les reconstruire même lorsque, au nom de leur culture ou de leur religion, certaines sont privées de liberté et restent enfermées dans leurs maisons.

Il y a aujourd'hui, dans plusieurs milieux, un courant islamique qui est loin de promouvoir le dialogue islamo-chrétien. Des écoles transmettent aux enfants et aux adolescents une mentalité qui ne favorise pas l'ouverture aux autres croyants. Mais si, à la maison, le langage des mères parle d'amitié, de reconnaissance et d'estime pour des religieuses qui ont marqué positivement leur vie, ces jeunes ont encore une chance d'entrevoir que le dialogue entre

chrétiens et musulmans est possible. "La main qui balance le berceau, balance le monde".

En même temps, nous-mêmes, religieuses, nous sommes en train de grandir dans une prise de conscience de notre propre situation comme **FEMMES DANS L'EGLISE**. Nous nous sentons soeurs des femmes musulmanes, partageant une même aspiration à la liberté et au respect.

De multiples façons, par les mouvements associatifs et par les coopératives des femmes, par les rassemblements où l'on célèbre et partage l'expérience d'être femme, nous pouvons, ensemble, poser les fondations du dialogue islamo-chrétien. Quand nous collaborons avec des femmes musulmanes pour que nos sociétés et nos communautés croyantes intègrent pleinement l'homme et la femme sur un pied d'égalité, nous travaillons pour le

Comme femmes, nous avons la chance et le privilège de les reconstruire même lorsque, au nom de leur culture ou de leur religion, certaines sont privées de liberté et restent enfermées dans leurs maisons.

dialogue car, à la base du non-dialogue, il y a la prétention à se suffire à soi-même et l'exclusion de l'autre différent.

C'est une conviction que nous avons: la libération de la femme et le dialogue entre les croyants des différentes religions sont liés l'un à l'autre.

Croyantes dans le Christ qui se laissent affecter par la foi de l'autre

Peut-on vivre quotidiennement avec des musulmans sans que notre propre foi en soit en quelque sorte affectée?

On a beaucoup parlé de la théologie contextuelle. En effet, ceux qui vivent dans un milieu exclusivement chrétien ne peuvent pas avoir la même approche théologique que ceux qui baignent dans un contexte de pluralisme religieux. N'en est-il pas de même pour l'expérience de Dieu, pour la prière et pour la compréhension que l'on peut avoir du Mystère

de Jésus-Christ?

La foi est un don vivant, dynamique. Il n'est donc pas étonnant qu'elle se laisse féconder par le terrain dans lequel nous sommes enracinées.

L'Islam comme tel, son existence, sa signification nous posent question. Mais surtout la foi des musulmans sincères nous enrichit et nous interpelle. Nous laisser affecter par l'autre religion, par l'autre croyant ne met pas notre identité chrétienne en danger. C'est, au contraire, une fenêtre ouverte à travers laquelle nous pouvons entrevoir certains "traits" du visage de Dieu.

L'autre croyant a quelque chose à dire à ma foi. C'est aussi une forme de dialogue: reconnaître que même la foi chrétienne a besoin de la foi de l'autre pour s'ouvrir toujours davantage au grand Mystère du Dieu que Jésus nous révèle.

Religieuses formées solidement pour vivre la rencontre inter-religieuse

L'existence même de L'Islam, le fait du pluralisme religieux en Afrique, la rencontre de l'autre croyant demandent que nous nous interroguions sur la formation que tout cela demande de notre part.

Dans nos programmes de formation première et continue, quelle place donnons-nous à la connaissance de l'Islam, à l'information sur ses courants actuels dans le monde, à la théologie des religions, à une spiritualité chrétienne solide?

Nous serions peut-être tentées de croire que cette formation est uniquement nécessaire pour celles qui auraient à vivre le **DIALOGUE THEOLOGIQUE**. Au contraire, quelles que soient nos compétences (pastorales, professionnelles, etc.), nous avons toutes besoin de fonder notre action et notre présence sur des bases spirituelles et théologiques qui nous permettent de vivre enracinées et ouvertes au sein d'un milieu religieux pluraliste.

Comme religieuses nous avons aussi une responsabilité vis-à-vis des chrétiens africains qui, en rencontrant l'Islam, peuvent réagir soit par la peur, l'enfermement, soit par une certaine confusion.

L'Islam en Afrique présente des visages si divers que nous sentons le besoin d'être lucides

et informées pour ne pas adopter un langage ou des attitudes trop simplistes à son égard.

Missionnaires au-delà des frontières de l'Eglise

Aujourd'hui, les Eglises d'Afrique, les communautés chrétiennes ont des besoins immenses. Même si nos congrégations missionnaires étaient deux fois plus nombreuses, nous serions encore à court de ressources humaines pour répondre aux appels. Mais, hélas, c'est souvent le contraire qui arrive: les vocations missionnaires se font rares et les congrégations sont obligées de faire des choix qui aillent le plus possible dans la ligne de leurs charismes propres.

La présence des communautés religieuses en milieu musulman fera-t-elle partie de nos priorités? Parfois c'est par une seule communauté religieuse que l'Eglise est présente dans toute une région islamisée! Les Responsables des congrégations et les Evêques pourraient encourager l'engagement de l'une ou l'autre religieuse pour la promotion du dialogue islamo-chrétien dans les diocèses où l'Islam est présent.

Que l'Esprit de Dieu nous montre quels sont les appels que lance l'Islam aux congrégations

apostoliques féminines en cette veille du Synode!

Que nous n'attendions pas, pour nous intéresser à l'Islam, que celui-ci apparaisse comme une menace, mais que nous nous sentions concernées même lorsqu'il est minoritaire et peu influent!

L'Islam comme tel, son existence, sa signification nous posent question. Mais surtout la foi des musulmans sincères nous enrichit et nous interpelle. Nous laisser affecter par l'autre religion, par l'autre croyant ne met pas notre identité chrétienne en danger. C'est, au contraire, une fenêtre ouverte à travers laquelle nous pouvons entrevoir certains "traits" du visage de Dieu.

Qu'avec les autres croyants nous nous considérons comme des partenaires qui peuvent s'appuyer sur les valeurs de chaque religion pour travailler ensemble à rendre plus digne la vie de beaucoup d'Africains!



INCULTURATED FORMATION

Libanos Ayele, CMS

I think the theme of inculturation is one of the hot issues in Africa today. However, while the topic of the inculturation of the Gospel started especially with Vatican II, the reflection upon the inculturation of religious life in Africa started only in the 1980's. Some individuals might have started earlier than that, but I think discussions and sharing reflections on the topic began not long ago.

I am glad to see efforts being made to take the issue seriously. However, despite the efforts being made, it is very hard to deal with when you come to the practical side of it.

- How can we divest "Religious Life" of its conventional dress and hand it over "naked" and "pure" at this stage of its history?
- While divesting it, have we prepared an African/local dress to replace it?

Although religious life started in Africa, the various forms of religious life that we have today, in our Catholic world, developed especially in the West. Therefore, the models or patterns we know are those of Western countries and we need courage to face the issue and deal with it honestly and lovingly. Along the way, we might make mistakes, making mistakes is inevitable, but let us make sure they do not affect individuals: our candidates should not become our "guinea pigs" to experiment upon! This issue is a very delicate matter, so although the process must be gradual, we need to act.

At this point I would like to say a word on the importance of considering the educational and social *background* of our candidates:

More than ten years ago, when I was teaching a course called "Language in Culture and Society", I had the chance to read and discuss many interesting articles on the subject. The fact struck me that in many developing (poor)

countries, in the field of education, the same experiences and processes were taking place. In these countries, the misfortune of school children and adult students was identical; for example: at home the children spoke their mother tongue; at school they were introduced to the national languages (or classical as in the case of Arabic); and in their intermediate and advanced studies they were taught in the instructional (colonial) media (because books were available in those languages only and their local languages did not have adequate vocabularies to deal with scientific/high matters).

The outcome of this situation is immaturity and "half-bakedness". The students can master none of these languages and logically many have to depend on memorization rather than understanding and full assimilation of the knowledge. *So the language factor is very important and the educational process is very much conditioned by it.* Rightly, Rogath Kimaryo quotes Paulo Freire saying that the students become the depositories and the teacher the depositor; and Kimaryo says that this banking system of education has almost become a culture among Africans. (cf. *AFER*, August 1993, p. 204). This is true in most countries and it is the milieu where our candidates come from.

The social background, is no less complex. Students pass most of their time in school and lose a real and deep contact with their traditional cultural practices, structures and values. They are not in touch with it; therefore, they are easily influenced by what they come in contact with.

The course mentioned above, shows clearly that the three elements (language, culture and society) go hand in hand; therefore, due to the contact with other peoples, the African cultures, languages and societies are not the same as yesterday; they are constantly changing or evolving.

Another factor as Jean Marc Ela says, is that our societies are no longer protected from secularization, atheism, or religious indifference; and that urbanization, contemporary economic constraints, the phenomenal increase in school enrolment, the growth of unemployment, drought, and famine are phenomena completely upsetting human conditions in Black Africa (cf. *My Faith as an African*: 1990, p. 171).

So we are challenged by these factors and the programmes in our Formation Houses should be geared accordingly.

Now let me close with some reflections and considerations:

- As I mentioned above, it is very delicate and hard to divest "religious life" of its conventional dress in order to leave it "naked" or "pure" so that we Africans can dress it in our own way. Therefore, we should continue to do research, reflect upon, identify, and share the values or elements that are typically African and that can help us to understand and live religious life better in the African milieu. My fear is that in the divestment process, we might throw away what is essential. (The tendency of some is to act emotionally and to throw away everything that has to do with Westerners). We need patience and time.
- All of us are called to be alert and to move with the changing cultures and mentalities of the societies, especially of the youth, so as to be able to respond to the needs of the candidates and help them to be really integrated persons.
- We should avoid generalizations and be careful to distinguish the general culture from the particular cultures. People are very sensitive and are hurt when they are identified wrongly or when their identity/culture/tribe is ignored. Africa shelters many tribes and as we all know, differences exist among them. So let us identify and learn the background of each of our candidates.
- Let us take care to discover and study the healthy roots of each society and constantly to strengthen these roots. We can ask the candidates themselves to do some field work and learn directly from the elders and Wise people of our societies.

I am confident that together we shall be able to give some positive answers to the issue. The African Synod is causing some movements and crises, and I hope it will lead to a clear vision and towards courageous decisions and actions in various fields including Formation.

Although religious life started in Africa, the various forms of religious life that we have today, in our Catholic world, developed especially in the West. Therefore, the models or patterns we know are those of Western countries and we need courage to face the issue and deal with it honestly and lovingly.



FORMATION IN AFRICA TODAY

Emmanuel Kofi Fianu, SVD

The issue of formation on the African continent has been the focus of discussion for quite some time now. It forms part of the global discussion of the 'aggiornamento' or renewal of the Church initiated by Vatican II. That Council still remains a point of reference for the discussion of many issues on the life of the Church. Soon after the Council, whereas the European continent, or the 'old Christian world' talked of up-dating, the Latin-American Church saw her process of renewal in the development of the theology of liberation. The Asian continent turned to dialogue with the other religions long existent on the continent before the arrival of Christianity. On the African continent the key word became inculturation.

Even though I still look forward to a more precise and generally acceptable definition of the term, I believe we Christians of Africa are making the effort to appreciate and integrate our various cultural values not only into Christianity but also into Religious Life. I do not however think we shall arrive at a common cultural identity for any particular country and less so for the continent. We should however not be discouraged in our efforts to work towards a better future of integrated Christian life in Africa. Our success will depend very much on the adequate formation of the Laity, Religious and Clergy of today; leaders of the coming millennium. The forthcoming Synods on Africa and Consecrated Life give us all an opportunity to reflect deeper on our life as African Religious and how we want to shape it for the next millennium.

In this reflection I would limit myself to the challenge of formation of religious priests in Africa today. Recent discussions on formation in general and, in particular, of religious priests overwhelm us with an endless list of problems and suggestions. It is obvious that without in-depth reflection we may only end up with folkloric solutions which are not adequate remedies.

I am convinced that the basic challenge of formation in Africa today is to have the courage to stop and reflect. Each religious congregation or family needs to stop and ask itself a number of pertinent questions. There is the need for a critical self-study to know who we are as African Religious. We need to see how far we can identify with other members of our religious families if we are international, and with the local and universal Church. It may become necessary to seek the modification of international structures, based at times on concepts not too helpful for an African Religious identity. This is where we need to stress the importance and wisdom of unity in diversity. Rigid uniformity would have to give way to objective flexibility which leads to constructive decentralization.

Many people speak today of inculturated formation. I often ask myself what we really mean by that. Africa does not have a homogeneous culture, I even doubt if any one of our countries has a homogeneous culture. Our seminarians come from different cultural backgrounds, so in how far can formators achieve this goal of integrated formation in the strict sense of the term? We may end up causing more divisions or unconsciously imposing the culture of the formator which will not be fruitful to formation and religious family life. We should also not forget that most of our students do not have deep insights into their particular cultures because the prevailing educational systems have little to do with culture.

If we want our seminarians to have an inculturated formation we may need to review our structures of formation. The present system, built upon a Western model, may not be the most suitable one for us. We may need to look, for example at our Philosophy programmes to see if we could not lay more emphasis on African ways of thinking or philosophy, the wisdom of proverbs, oral culture and

spirituality. There is also the need for more practical exposure to the everyday life situation of the people the seminarians will be serving as priests in the future. Our programmes would need to make room for more confrontation with the realities of Christian communities. This may enhance the personal and matured response of the seminarian to his religious vocation. A recent open letter from the youth of "Mji Wa Furaha" Youth Centre in Nairobi to all seminarians and young religious in formation, echoes the concern of many of those we want to serve. In this regard I think our families and Christian communities should become more involved in the formation of our seminarians. This may be the genesis of a new sense of responsibility on their part for ministry in the Church.

I also believe that if we want to change we must have the courage to 'spare' people who will be formed to work towards it. We often hear Superiors say they need personnel for one or the other place or responsibility but it is often when the gap needs to be filled immediately. I think it is during the time of formation that we should discuss the plans and needs of the provinces with the seminarians and get them interested in their realization. Setting goals is known to be a good and effective means to success and self-fulfillment. In a number of cases we seem to put issues concerning those in formation under the cover of silence. Seminarians remain uncertainties until the bishop ordains them. Formators and Superiors need to exhibit more confidence in those in formation and help them plan their future with a sense of maturity. When a candidate knows that his interests serve the general plan of the congregation or the province he will strive conscientiously towards its achievement.

Faced with the various possibilities of ministry for which we do not feel adequately prepared, I think our challenge today may be to accept that God himself was at work long before us and grant him that space. This may also lead to a greater involvement and responsibility of the Laity in a Church that should more and more make room for their active participation. We may need to have the courage to start planning for the next four or five years ahead instead of trying to solve the problems of today. The problems of today have already overtaken us. By the time we find solutions to them they may no longer be timely and new problems would have overtaken us and we should not have solved anything. We need

to look rather at how we can face those of the four or five years to come. Long term planning may be more beneficial for effective ministry. This is where the role of Formators and Superiors as visionaries and planners is indispensable. I think, for example, that the solution to an inculturated formation today should not be sought in only what is past but also with a projection into the future. Culture is dynamic so we should offer our seminarians not only the knowledge of their specific cultures but also the essential tools for appreciating the cultural values of all times and peoples. As we live in an electronic age, the rate of development is very fast and unfortunately many of our people of tomorrow will be ignorant of the cultural values we uphold today. The elders who keep these traditions today may no longer be with us. What we shall be presenting to our people at that time will have become foreign to them and so we shall have new problems to which we shall seek new solutions. We shall continue to be overtaken by events in the formation of religious priests for the Church and society of tomorrow. Let us however not be discouraged. Let us face the future confident that we hold this treasure of our religious vocation in earthenware vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2 Cor 4:7). What Paul wrote to the Romans in Rom 8:28 should inspire us to hope for the best.



THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA

Renato Kizito Sesana, MCCJ

After a class at Tangaza Theological College in Nairobi, while sharing some reflections with the students, a young African who does his pastoral experience in a shanty town on the outskirts of Nairobi and is on his way to re-appropriate the inheritance of his ancestors told me: *"I have realized that the single most important factor in my relationship with our people is the time I take to communicate with them. Before going there I felt embarrassed by my rich clothes, by the fact that I have three good meals a day, that I have plenty of time for study and prayer which they can hardly afford, and so on. Now I feel these things count very little. What people want is that I take time to communicate. They want to know me as a person"*.

African Communication Experience

In Africa establishing relationships is more important than action. People feel more human when they "communicate" rather than when they "do". The very act of communicating is a value, regardless of the message.

I feel that any serious reflection on how to communicate the Good News in Africa should not start from the instrumental aspect, which is somehow forced on us when we speak of the "means of social communication", but our reflection should rather develop from the richness of the African communicative experience.

Human communication, in Africa as anywhere else, but here with a particular strength, is the establishment of relationships, the creation of meaning, the building of understanding and communion.

So the problem is not simply how to use the modern means of social communication, but how to draw into the life of the Church the African communicative experience.

I think that the first step is to liberate the African gift for communication, for building up human relationships. Then we might well find that Africans are able to use in a more human and relational oriented way even the modern mass media.

At the beginning of my ministry in Africa, I had the luck of being initiated into pastoral work by an experienced White Father. In the area where we operated, it was already a tradition that the priests would help solve family and village conflicts. I was always afraid of committing some mistake, due also to my still poor knowledge of the local language. One day when I was particularly nervous because I had to go alone to assist in solving a rather important conflict, he told me: *"What you have to do is to listen with patience, kindness, understanding and respect. Even after you think you have fully understood the case, never try to speed up the process, or say that you are in a hurry to go back to the mission. Listen to every single person who wants to speak. If after doing this you still pass a wrong judgement, the elders will help you to correct it. What is important is not the judgement, since everybody in the village knows already who is wrong and who is right! What is important is the process, the sitting together, the reciprocal listening, the building of relationships"*.

In the same way, I would say that at this moment of change and growth for the Church in Africa what is important is to put communication at the centre of the internal life of the Church and of the relationship of the Church with the world. Listen with respect, understanding and love to what the people have to say. Allow them to express their faith with freedom and joy, without any other restraint than their love for Jesus.

A Conversion is Needed

The challenge is formidable. If it is true what social scientists are telling us, that the mass media are not only transmitting messages, but they are shaping, creating a new culture - or, in the Western society, they are the culture - the task of the African Church is apparently two-fold and contradictory.

On the one side there are the African Cultures, and there inculturation is needed. There has been much talk (and little action) about the need for this inculturation.

On the other side there is the mass media culture, and another form of inculturation is needed there. A peaceful reciprocal acceptance of Church and mass media has not been achieved even in the countries of traditional Christianity where the mass media were invented. We cannot cancel the fact that in 1832 Pope Gregory XVI defined the freedom of the press as "evil, and never enough abhorred and detested". Since then time has passed, but in spite of the Second Vatican Council and the words of *Communio et Progressio* about the need of a public opinion in the Church, it is a fact that most church leaders are ill at ease when dealing with the media, and a free public opinion in the Church is still hardly tolerated.

The Threat of Cultural Imperialism

Simplifying, we can foresee in a not-too-distant future two possible scenarios:

- the modern mass media will flatten out all cultural diversity all over the world, and in Africa we will all be part of the periphery of the Empire, an Empire based in North America or on the Pacific Rim. We will speak the same language, watch the same TV programmes express our dreams in the same way. This scenario is too sad to contemplate, and in any case it will make superfluous any talk of inculturation in Africa!

- the Traditional Culture(s) will creatively meet the challenges of modernity and of the mass media culture and give rise to new African Culture(s), with an undoubtedly painful process of transformation and integration. In this case the main actors will be the African Culture(s) and the mass media culture, woven by the process of communication. In this scenario, if the Church wants to communicate the Gospel, it will have to enter in the arena with courage and boldness. Those absent from this process run the risk of becoming irrelevant to the emerging

modern African culture. This scenario helps us to understand that inculturation is of necessity a creative process geared to the future, not a repetition of the models of the past. Certain uses of symbols, signs, and rites from the past could at best be simply folklore.

An Agenda for the Future

A new vision is needed. For too long in Africa a Christian communicator has been understood as a Christian person with the technical skills to operate the gadgets needed in the mass media communication process. In the new perspective the Christian communicator is a person gifted to interpret and re-create the reality in new ways which are meaningful for the audience and which are imbued with Christian values. For a Christian communicator emphasis should not be on techniques but on faith and creativity. Truly, technical skills and

In the new perspective the Christian communicator is a person gifted to interpret and re-create the reality in new ways which are meaningful for the audience and which are imbued with Christian values.

modern equipment are needed, but as communication through the mass media is a work of art, creativity is of paramount importance, in order to avoid mere repetition of what has already been done by others.

Pastoral plans envisaging more personnel, more money, more Catholic Press, more Catholic Radio and TV Stations, will not necessarily solve the problem of communicating the Gospel in Africa, if they are not inspired by a more comprehensive cultural approach.

The communicator is the artist who sings a new song, gives life to a new symbol, interprets and re-expresses the African experience of poverty and dependence opening it to new horizons. Communication is how we pray and the way we build our Churches. To communicate is to be present, not necessarily physically, at the market, at the well, at the dances and festivities, at the beer halls, at the funerals. Communication is to involve, not to use. Communication is the constant re-creation of a culture.

AFRICAN WOMAN - ROLES AND NEEDS

Judith Mbula Bahemuka

The call for an African Bishops' Synod comes at a time when the African woman is facing challenges from different perspectives. The challenge to be herself, a person with dignity and self-worth; the challenge to participate fully in the development of the "Church Community"; and the challenge to rise above negative traditional structures, both in the Church and society.

For the past twenty years, a lot of literature on the roles, status and needs of women especially in the developing countries, has been circulated at conferences and other fora. What has not been highlighted, however, is the distinction between the status and the *condition* of the woman. The role she plays is solely determined by both her *condition* and her *position* in society.

Young (1988) defined "condition" as the material state in which women find themselves: their poverty; excessive work loads; lack of formal education and training; lack of access to modern technology, etc. "Position" on the other hand is the placement of the woman in society.

There are ambiguities that emerge as one discusses African Women's "condition" and "position". One of the ambiguities is that of treating women as a *unitary* category. Women in Africa belong to different classes and different positions. They therefore, experience different conditions. The various positions and conditions however, tend to be a step below that of men. This is due to traditional structures which still define gender roles and thus determine the status of women. Due to these structures, it is important to classify women as a broad social category and look at their situation and needs from that perspective.

Regarding women's situation and needs in Africa, two broad hypotheses can be postulated. One of the hypotheses is that the African woman is relatively deprived, the other is that she is marginal. The marginality hypothesis is expressed through such services as agriculture, education, employment in the public sector, access to farm inputs, access to appropriate

technology. Relative deprivation has its roots in the culture and values of certain communities where, for example, communication of technical information across sexes is *not acceptable*.

Young (1988); Wipper (1975); Bahemuka (1981); argued that there is a tendency to emphasise women's practical and day to day needs, and thus focus on ameliorative measures. This approach makes it difficult to address issues concerning women's position and conditions which should be improved. The key question that should be asked is related to the structural positions, and whether any serious and sustainable improvement of African women's condition is possible without *structural* changes. What one comes across is that women's needs as mothers, as producers etc., are highlighted; *their interests and needs as women remain silent*.

Opinions differ as to what has created the situation and the key structures that have shaped the unequal outcome. Different scholars have argued that the leading structures in Africa have been:

- a) Colonial powers and the new political forms where women are not only absent but are silent.
- b) The structuring of the economy in such a way that it is centred on the male in order to create a basic social and economic unit (nuclear family).
- c) Economic and other necessary inputs being targeted largely to men in conformity with European and Western stereotypes; women's needs as producers being ignored and thereby exacerbating their dependence on men.

Of the foregoing structures, the third seems to be still persisting. Land ownership, decision making, inheritance, are some of the areas where women's needs have to be looked into. Apart from these, education, training, acceptable levels of exposure and social services are important. At the psychological level, women have both direct and indirect needs. One area that fits in with the well-being of women is self esteem and the aspiration of each African woman.

ROLE OF THE SISTER IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH

Patricia McMenamin, Superior General, OLA

"In the morning long before dawn, He got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of Him and when they found Him they said, "everybody is looking for you". He answered "let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came". And He went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils" (Mk 1:35-39).

This simple story of a day in the life of Christ could find a parallel in the life of a Sister whether she be in Africa or in any other part of the world. To write this short article for the SEDOS Bulletin, I asked some of our Sisters how they saw their role in the African Church and what follows is really a synthesis of what they said.

He Went to a Lonely Place and Prayed

Our focus on Jesus is central to discipleship and fidelity to time with Him in prayer deepens our conviction of His love for each one of us. Only when she has given prime time to this intimacy with God can a religious witness to the gratuitousness of His love. This witness can take many forms, a silent presence in Algeria or in other Islamic States, elsewhere it is a commitment to a broken and fragile humanity by healing the sick, caring for the handicapped, touching the lives of the marginalised. It means giving an unselfish, uncalculated service to the poor. How often people come at "prayer time" and seek out the Sister to help them in their need. Christ went to pray very early in the morning so the day was for others!

Let Us Go, so I Can Preach

The Sister has a role as educator in the faith, opening peoples' minds to the Word of God. She is a carrier of Hope where many are falsely

influenced by the attraction of sects. Opening the Bible with the women and men of the African villages, a Sister will help them to discover that famine, oppression and poverty are incompatible with the design of God for humanity. The message of Jesus was clear, to bring liberty to captives, give sight to the blind. Jean Marc Ela goes as far as to say that only when the Church is committed to the dispossessed and exploited, to the people in shanty-towns, only then is the Gospel a true

A Sister in Africa today must be in touch with all that has to do with human promotion. She needs to be in real contact with people and remain close to them in their daily lives.

liberator and a precursor of a new future (1980 Dar-es-Salaam). This is at the basis of our prophetic calling. God's love knows no limits of race or creed, communities can be powerful witnesses to this non-exclusive love in their togetherness, especially where the members come from different countries or tribes.

Everyone is Looking for You...

A Sister in Africa today must be in touch with all that has to do with human promotion. She needs to be in real contact with people and remain close to them in their daily lives. Governments should provide the necessary infrastructure for rural development but Sisters must take a leading role in accompanying this movement. They need to be creative in finding ways to encourage youth to stay in their villages instead of going into cities where they encounter a multiplicity of problems. Small projects which can be fairly easily managed

may be sources not only of income for those concerned but also of a sense of community among peoples.

He Went all through Galilee

Understanding of human suffering whatever form it takes is a gift for those concerned. God loves everyone even in their very weakness and fragility and they need to be told this not only in words but also in deed. His care shines through the sensitivity of a nurse or doctor, through the encouraging word of the teacher, through the patient listening of the pastoral or social worker. Every contact with the leper, the handicapped, the AIDS patient, the prisoner, is an occasion of announcing the liberating message of the Gospel. Saint Columba, one of our early Irish missionaries, remarked that we are pilgrims for Christ and that the person who brings freedom brings dignity. Our presence among people should be liberating in some way and never creative of dependence or be seen as a "fairy godmother role".

He Cast Out Devils...

Justice, peace, integrity of creation are concerns of the Church and of religious today. In areas of persecution and violence, religious need to be elements (agents) of peace and of non-violence. At times this may be the only reason for staying in a place, a sign of solidarity and commitment to a people **especially to the women**. There is never room for looking for privilege but rather a search for a simple life-style satisfied with what is necessary. Here there are many questions for religious, how often we seek greater security and comfort in travelling, in housing, in what we eat, what we wear. Christ went about doing good and did not know often where next He might lay His head. The rich man in the Gospel was afraid of having nothing. Choice is difficult if we are afraid of having nothing! But Christ does not water down His invitation to "leave all" even that which one finds most difficult to part with. God comes to visit not in possessions but in our hearts!

A number one priority for Sisters in the African Church today is the cause of woman in all aspects. We need a much more inclusive approach and have a voice where decisions are made, be that in society or in the Church. This may take many forms, beginning with language. To name someone is to recognise her presence! Patience is required but gradually

there are signs that attitudes are beginning to change. In areas of pastoral planning Sisters must make their voices heard and influence decisions concerning the family and society. Sisters may be resource persons for team-work.

Justice touches the area of commitment to duty and of forming professional consciences. A basic principle is to do an honest day's work and not look for privileges. Honesty and efficiency speak louder than any words could ever do.

They Set Out in Search of Him

Religious are called to be question-marks in the face of the huge problems facing the poor in Africa today, in villages and in cities. A life lived for God, sharing in the daily struggles of a people, promoting their liberty and defending their dignity, is a prophetic life and an invitation to discover that our God is a God of tenderness and compassion, Who wills that each person receive of His fullness. A Sister's role is primarily to empower her "companions" to go and search for Him.



AFRICAN WOMEN IN POLITICS

Celine Namalambo, H.B.V.M.

This topic lends itself to a variety of treatments. One possibility is to look at the African women who are already in politics and evaluate what their contribution to politics has been. To take this option would not do justice to the African woman, as not many have been actively involved in politics so far, and my evaluation of the situation of those who have tried to be in politics is that they have been so exploited by men, that they could not really be themselves and contribute as women. This is understandable when in actual fact Africa is still very much a man's world. To survive any length of time in politics, women had to 'serve' the wishes of men. This becomes clear in the kind of women top political leadership chooses for different ministerial posts. One wonders what criteria are used in the choice.

The second possibility, and the one I wish to take, is to look at the African woman and try to highlight what she could contribute to politics if she became not only more involved in it but if she was given the freedom to be herself with all the qualities that belong to her.

The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English defines politics as "a science or art of government". Now, government is about controlling or directing the public affairs of a people in a country. It is involvement in the lives of the people, socially, culturally, scientifically, etc. In Africa, more than elsewhere, the lives of the people are very much in the hands of the politicians. It is as if politics run the different households by their policies, etc. Who is better qualified to understand people's lives than the one who brought them into the world? From the cradle to the grave, the woman is involved in the life of every human being, male or female. This makes it an absolute requirement that the woman should be at the centre of anything that affects the human being seriously. Being at the centre of planning for the nation, as that is what politics entails in African countries, the African woman will influence decisions and thereby fight against the injustice and oppression brought about by some

of the political systems we experience in Africa. How will she be able to do this?

The African woman has been endowed with certain qualities which she can bring to the political world. The economic hardship that our African countries have been thrown into have made the African woman a survivor through hard work. She rises early to work in the field or to pick some vegetables to sell at the market to find the money to feed her family. The African woman who is able, engages in all sorts of business, from selling vegetables in a market, to selling cars in a garage or on the street. She is industrious and even with grass, clay or rugs she can make something to sell to feed her family. If she engages in politics, she will be creative and by involving other women, both at the grassroots and other levels, she will raise the standard of living in the country. Being at the centre of decision making for the country, her compassion and common sense will enable her to influence decisions as she will be able to speak for the most vulnerable in society, namely, the women and children. Bringing into politics her qualities of endurance and fidelity, she will not be too easily corrupted but her motherly heart will continue to go out towards those who suffer most from political systems. Oh! what a different world it will be!

All over the world, women are trying to take their rightful place in society. By engaging in politics African women will help balance the gender issue. They will be able to be the voice the voiceless, as many African women are. Having experienced the pangs of childbirth, they will be able to speak on behalf of parents who see their children suffer, imprisoned, or die without cause. By challenging those who oppose her, she will put her hand to systematic change knowing that only time will tell how effective her ways are.

I hope to live to see the day when the role of the African woman will be recognised in the public square, in the corridors of power, in the pulpit and right in our midst.

TRENDS IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY

Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, CSSp

African theology has reached adulthood. The debate about its right to exist is over. In 1956 African priests were worried about their silence. Today, the chief pastors of the Catholic Church in Africa are taking decisions to the best of their ability. In 1960 Professor A. Vanneste told his student, T. Tshibangu, and the Kinshasa audience that an African theology would be second class; universal (European) theology was preferable. His audience refused to believe him during that first celebrated debate on African theology. The constant productions of the Faculty of Theology of Kinshasa and other Faculties, Seminaries and Theological Associations have become resources for the study of the theological effort in Africa. In 1989 during

Secondly, African theology takes seriously the deplorable social conditions prevalent in post-colonial Africa such as the delinquent State, military and civilian dictatorships, intimidation and brutality reflecting the age of slavery and colonialism.

the theology week of the same Faculty of Kinshasa African theology was assessed. Curiously, Vanneste and Bishop Tshibangu along with many other participants were pre-occupied about the direction African theology should follow. The right of doing theology from the African perspective was calmly accepted.

From the period of this debate, various features of African theology started to emerge. Today one can count three principal trends: African Theology of Inculturation; African Liberation Theology; and Black Theology of South Africa.

The *African Theology of Inculturation* appears to be the popular pattern of doing theology in the continent. For many, it is co-terminus with African theology. Inculturation Theology is continuous with the affirmation of African identity and culture (*Negritude*) which was championed in the 1930's by Senghor and Aimé Césaire. *Negritude* is the unconditional affirmation of African identity, authenticity and culture over against the racist colonial denial of it. Inculturation Theology affirms the value of African cultures. It insists that *these cultures constitute the context or base for the experience and expression of the Good News of salvation*. In other words, the cultures of Africa, especially the world-view or cosmology undergirding the cultures, are the principal prism through which Jesus is recognised and spoken about as risen. Inculturation differs from adaptation which pretends that the Western context is universal, and needs only local amendments. But the route towards inculturation was not easy for Africa. The prophetic role of Vatican Council II was fundamental: it gave bishops and Bishops' Conferences *competence* in liturgical matters, an area totally reserved to the Holy See (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 22:2); it called on various socio-cultural areas to revisit the interpretation of the Christian message from their own vision of the world (cf. *Ad Genes*, n. 22); it called for a radical adaptation of the liturgy where necessary (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 40); it acknowledged the legitimacy of patriarchates with particular theologies and liturgies (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23), and so on. These and other encouragements by Paul VI and John Paul II gave the impetus for responsible creativity in African local Churches. Christian communities led by their pastors and theologians have engaged in this exercise according to their ability and courage. The results are easily seen in the area of liturgy. The "Zairean Rite" (which includes the rites for the consecration of virgins), the Eastern African Eucharistic prayers, the

Ndzonmelen mass of Yaoundé, and the Moore rite of initiation of Burkina Faso are the well known liturgies. But there are also the creative Eucharistic liturgies of Malawi and Ghana (*Kumasi*); the experimentations in healing and reconciliation liturgies in Nigeria (East), the Christianized *Yoruba* rite of naming the child, etc. Theological reflection is fast on the heels of practice. Theologians do not simply define inculturation or set the limits for its experience and expression. Works on God and Christ have been produced. The Christological titles emerging from this contextual experience of the risen Jesus are predictable: Jesus our Saviour; Jesus our healer (Christo-therapy); Jesus our Brother-ancestor; Jesus the Proto-ancestor; Jesus the Chief or King; Jesus the beginning and end - *Alpha and Omega*; Jesus our priest - *Nganga*; Jesus the fearless leader - *Onwuatiegwu*, etc.

Secondly, African theology takes seriously the deplorable social conditions prevalent in post-colonial Africa such as the delinquent State, military and civilian dictatorships, intimidation and brutality reflecting the age of slavery and colonialism. The African Theology of Liberation takes these evils head on. It is a prophetic theology. The necessary connection is made between the experience of the Gospel and the unhappy lot of the daughters and sons of Africa. The Christian community and its leaders must not be neutral. The liberation is from oppression on all levels: sexism and ethnicism, which were also inherited from our indigenous cultures, are rejected, along with oppression by dictators and neo-colonisation by multi-national corporations and Western finance houses. The African Theology of Liberation has thrown a healthy challenge to the theological enterprise in modern Africa. It has given theology a cutting edge (*Tutu*). African theology must have a prophetic voice, and as well heal the split in the African psyche. But the African Theology of Liberation must struggle to be contextual; for no group of people, no race, has been as anthropologically impoverished (*Mveng*) as Black Africans.

Thirdly, in the Southern African region Black Theology predominates. Its context is the experience of the culture of *apartheid* which is supported by the Dutch Reformed Church. Black Theology denounces apartheid as a heresy. In its revulsion against apartheid, Black Theology is impatient with the cultural past of Africa which has been projected by the racist oppressor as retarded, and is viewed by Africans as weak and incapable of liberating

them from their oppression. The Exodus motif controls this theology. Theologians in South Africa took a clear stand in the famous '*Kairos*' Document (1985). They attacked the theology undergirding apartheid; and they discredited the non-critical theology of the Church which calls for peace, reconciliation, and non-violence. Rather the Church should descend into the terrain where the masses have developed the theology of confrontation against the satanic apartheid State. The liberation of Nelson Mandela and the unclarity of a multi-racial South Africa is a new challenge to Black Theology. The dynamics of the cultures of Africa may have to be retrieved. Black Theology may help to create a new solidarity based on a consensus in which each group exercises the right to speak (African palaver).

This new solidarity is a top priority for theology in Africa today. The national conferences have shown the power of traditional African cultures, especially the culture of dialogue where every person must express his or her hurt (you either speak or die). This power to speak in order to move towards consensus in a universe where the sacred is ever present must concern African Theology. It has prospects for a new kind of being Church (solidarity-fraternity based on giving adults, including lay people, their role). It has the potential of a new beginning for Africa. It is not without reason that bishops were invited to chair some of the national conferences. The relationship between humans is best sealed under the gaze of the ancestors, under the gaze of the Proto-Ancestor.



AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY: CONCEPT AND NECESSITY

Chukwudum B. Okolo

The impact of the African quest for concreteness, identity, and relevance, particularly since the Second World War, has not been limited to politics alone but has equally been felt in the Church, religion or theology. Therefore, it is no surprise to realise that the contemporary African theologian has developed much interest in "African Theology": "African Christian Theology" as a relevant, if not an indispensable mode of mediating his particular historical and cultural experiences with revealed Truth in Jesus Christ. It is thus in the general context of

much a new theme for reflection as a **new way to do theology**", several liberation theologies have sprung up in different cultures and among different peoples. One can easily cite Asian liberation theology, black liberation theology, liberation theology for the Hispanics. This short paper advances 'African liberation theology' as one of these theologies of liberation and certainly one of the inevitable modes of theologizing in the African context. What, briefly, is this African liberation theology and why is it necessary in Africa today?

In its turn, an African liberation theology is a critical reflection, based on the Gospel, of the African world as unjust, exploited, poor, and oppressed; and the desire born out of this experience is to build a much more equitable and humane society.

AN AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY:

relevance and concrete influence on the African situation, the people and their values, that African theology was born, and interest in it considerably sharpened among African theologians particularly since Vatican II.

Over the years, however, one must say that African theology has manifested several basic trends of which "African inculturation theology" and "African liberation theology" are the most popular. As a matter of fact since liberation theology broke into the world of theology and the universal Church from Latin America in the early to mid seventies and became for Gutierrez, its known Chief exponent, "not so

The different liberation theologies are born out of people's own experiences of their various situations as unjustly dominated (politically) hence exploited, racially oppressed (as in the case of liberation theology in South Africa), poor, and in many cases, brutally dehumanized. In these contexts liberation theology's essential task is a critical reflection on these situations of injustice and of evil structures in the light of revealed truth with a view to abolish the unjust *status quo* and to create a new world of humanity. Consequently, the exponents of various theologies of liberation are deeply animated by the same desire summarised by Gutierrez himself, namely, "to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more human" (*A Theology of Liberation*, p. 15). Hence, in liberation theologies, the "liberation" in question is not only a "liberation from" injustice, poverty, classism, oppression, etc., but more importantly "a liberation to" construct or build a more equitable human society, to exercise mastery of one's world and control one's rhythm of progress.

In its turn, an *African liberation theology* is a critical reflection, based on the Gospel, of the African world as unjust, exploited, poor, and oppressed; and the desire born out of this experience is to build a much more equitable and humane society. We stress here that an African liberation theology, like other liberation theologies, mediates the Christian faith with the objective historical experiences of the African people, their joys, sorrows, hopes, and frustrations.

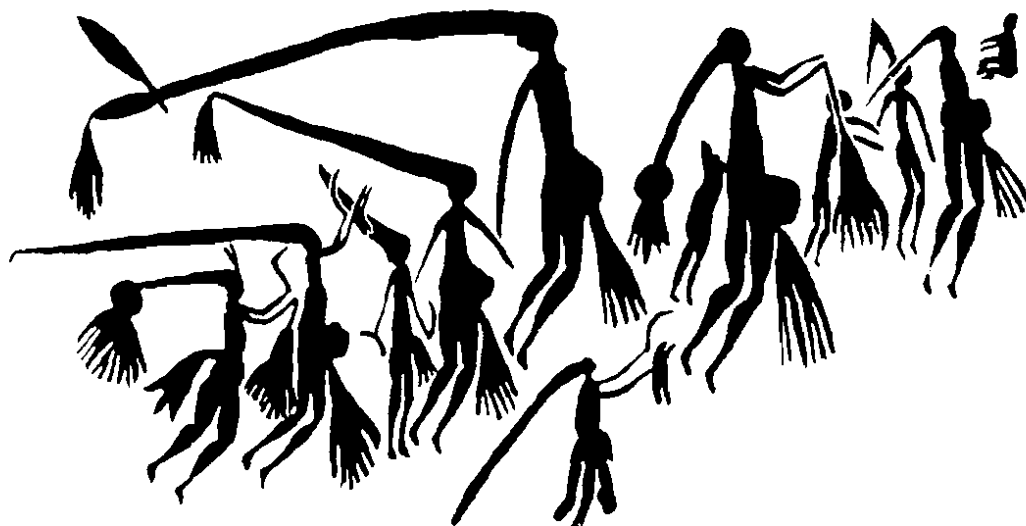
The important point is that theologising in the African context today absolutely calls for this mode of inquiry or a theology of African liberation, precisely because the African in South Africa and in the rest of black Africa has experienced bitter conditions of class, poverty, oppression, racism, evil structures, etc., which he wishes to abolish in the effort to construct a new, freer, and more humane society. Thus, the *Final Communiqué* of the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians in 1977, Accra, Ghana, summarized it all when it demanded, 'Liberation theology' as a necessary task in Africa. "We are committed to the struggle of our people to be free", the members of the Conference echoed "and we believe that the theology that arises from that commitment will have three characteristics". One of these is liberation theology, in other words, an African liberation theology.

We note that this collective decision was not arrived at by abstraction but from an objective analysis of African reality and the human condition in Africa. First of all there are various

kinds of injustice operative in Africa: at the political, economic, social, and cultural levels. Furthermore, the dialectics of the struggle between the rich and the poor; the haves and have-nots, the employed and unemployed; the powerful and the powerless, etc., is evident in Africa and constitutes a source of tension and enslavement for the masses. One must not forget that in Africa, too, there are many impersonal forces present such as evil customs and traditions which tempt individuals to greed,

In these contexts liberation theology's essential task is a critical reflection on these situations of injustice and of evil structures in the light of revealed truth with a view to abolish the unjust status quo and to create a new world of humanity.

pride, abuse of power, exploitation, corruption, theft, etc., all of which constitute avenues of injustice and lead to unhappiness in the lives of the people. In all, one must conclude therefore that Africa, like the rest of the unjust world, is ripe for liberation theology and that the particular experiences of political injustice, oppression, violence, tribalism, racialism, structural poverty, etc., call for critical theological reflection in the African context, which is what African liberation theology is all about.



WHAT ECCLESIOLOGY FOR AFRICA?

Laurenti Magesa

In the Catholic Church in Africa, the identification of ecclesiology with the hierarchical structure (or "hierarchology") is unfortunately pervasive and almost total. This is due to a combination of factors. Some are historical-theological while others are cultural-religious. Still others are social-economic.

Vatican I took place in 1869-70. In this Council ultramontanist prevailed. This was the view which placed all power in the Church in the hands of the papacy. But it was also the nineteenth century, shortly after Vatican I, which saw the beginning of the "Third Wave" of European missionary incursion into Africa. What this meant concretely for the continent is

It is obvious that many African Catholics are becoming uncomfortable with a rigidly hierarchical, monarchical system of Church. By the concrete positions they take vis-a-vis the practical operation of this system, African Catholics seem to be asking whether the hierarchical ecclesiology is absolute.

obvious. The type of Catholic Church established here was rigidly hierarchical in its structure and theology from the start.

Such an ecclesiastical system became easily acceptable among a good number of African converts to Catholicism then. This is explainable by the fact that it mirrored in part their own cultural-religious and social-political outlook where a considerable amount of power lay in the hands of the ruler (the Chief). In fact, because this Church system was advocated by White missionaries, before whom many

Africans then stood in awe, it actually buttressed the Africans' own patriarchal and monarchist systems, many times even in their worst forms.

But starting with the 1960's there has developed in Africa a different atmosphere in the theological, cultural, social and economic areas. The change has been brought about by Vatican II and the attainment of political independence, among other things. At the present time, this change is fanned by the struggle for democratic forms of governance all over the continent. All of this is having an impact within African Catholicism.

It is obvious that many African Catholics are becoming uncomfortable with a rigidly hierarchical, monarchical system of Church. By the concrete positions they take *vis-a-vis* the practical operation of this system, African Catholics seem to be asking whether the hierarchical ecclesiology is absolute. As increasing numbers see it to be Western-inspired, they are asking: Can there be an ecclesiology for Africa? In which case, what would be some of its characteristics that would distinguish it from the current one?

Consensus in decision-making would be one such major characteristic. Despite shortcomings in actual practice, consensus was a central element in African governance. It was also important in day-to-day social intercourse. What does this mean ecclesologically? It means that participation of the faithful in all affairs of the Church must form part and parcel of the structure of the Church. We may call this collegiality on a broader basis than that of bishops alone. It is also corresponsibility. This practice captures the meaning and significance of the theological principle that the faith of the people is the faith of the Church.

African Catholics seem to have no difficulty in accepting the fact that the Church is an

institution governed and directed by certain leaders. But they relate even more deeply to the sense of the Church as a community of believers. They desire a Church where everyone can have a contribution to make, a word to say, a proposal to voice, a plan to advance, an explanation to offer. They desire a Church in which the leaders are not the kind who impose their will on all the rest, leaders who force their own modes of expression of the faith down the throats of the rest of the faithful. On the contrary, they want a Church where the leaders are ready to learn and walk together with everyone else towards an ever more complete realization of the will of God. We may call this a "Spirit ecclesiology".

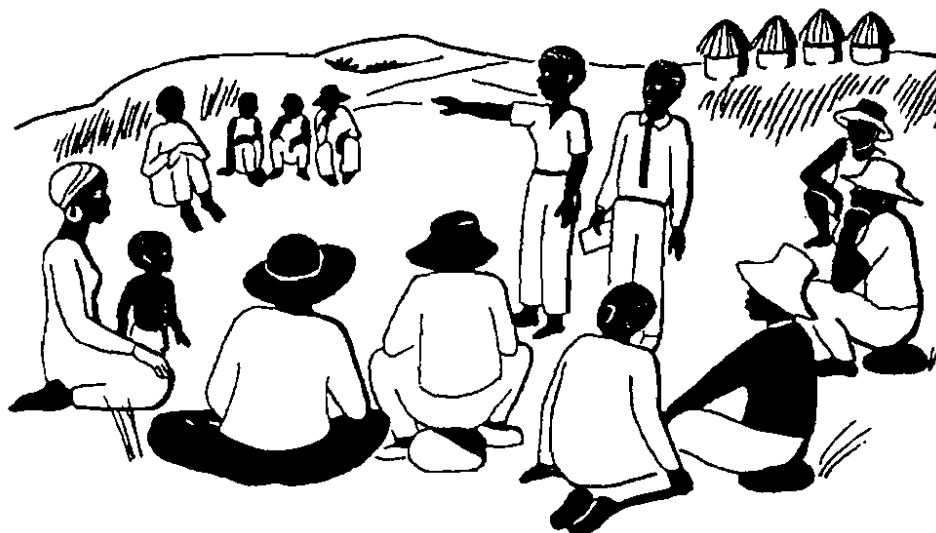
Saint Paul speaks of it in 1 Cor 12. Its fundamental principle is that "... no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' unless he/she is under the influence of the Holy Spirit". The diversities of God's gifts given to the members of the Body of Christ, all the members of the Church, are recognised here. The principle calls forth their use for the good of the Body. Gradation, in the sense of priorities for good order, by no means implies suppression or neglect of other gifts. Each one of God's gifts to each of God's faith-

ful is important for God's reign on earth.

An ecclesiology is both a structure and a way of life. Not unlike the Scriptural vision of Church, the African consensus model of

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governance and social relationships should inform and set the direction for the structure and life of the Catholic Church in the African continent.



CHURCH IN THE SERVICE OF JUSTICE

Rose Sumah, NDA

In recent years, there has been a marked interest in Justice and Peace issues. Yet action for justice is as old as the Judeo-Christian religion. We meet it throughout the Old Testament. The Prophets often incurred the wrath of those in authority by drawing the attention of Israel to the elements of injustice in the society. The prophet Amos is one such example during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. Similarly the New Testament gives us numerous situations calling for justice. Christ's mission was to address situations of injustice and to "*bring liberty to captives*", a non-violent approach. This mission he has entrusted to the Church. It is her commitment to justice that gives her credibility as a sign or sacrament of Christ in the world.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

The Good News of the Gospel is the message of Justice and Liberation. Therefore it is the prime duty of the Church to preach this message in season and out of season. This necessarily implies a denunciation of existing injustice and its root cause unjust structures.

In the document *Justice in the World*, (30th Nov. 1971), the Synod Bishops in speaking of the present day world, marked as it is by grave injustice, recognised the need to: "*listen with a humble and open heart to the Word of God, as he shows us new paths towards action in the cause of justice in the world*".

"The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men (and women) of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and anguish of the followers of Christ as well".

The Church in preaching the Gospel denounces existing injustice. Leo XII's Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* for the rights of workers is as relevant today as it was in 1891. Pope John

Paul II never tires of promoting Peace and Justice. Every year one day is devoted to Justice and Peace, when his *Message* is heard throughout the world, often focusing on circumstances needing a proclamation and a stand of the Church. In response, Churches at local level appeal for justice and call attention to injustices existing in their society. In this way the Church calls every believer to the duty of working for justice.

In society there are flagrant injustices about which the Church if she is to be faithful to her mission, cannot keep silent or be neutral. A silent or neutral position is tantamount to being on the side of the oppressor.

THE LOCAL CHURCH SPEAKS OUT

This is why the Bishops of Sudan had to raise their voices in defense of justice in their Pastoral Letter of 01-10-1983 "*we must denounce those, who have acquired their riches and power through unscrupulous and dishonest means. These people will stop at nothing in order to achieve their aims. These are the types of rich and powerful men whose methods we condemn unequivocally. These are the people who oppress the worker, over-ride the rights of others, treat others inhumanly. These are the people who corrupt and manipulate the authorities, mislead the politicians, undermine administration. These are the people who close the mouth of the poor and the weak so that they may not cry for their rights. These are the real causes of unrest, the real threats to peace. Side by side with the rich we see the poor the weak and the ignorant, whom we call 'the common man'. His condition calls for compassion but above all for justice*".

Action for justice follows its proclamation and denunciation. The Church, through her members, has established groups at local level who are directly engaged in working for justice.

Through the many diocesan justice and peace groups, those of religious and lay institutions in many forms, people are becoming more aware of the need for justice. A recent example is the Pastoral Letter of the Malawian Bishops' Conference for which they suffered a certain amount of persecution.

Another form of commitment to justice is working through a programme for the development and education of peoples. In almost every diocese in Africa there is a development office, through which the Church tries to empower the poor to become independent, self-sufficient and gainfully employed, as in the field of cottage industries and self-help projects. Resources are often made available by Church and charitable organisations.

JUSTICE AS A WAY TO PEACE

The Pope in his *Peace Message* of January 1993 implied that if one wants peace then justice must be done.

"Many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations". (If you want Peace reach out to the Poor).

Poverty or marginalization is a source of conflict and everyone has a right to the resources of the earth.

"God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity". (Gaudium et Spes, n. 69)

Very often it is the church: bishops, priests, religious and lay groups who raise their voice against situations of injustice. Since the Church is close to the people who know the unjust situations and structures, it is she who is best able to defend the poor against exploitation and injustice.

RISK OF INVOLVEMENT

A stand for justice involves risks, and demands courage. Many of the committed faithful have lost their earthly lives in fidelity to the mission of Christ, that is bringing liberty to

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captives. Some we know about, like the case of the Jesuits in El Salvador, the disappearance of justice and peace workers in Peru the same could be said for Bosnia, the Philippines, but there are lots of others of whom we know nothing.

Whatever the consequence may be, it is the duty of the Church, the people of God, to continue the mission of her Redeemer who himself suffered death in fulfilling this same mission. We have His words to sustain us *"Do not be afraid", "I am with you always"* (Mt 28:20).



AFRICA AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES

Peter J. Henriot, SJ

"The ruin of the economy, sometimes hastened by the unjust conditions of the world market, should be considered a major cause of the violation of basic human rights in Africa". These words of the *Instrumentum Laboris* (#121) point to a major issue of justice and peace which the African Synod must address: the consequences for Africa of the "Structural Adjustment Programmes" (SAP) imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Economic Decline

Today sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 32 of the 47 nations on the United Nations' list of poorest countries. In real terms, average incomes in Africa have fallen by approximately one-quarter in the past 20 years, and the majority of the population are now desperately poor and unable to provide the basics of adequate food, clothing, housing, medicine, etc.

The decline of Africa's economy has *internal* causes which over the years include technical mistakes, corruption, misplaced priorities, war and natural disasters. But *external* causes have had greater effects as (1) price of basic commodities (e.g., coffee, cotton, cocoa, copper) has drastically fallen over the past two decades and (2) price of imports have dramatically increased (e.g., oil, spare parts). This has created the tremendous problem of an *imbalance of trade*, necessitating major borrowing efforts by all the African Governments. As a consequence, *external debt* for sub-Saharan Africa more than tripled between 1980 and 1992, reaching to over US\$ 183 billion.

Beginning in the 1980's, African countries desiring to secure debt relief through rescheduling and/or forgiveness and to be eligible for further loans from private banks, Governments and international institutions were obliged to

agree to institute major changes in their economies. Through the IMF-designed "*structural adjustment programmes*", the economies were liberalised with market forces promised as the major remedy for the problems of economic decline.

Elements of SAP

The basic elements of SAP deal with (a) *stabilisation* of the economy through short-term monetary and budget arrangements (e.g., curtailing inflation) and (b) *restructuring* of the economy through long-term market and trade arrangements (e.g., privatising the State companies). These are the various elements, with the hoped-for results:

A. Monetary.

1. Devalue money (encourage exports, discourage imports)
2. Increase interest rates (encourage savings)
3. Curtail credit supply (slow down inflation)

B. Market.

4. Decontrol prices (effect market forces)
5. Restrain wages (prevent wage spiraling)
6. Remove subsidies (save money spent on consumption)

C. Budget.

7. Cut services (trim budget; impose fees in health, education sectors)
8. Retrench workers (increase efficiencies)
9. Privatisise State companies (promote productivity)

D. Trade.

10. Eliminate trade barriers (introduce competition)
11. Promote export orientation (earn foreign exchange)

12. Invite outside investment (promote diversification and competition)

human capital base for sustainable recovery; promote regional cooperation efforts.

Critique of SAP

Very few in Africa would ask for a return to the failed economic policies of the past few decades. But many -- including international agencies such as UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNDP, ILO and OXFAM -- question whether SAP as it is being implemented here in Africa today is really promoting an *equitable* and *sustainable* economic growth. The basic critique centres around two considerations:

a) **Economic:** It is a short-term fiscal management programme rather than a long-term integral development programme. That is, it is primarily designed to stabilise the money economy so that the African countries are in a better position to service debt repayments. It does not put central emphasis on such critically important development concerns as employment generation, small entrepreneurship, food production, human capital enhancement, environmental protection, regional cooperation, etc.

b) **Ethical:** It bears down hardest on those who are most vulnerable, the poor, especially women, children, elderly, handicapped, etc. The burden of rising prices, increased unemployment, decline of "real wages", increased fees for services, etc., affect those in society who are already heavily burdened. This is having disastrous effects on the social well-being of the people, as Government statistics show increased rates of malnutrition, infant mortality, illiteracy, criminal activity, etc.

Alternatives to SAP

Though often hailed by its supporters as the only possible approach to economic reform, there are *substantive alternatives* to SAP which should be paid attention to. These touch on:

a) **Timing:** e.g., put in place social cushioning programmes before harsh effects are rapidly felt; phase in import liberalisation in ways which provide temporary protection for our own struggling manufacturing and agricultural sectors to enable them to become more firmly established and competitive.

b) **Content:** e.g., include real development elements in planning and priorities; strengthen public services (health, education, etc.) to build

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c) **Direction:** e.g., promote participation of the poor for "bottom-up" (rather than "trickle down") approaches; enable all sectors of the society to participate in "people friendly" market reforms.



Many Bishops' Conferences in Africa have recently written strong Pastoral Letters challenging Government economic reform policies. The African Synod should review these Letters and other documents which examine SAP and its consequences and come up with a statement of ethical evaluation and practical recommendation. The Zambian Catholic Bishops emphasised in their Pastoral Letters of 1992 and 1993: "we must recall the fundamental norm for judging the success of any economic reforms: *they must serve all the people*". SAP must be understood and responded to in the light of that norm, as a basic issue of human rights in Africa today.

THE CHURCH AND THE REFUGEES IN AFRICA

Ellen Gielty, Superior General, SND

The continent of Africa is considered to have the greatest number of refugees in the world. But Africa cannot cope with the huge numbers of people who cross over borders looking for food, work and hospital treatment. By means of television, hearts have been stirred all over the world at the sight of the conditions in the huge refugee camps. An appeal has already been made to the participants of the African Synod on their behalf: "Please do not forget the least of your brothers and sisters".

Christian refugees have every right to hope to be rescued from their misery and misfortune by the Church to which they belong. It would be a great tragedy if they were to be spurned and ignored by their mother, the Church. The Church sees in refugees, "an untapped human potential, a wealth of creativity and above all human dignity". Without accompanying action, these words are no consolation to a refugee who wants only food, work, a future for the children and who expresses the simple wish to stop "feeling like a nobody". No sharp division can be made between the material and spiritual needs of refugees, returnees or displaced persons. The Church today reaches out to the needs of the whole person.

On his pastoral visits throughout the world, Pope John Paul II has appealed to the Christian community to respect the human person and human rights. In response to urgent needs in his country, the Archbishop of Khartoum has set up a special vicariate to assist the more than 500,000 people who had to take refuge in the desert after their homes were destroyed. In addition, parishes in his archdiocese are doing what they can to help the needy and displaced in spite of the fact that non-Islamic humanitarian groups and Christian organisations have been prohibited. Some distance education techniques are being used in nine centres in Khartoum to continue the religious education of

young displaced persons and refugees. With the help of pastoral workers from other dioceses and religious congregations, special training programmes have been set up in refugee camps.

At a meeting set up in 1993 in Mozambique by the Imbisa Refugee Service and other organisations, the 100 participants included sister Churches, organisations of the UN and the Mozambique Government. This meeting concerned itself with the problems of returnees, identifying the need for intensive training for social integrators who would place returnees in small communities and give help in repatriation where possible through information exchange.

The refugee problem is one that touches all the African Churches for it involves our sisters and brothers from other countries who are in exile, who are returnees, or who are displaced people within their own country.

They challenge the Churches to make real the message of Christ today. How could the Church entrusted with the care of "even the least of my little ones", ignore the 6 million refugees in 42 countries and the 16 million displaced persons in 11 countries.

The Synod can be helpful in drawing further attention to the enormity of the problem in Africa. It can encourage Church and other agencies to tackle the issues already identified. It can persuade more dioceses and organisations to give support to lay leaders and catechists and to promote the work of existing Refugee Services.

Let all religious congregations working in Africa, join our voices to the clamant appeal made to the participants of the African Synod: "Keep a place in your hearts and minds and give your attention to the millions of God's children whose very lives are traumatised by violence, hunger and exile".

CHURCH AND URBANIZATION IN AFRICA

William T. Knipe, MM

If we look at the 1960's, 70's and 80's in Africa, what were some of the unexpected, unanticipated happenings of the last three decades?

Elite neo-colonialist one-party rule - Vatican II - Famine and refugees - Women's movement - OPEC - Youth counter-culture - Rise of fundamentalist Islam - AIDS - Widening gap between rich and poor - "Eucharistic famine" - Ecology/Environmental movement - Youth dropping out of the Church by the thousands - Civil wars - Attraction of the break-away sects - ... *exploding population in the cities!*

How effectively did we in the African Church respond to the happenings of the 1960's, 70's and 80's? How effectively did anybody respond? That is the point! It was not just the Church... but the Church missed many opportunities to make a difference!

And one of the main reasons - not the only reason - was that *we in the Church did not expect things to be different!* We expected the future simply to be an extension of what is, rather than look at the world that was going to be, and be ready to evangelise in a rapidly changing world.

If we could have anticipated even some of these events and had lead-time to bring our Christians along, and get them in touch with what was behind, for example, *the sudden, vast immigration to the cities*, - the Church could have been much more present and much more a part of the answer, instead of dragging along behind! We missed enormous opportunities to make a difference and be a difference because we did not anticipate!

One reason the Church needs to take the future seriously is that *we are in a time of very rapid change*. We will experience as much change in the next 10 years as in the past three decades. If we in the African Church want to be responsible stewards of our evangelising mission, we need to anticipate as best we can what

is going to change.

One of the emerging trends in Africa is the exploding cities of our developing countries! We are facing the urbanisation of Africa! If we do not take that trend seriously and mobilize today -- and create new urban forms of being Church, new forms of ministry, new forms of community health care for cities today, new forms of helping people with self-help projects in housing, sanitation, today, -- then years from now it is going to be too late. The Church is going to be much later than it has any justification for being!

By the year 2000 we are going to be sharing this world with 6.2 billion people (up from 4.6 billion today). The growth is the most rapid in countries of the developing world, with Kenya leading with 4.2% growth a year. There are over 34 countries with a population growth in excess of 3% a year. What will that look like over 10 years?

Latin America will have 75% urbanisation by the year 2000. Mexico City will be the largest city with 32 million; São Paulo will be second with 25 million. Calcutta and Bombay will have 19 million. What about Lagos and Cairo and Kinshasa and Nairobi? Unless we anticipate and mobilize resources: not only rural development and land reform, but urban development -- small businesses, cottage industries, urban agriculture -- we are going to see a tremendous collapse of these urban environments.

Some countries have no chance. 195 million Christians will live in absolute poverty. The Church needs to do much more in the theology of stewardship and earth-keeping, and the ethical use of resources.

If indeed "The earth is the Lord's", it is no longer a question of how much of mine do I have to relinquish in tithing. The question is: How much of God's do I get to keep in a world where there is not enough to go around?

L'APOSTOLAT BIBLIQUE EN AFRIQUE

Dieter Eduard Skweres, SVD

Au plus tard depuis le deuxième concile du Vatican, l'Eglise a de nouveau pris conscience du fait que la Bible joue et doit jouer un rôle particulier dans la vie spirituelle du chrétien ainsi que dans les activités pastorales de l'Eglise, surtout dans la prédication, la catéchèse et le travail de groupes. "Il faut donc que toute la prédication ecclésiastique, comme la religion chrétienne elle-même, soit nourrie et régie par la Sainte Ecriture. Dans les Saints Livres, en effet, le Père qui est aux cieux vient avec tendresse au-devant de ses fils et entre en conversation avec eux; or, la force et la puissance que recèle la parole de Dieu sont si grandes qu'elles constituent, pour l'Eglise, son

L'ouverture des esprits et des coeurs à la Bible est grande en Afrique. Il va cependant de soi que le contexte africain donne des tâches particulières à l'apostolat biblique, mais, en même temps, aussi la chance grandiose de contribuer à l'inculturation du message chrétien en Afrique.

point d'appui et sa vigueur et, pour les enfants de l'Eglise, la force de leur foi, la nourriture de leur âme, la source pure et permanente de leur vie spirituelle" (Dei Verbum, 21). L'apostolat biblique a pris la tâche de donner à la Bible cette place que le Concile lui a assignée dans la vie de l'Eglise. L'ouverture des esprits et des coeurs à la Bible est grande en Afrique. Il va cependant de soi que le contexte africain donne des tâches particulières à l'apostolat biblique, mais, en même temps, aussi la chance grandiose de contribuer à l'inculturation du message chrétien en Afrique.

Le contexte africain

L'historicité de ce que la Bible rapporte, la possibilité et la réalité de miracles, l'existence d'esprits mauvais, la survie après la mort et d'autres problèmes qui préoccupent les chrétiens de l'occident, sont en Afrique (encore!) hors de discussion. Ici, nous sommes confrontés avec d'autres questions comme, par exemple, celles-ci: "Jacob avait deux femmes et deux concubines. David possédait même huit femmes. Pourquoi pas nous? Il ne doit pas y avoir deux poids et deux mesures". - "Ne peut-on pas comprendre nos fétiches et justifier leur emploi à l'instar du serpent d'airain au désert?" - "Comment faut-il réciter les psaumes pour les rendre efficaces?" - "Est-ce que l'Eglise nous cache des livres bibliques ainsi que des connaissances sur la Bible et sur son usage efficace?" - "Quelle est la différence entre la Bible et le Qoran?"

Pensée magique

La mentalité africaine est caractérisée par la pensée magique. Ainsi s'explique-t-il que beaucoup d'Africains cherchent, aussi dans la Bible, et en particulier dans les psaumes, des formules magiques et des moyens puissants d'action. Des hommes d'affaires rusés (occidentaux, bien sûr!) profitent de cette mentalité, en publiant des écrits comme "La clef des psaumes", une brochure qui donne des instructions bizarres sur l'emploi efficace des psaumes comme, par exemple, la suivante: Pour se protéger contre l'envie des voisins, il faut verser devant leur porte, un mélange de moutarde et de champagne (sic!), tout en récitant un certain psaume sept fois. Il s'agit, admettons-le, d'un exemple extrême. La Bible elle-même nous aide de façon excellente à transmettre, dans ce contexte, l'image d'un Dieu qu'on ne peut "manipuler" et la compréhension

de la prière comme l'expression d'une relation personnelle de confiance avec Dieu.

Des doctrines gnostiques de salut

Le fait que savoir, c'est pouvoir, se réalise en Afrique, en premier lieu, dans le domaine religieux. C'est dans ce domaine qu'on aimerait acquérir des connaissances particulières pour avoir du pouvoir sur les forces de la nature, sur sa propre vie et sur celle des autres. Pour cela, des sectes ou associations qui ressemblent aux religions des mystères du gnosticisme de l'Antiquité et qui promettent le salut à travers des connaissances particulières (Rose-croix, Eckankar, etc.) prennent sur les gens, surtout sur les demi-cultivés. Dans ces sectes et associations, la Bible et des écrits apocryphes que l'Eglise n'a pas acceptés dans son canon des Ecritures Saintes, ainsi que des interprétations mystérieuses et des applications secrètes de ces textes jouent un rôle important. C'est de nouveau la Bible elle-même qui nous aide à montrer que la réussite de la vie humaine ne dépend pas du savoir et du pouvoir, mais de la révélation et de la foi, de la rédemption et de la grâce, de la prière et de l'amour.

L'attrait de l'Ancien Testament

L'Ancien Testament attire les Africains de façon particulière. Comme dans un miroir, ils y reconnaissent souvent leurs propres conditions de vie: la polygamie, le désir d'une descendance nombreuse, la stérilité qui constitue une "honte" pour la femme, les sacrifices d'animaux, les interdits alimentaires, la danse religieuse, etc. Souvent la simple indication que dans l'Ancien Testament l'adultère, par exemple, est sanctionné par la peine capitale, suffit pour laisser entendre que les chrétiens doivent comprendre et vivre l'Ancien Testament à la lumière du Nouveau. En tout cas, dans le contexte africain, une définition claire de la relation entre l'économie vétérotestamentaire et l'économie néotestamentaire du salut se montre comme une tâche importante.

Bible et Qoran

L'Islam est une puissance dans beaucoup de parties d'Afrique. Le Qoran occupe le centre de l'Islam. L'apostolat biblique a aussi la tâche de mettre au clair que dans notre religion, la Bible tient une autre position que tient le Qoran dans l'Islam. La Bible elle-même montre sans équivoque que le centre de la religion chrétienne n'est pas un livre, mais une personne

vivante: le Christ ressuscité. De plus, il est important dans ce contexte, de montrer que la Bible n'est pas une dictée venue du ciel, mais le témoignage historique de la révélation de Dieu. Bien que ce témoignage soit "inspiré" et, pour cela parole de Dieu, l'inspiration n'est pas identique à la révélation.

Libération et fraternité

Si nous pensons à l'Amérique Latine, le mot d'ordre est "libération". La libération vaut évidemment aussi pour l'Afrique. L'indépendance politique, économique et culturelle demande encore la libération des entraves coloniales et néo-coloniales. Et combien la Bible recèle en elle de lumière et de force pour contribuer à ce processus! De même, elle devrait nous aider à montrer du doigt les injustices politiques et sociales ainsi que la corruption et le manque de conscience professionnelle dans les Etats africains eux-mêmes. Mais en plus de cela, il y a, en Afrique, encore le problème particulier de la division des hommes non seulement en classes sociales, mais aussi en

La Bible elle-même montre sans équivoque que le centre de la religion chrétienne n'est pas un livre, mais une personne vivante: le Christ ressuscité. De plus, il est important dans ce contexte, de montrer que la Bible n'est pas une dictée venue du ciel, mais le témoignage historique de la révélation de Dieu.

ethnies, en tribus, en clans, en religions... Le mot d'ordre particulier pour l'Afrique a été donné par Jean-Paul II dans la cathédrale de Lomé, le 9 août 1985, et il s'appelle "dialogue fraternel". L'apostolat biblique en Afrique a la tâche de le reprendre et de travailler à sa réalisation. Le même dénominateur auquel on peut aussi réduire le comportement des chrétiens n'est-il pas, pour la Bible, l'amour fraternel?

Inculturation

Le caractère historique de la révélation et surtout de la transmission de cette dernière a eu pour conséquence que le christianisme est venu en Afrique dans un vêtement occidental. C'est

cependant le même caractère historique qui exige ce que le Pape a ainsi formulé dans son discours mentionné ci-dessus: "Chaque peuple africain doit se donner la peine de faire passer l'Evangile dans la vie selon ses propres traits de caractère. Il ne faut pas seulement traduire le message du Christ dans la langue respective, mais aussi dans les coutumes respectives, en tenant compte des valeurs humaines de cet héritage culturel. L'effort doit viser à être un Africain authentique et un chrétien véritable à la fois". En ceci un rôle privilégié peut échoir à l'apostolat biblique. Car le vêtement biblique de la révélation de Dieu est bien plus familier à la pensée africaine qu'à la pensée occidentale. Mais en particulier, dans la bible se trouvent des exemples d'inculturation comme celle qui a eu lieu quand les tribus nomades israéliètes se sont sédentarisées sur la terre cultivable cananéenne ou lors du passage du christianisme de la société juive à la société gréco-romaine. L'acceptation et le refus, dans la Bible, d'éléments provenant des cultures égyptienne,

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cananéenne, mésopotamienne, perse et hellénistique nous montrent les possibilités, mais aussi les limites de l'inculturation du christianisme en Afrique.

Structures

Plusieurs institutions ont été fondées ces dernières décennies sur le continent africain pour promouvoir l'apostolat biblique. A titre d'exemples, on peut citer le Centre pour l'Apostolat Biblique (CAB) à Bandundu au Zaïre, le Centre Biblique de Lomé (CEBILLO) au Togo, le Centre St Irénée à Kikwit au Zaïre, la maison d'édition VERBUM BIBLIE également au Zaïre. Mais aussi des Centres pastoraux, catéchétiques et missiologiques comme, par exemple, LUMKO en Afrique du Sud se sont lancés dans cet apostolat. Le



couronnement de ce mouvement en Afrique est l'établissement du BICAM (Biblical Center for Africa and Madagascar) à Nairobi au Kenya, qui opère sous les auspices du SCEAM (Symposium des conférences Episcopales d'Afrique et de Madagascar). Par l'organisation de sessions bibliques pour des multiplicateurs, mais aussi à la base et en mettant à la disposition des hommes, dans leurs langues et à des prix abordables, la Bible et de la littérature accompagnante, toutes ces institutions travaillent à ce que la Bible trouve la place qui lui convient dans l'Eglise en Afrique et dans le coeur des Africains.

ZAIRE: UNE HEURE DE TÉMOIGNAGE

Mbuka Cyprien, CICM

Le Zaïre vit l'heure la plus sombre de son histoire post-coloniale: blocage politique, tissus économiques délabrés, administration et institutions paralysées, peuple humilié, droits de l'homme quotidiennement bafoués. Des ambitions politiques n'ont pas manqué, mais elles n'ont engendré qu'exploitation, corruption, injustice. Il y a 4 ans, l'avènement du multipartisme a mobilisé des énergies et suscité l'espoir. Mais hélas, le pays n'a pas cessé de pleurer ses morts, victimes de l'oppression et de la faim; il n'a pas évité des oppositions: soulèvement des ethnies les unes contre les autres. C'est précisément durant ces 4 dernières années que la situation a été aggravée par l'entêtement du pouvoir dictatorial, par des pillages commandités par ce même pouvoir et par une réforme monétaire contre toute règle économique.

Le tableau est manifestement sombre. L'espérance n'est pas évidente. Heureusement des témoins du Royaume ne manquent pas. Sans doute ne s'agit-il pas de signes éclatants, mais de «lueurs d'espoir» qui s'efforcent de percer sous «l'épaisseur de la misère». En effet, «nombre d'hommes, de femmes, de groupes prennent le risque, ils refusent l'intolérable, ils affrontent les défis de (la dictature)... et croient au changement au-delà des échecs». Nous voudrions évoquer ici quelques-uns de ces «éclairs de la nuit», véritables signes du Royaume.

1. Presse écrite

Dans le contexte du multipartisme, le Zaïre connaît une libération de la presse écrite. Celle-ci a rompu avec l'indifférence et l'attitude honteuse et servile d'être l'acolyte du pouvoir. Sans complaisance, elle pointe du doigt la cause de l'agression du peuple Zaïrois avec l'intention de la démasquer. Cette attitude courageuse est provocante; aussi essaie-t-on de l'étouffer par des enlèvements, des arrestations arbitraires,

des emprisonnements, des tortures physiques et morales, voire même des exécutions sommaires. Des imprimeries ont été plastiquées, mais la lutte pour la libération continue.

2. Des communautés de diverses religions

16 février et 1^{er} mars 1992: les grandes artères de Kinshasa sont remplies de foules en procession; les gens sont animés de la seule volonté d'un changement de la situation du pays au prix de leur propre vie. Ces "marches d'espoir" auront lieu plus tard dans d'autres cités du pays. L'initiative vient des fidèles de la

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base. Des ministres du culte, des religieux et religieuses les rejoignent. Ils sont hommes et femmes, jeunes et moins jeunes, surtout catholiques et protestants, mais *kimbanguistes* et musulmans y sont aussi présents. Main dans la main, pacifiquement, ils défilent en priant et en chantant. Dans leur marche, ils invoquent Dieu non pas dans une perspective défaitiste ni utilitariste. Ils s'adressent à Lui comme à un Père qui les accompagne dans leur marche «dans une terre craquelée par la sécheresse». Des hommes, des femmes, des jeunes meurent sous les balles des forces armées; d'autres sont grièvement blessés, molestés, arrêtés et emprisonnés; des missionnaires sont expulsés. Le bilan est sévère. Mais il révèle l'existence des communautés organisées, empreintes de créativité et de vitalité, décidées à exorciser le

spectre de la misère et de la mort au nom de leur foi en l'homme, créé à l'image de Dieu.

3. Des hommes et des femmes d'Église

On reproche aux évêques du Zaïre de manquer de prises de position claires et nettes vis-à-vis des agresseurs du peuple, de démissionner devant eux, voire même de se compromettre avec eux. Il nous faut, néanmoins, reconnaître les actes courageux dont ces mêmes évêques font preuve. Par des messages souvent percutants ils ne cessent d'éclairer le peuple dans sa marche politique. Ils ne manquent pas de condamner et dénoncer les injustices, l'exploitation, le terrorisme; ils lancent à tous l'appel à la conversion et invitent au dialogue. La présidence de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine et celle du Haut Conseil de la République ont été confiées à un évêque.

Les évêques ne sont pas les seuls hommes d'Église engagés dans cette lutte pour la libération du peuple zaïrois; le clergé, les religieux et

Malgré l'insécurité, les pillages de leurs biens, la déception provoquée par certains collaborateurs et même des chrétiens qui se retournent contre eux, les missionnaires restent dans leurs postes; confiant dans le Seigneur, ils restent aux côtés du peuple auquel ils ont été envoyés, partageant avec lui les misères et les angoisses du moment.

religieuses dénoncent aussi les injustices, mobilisent les chrétiens pour lutter contre l'exploitation, aident le peuple à prendre conscience de ses droits; ils n'hésitent pas à descendre dans les rues pour effectuer, avec le peuple, des "marches d'espoir". Dès lors ne sont-ils pas à l'abri de la répression: agression morale, psychologique et physique; certains paient de leur vie. Malgré l'insécurité, les pillages de leurs biens, la déception provoquée par certains collaborateurs et même des chrétiens qui se retournent contre eux, les missionnaires restent dans leurs postes; confiant dans le Seigneur, ils restent aux côtés du peuple auquel ils ont été envoyés, partageant avec lui les misères et les angoisses du moment.

4. Les étudiants

Redoutable instance de la contestation politique, l'enseignement supérieur au Zaïre vitote aujourd'hui comme il peut. Depuis les débuts de la dictature en effet les étudiants ont eu le courage d'élever la voix contre l'agression injuste. L'on comprend dès lors qu'ils soient régulièrement l'objet de la répression de la part du pouvoir. Malgré tout, ils gardent le courage et la liberté de contester et de dénoncer les injustices. Ils expriment ce courage et cette liberté de plusieurs manières: grèves, marches de protestation, tracts, etc. Ici aussi, plusieurs vies humaines ont péri, quantité d'intellectuels compétents sont écartés de la recherche et de la production scientifiques. Ne sont-ils pas des témoins d'une vie sacrifiée pour la cause de la Nation?

5. Des travailleurs

Des milliers de gens, hommes et femmes, fonctionnaires et employés de l'État sont sans salaire depuis des mois. Plusieurs d'entre eux continuent à travailler, espérant que la situation s'améliorera. Lorsqu'ils arrivent à toucher quelque chose, il s'agit d'un salaire insignifiant sans rappels et sur base d'un taux largement dépassé par les multiples dévaluations. Ils s'imposent des sacrifices pour faire survivre leurs familles. Les grèves, les marches de protestation, les villes mortes, le refus de la coupure de 5.000.000 de zaïres, le fait de bouter la nouvelle monnaie (nouveau zaïre) sont autant de signes d'une volonté de changement. Ces attitudes et actes de protestation en faveur de l'instauration d'une politique et d'une économie au service de la Nation ne manquent pas de provoquer la répression dont plusieurs sont victimes: licenciements du travail, arrestations arbitraires, éliminations physiques.

6. Des "solidarités d'espoir"

Dans ce Zaïre en débâcle, les débats politiques conduisent à des élans régionalistes et tribalistes. Ainsi, certaines régions, croyant devoir se libérer des discriminations de tous ordres, se sont livrées à une véritable chasse contre les Zaïrois non originaires du lieu, focalisant l'agression sur certaines tribus. Cette entreprise conduit quelquefois à de véritables carnages dont personne ne connaîtra le nombre des morts ni les conditions dans lesquelles ils sont morts. D'autre part, - et c'est ici que germent des *bourgeons d'espérance* -, plusieurs rescapés reconnaissent avoir trouvé de l'aide au

cours de leur «marche mortelle»: refuge, nourriture, soins médicaux, assistance pour enterrer les morts. Devant ces gestes charitables, l'on ne peut pas s'empêcher d'évoquer cette parole de l'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu: "Venez, vous qui êtes bénis par mon Père, et recevez le Royaume qui a été préparé pour vous... Car j'ai eu faim et vous m'avez donné à manger; j'ai eu soif et vous m'avez donné à boire; j'étais étranger et vous m'avez accueilli chez vous". (Mt 25, 34-35).

Signalons aussi les miracles d'ingéniosité et de ténacité des femmes et des enfants pour assurer une vie quelque peu décente à leur famille par les moyens de l'économie informelle. C'est par ces femmes et ces enfants courageux, engagés pour la survie, qu'en grande partie le Zaïre survit d'une façon admirable et nourrit ses fils et filles.

Il est un fait: au Zaïre le peuple ne communie plus avec le système politique en vigueur; il ne s'y retrouve plus; il prend de plus en plus conscience de ses devoirs politiques; courageusement, il critique et refuse d'apporter son adhésion au pouvoir. On note avec joie que ce peuple "réagit d'une façon créative... il croit que Dieu est de son côté,... il est devenu une force politique dont on ne peut pas se passer aujourd'hui". "Des groupes de pression et des associations de défense des droits de l'homme, tel le groupe AMOS, l'aident à s'organiser pour se prendre en charge et s'auto-gérer politiquement et économiquement". Ces groupes se rencontrent souvent "afin de chercher des stratégies pour aider le peuple" à assumer son destin. Ces groupes ne sont pas épargnés des méfaits de la

dictature; plusieurs d'entre leurs membres sont purement et simplement éliminés par le pouvoir dictatorial.

C'est un constat: au Zaïre bon nombre d'hommes et de femmes, adultes et jeunes, parce qu'ils élèvent la voix pour dire non aux injustices, sont victimes de traitements inhumains. Elles sont très nombreuses ces familles qui sont complètement pillées et réduites à l'extrême pauvreté sans raisons. Ils

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sont des milliers ces hommes et ces femmes qui meurent dans le silence des prisons dans des conditions horriblement bestiales. Toutes ces personnes paient de leur vie pour qu'advienne le Règne de Dieu. Elles ne le proclament sans doute pas toujours à haute voix ni d'une manière explicite, mais l'expriment par leur vie: une vie de service, de communion et de témoignage. Elles comprennent, d'une manière mystérieuse, que l'option pour le Royaume n'est jamais sans souffrance et que «tous ceux qui veulent vivre dans le Christ avec piété seront persécutés» (2 Ti, 3, 12).



L'ÉGLISE COMME SACREMENT DE L'UNITÉ:

Le rôle de l'Eglise dans les conflits ethniques

Marie José Baranyaka, DMJ

Au Burundi comme ailleurs dans le monde on prie pour l'unité des chrétiens chaque année pendant la semaine de l'Unité des chrétiens, du 17 au 25 janvier. On clôture cette semaine par une célébration écuménique. Des chrétiens de toutes dénominations participent à cette Messe écuménique annuelle qui est devenue traditionnelle. La Messe est concélébrée par évêques: un Catholique, un de l'Eglise Episcopale; deux pasteurs: l'un de l'Eglise libre Méthodiste, l'autre de l'Eglise Episcopale.

Au Burundi, l'unité des chrétiens signifie aussi l'unité des citoyens. Les chrétiens au Burundi représentent plus de 85% de la population.

Le Sens de la célébration

Toute la cérémonie a comme objectif d'aider les chrétiens à prendre conscience que l'Unité naît du respect de la diversité et que cette diversité est enrichissante. C'est une occasion qu'a l'Eglise de rappeler aux chrétiens la nécessité de la réconciliation entre différentes dénominations aussi bien que la réconciliation nationale et la démocratisation des moeurs et des institutions.

Certains Défis

L'Unité suppose:

- l'unité dans les familles,
- l'unité entre collègues de travail,
- l'unité sur les collines et dans les quartiers,
- l'unité entre les personnes d'ethnies et de provenances régionales différentes,
- l'unité entre Nations,
- l'unité des chrétiens, pour qui cette valeur est une obligation évangélique, car l'unité c'est L'AMOUR, le 'commandement nouveau' : aimez-vous les uns les autres: Jn 13; 34-35.

L'Eglise est interpellée par les événements du 20 au 23 Octobre 1993

Les événements qui ont sanglanté le Burundi dans la nuit du 20-21 Octobre 93 par une tentative de coup d'Etat et qui ont entraîné l'assassinat du chef de l'Etat démocratiquement élu le 1er juin et solennellement installé le 10 juillet 1993, qui ont décapité le pays et ont créé un vide de pouvoir, ont entraîné la nation dans un marasme de guerre ethnique, politique et civile.

L'Eglise est interpellée par cette tragédie. C'est le 85% des chrétiens qui chaque année prient pour l'unité des chrétiens qui doivent faire un examen de conscience sans complaisance. Si nous chrétiens étions unis, si nous comprenions les exigences évangéliques du plus grand commandement Jn 13;34-35, le Burundi n'aurait pas enduré les malheurs qui sombrent sur le pays régulièrement depuis ces trois dernières décennies.

Au-delà de la célébration annuelle de l'Unité des chrétiens, les Burundi participent régulièrement à l'Eucharistie qui est le 'sommet' et le résumé de tous les Sacrements. "Faites ceci en mémoire de moi" dit Jésus aux Apôtres et à tous ceux qui continuent leur mission. Par ces mots Jésus invite ses fidèles à faire ce qu'il a fait, c'est-à-dire, à se "rompre eux-mêmes et à se "partager entre eux" en action de grâce au Père (Lc 22.19) C'est une condition indispensable pour que, dans l'Eucharistie, le peuple de Dieu devienne le "Corps du Christ". L'Eucharistie n'est réelle que moyennant la transformation du peuple divisé dans l'Unité du Christ.

Aussi, le "OUI" de la communauté est-il indispensable pour que celui qui préside cette célébration puisse le faire avec cette communauté. C'est ainsi que nous laissons entrer en

nous la réalité de l'Unique Sacerdoce du Christ et qu'en Eglise, nous devenons tous prêtres. Faire l'Eucharistie implique pour tous ceux qui y participent un "OUI" à une mort à soi-même, les paroles du ministre de l'Eucharistie ne suffisent pas: la mort-résurrection de l'Eglise les rend efficaces dans la mesure où Jésus n'appelle pas seulement les apôtres à "refaire" ses gestes et à redire ses paroles dans la liturgie de l'Eglise mais aussi l'ensemble du peuple de Dieu qui participe au ministère du Christ dans l'Esprit.

Ne permettons pas que l'Eucharistie devienne au Burundi un simple accident célébré de façon épisodique, mais qu'elle devienne pour nous ce qu'elle est réellement UN SACREMENT D'UNITE.

Le rôle de l'Eglise comme Sacrement de l'Unité

Les événements du Burundi posent des questions précises sur la Mission des évêques, sur les types de prêtres, de religieuses et d'autres agents pastoraux, dont les chrétiens ont réellement besoin.

Le véritable enjeu de la Mission de l'Eglise au Burundi est en définitive d'être à l'écoute de l'Evangile et au service de tous les Burundi et de jouer son rôle de "conscience prophétique" au sein d'une société divisée par un mal chronique où tant d'espérances sont étouffées.

L'Eglise du Burundi est appelée à réfléchir sur ces chances réelles d'avenir et à se demander si elle a encore ou non quelque chose de particulier à dire et à faire vivre, si elle croit à son rôle du 'Sacrement de l'Unité'. Elle devra se demander si la foi chrétienne dont elle affirme être le canal et le garant est toujours fiable et viable au Burundi.

Ces questions nous interpellent tous parce qu'elles ont réellement trait à la raison d'être de l'Eglise elle-même et par conséquent l'obligation de rendre compte de sa foi.

Un laïc Murundi commentant le texte des Acts 1,8 "Vous serez mes témoins" dit ceci: "L'ordre a été donné par Jésus ressuscité à ses apôtres: 'Vous allez recevoir une puissance, celle du Saint-Esprit qui viendra sur vous, vous serez alors mes témoins...' Non seulement jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre, mais bien plus sur tous les théâtres et dans tous les espaces et compartiments de la vie sociale et individuelle: vie de foi, vie économique, vie sociale, vie politique. Le christianisme, en effet, n'est pas

de la spéculation philosophique, théologique ou morale; c'est une forme de vie, une façon de vivre, de vivre la vie d'ici, maintenant comme une préparation ou une attente active de la vie à venir: Le ROYAUME".

(Mr. Gilles Bimazubute, un des ministres qui a été tué la nuit du 20-21 Octobre par les 'putschistes')

Le courage des nombreux Barundi

Je rends hommage à de nombreux Barundi qui ont témoigné de la charité et du courage pendant cette période difficile en luttant pour le retour à l'ordre, en protégeant sans intérêt, des personnes et leurs biens, alors que quelques délinquants ont exploité le vide de pouvoir dans le pays, les régions, communes et collines pour violer les droits de l'homme et les lois de la nation, nombreux sont ceux qui n'ont pas hésité à compromettre leur propre sécurité. La bonne volonté a continué à vivre dans beaucoup de coeurs et ce sont des signes d'espérance. A mesure que le pays se pacifie, on voit des situations cachées et héroïques venir au jour.

La prière de St François à l'Africaine

En ce moment où de nombreux Barundi sont possédés par la peur, le découragement, la haine, la tristesse, le rôle de l'Eglise comme 'SACREMENT DE L'UNITE' est de voir COMMENT faire VIVRE cette prière dans le contexte burundais actuel.

FAIS DE MOI UNE AUBE D'ESPERANCE

Oh Seigneur, quand le serpent de la haine inocule son venin, fais de moi le lait de coco qui neutralise le poison. Quand les tremblements de terre ne cessent d'élargir les failles, fais de ta servante l'humble passerelle de bambou.

Quand la boue de marécages entise dans le doute, fais de moi les bras secourables de la certitude.

Quand le crépuscule de l'anxiété allonge son ombre, fais de moi une aube d'espérance.

Quand les rivières des forêts de mangroves aux multiples ramifications égarent, fais de moi le courant qui permet de s'orienter.

Quand les nuages porteurs d'obscurité s'amoncellent et que gronde l'orage de l'angoisse, fais de moi la flûte qui console les coeurs.

*Quand le tigre féroce est sur le point de fondre sur sa proie, fais de moi le bouquetin de marais dont l'innocente ruse sauve. Et quand il y en a tant qui voudraient être reines, fais de moi la mère, celle qui sert tes serviteurs, pauvre en puissance, mais riche en mansuétude, grâce à son travail fait avec fidélité. **Peuples du monde, n° 231, mars 1991***

COMING EVENTS

ASIA: CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

SEDOS RESEARCH SEMINAR (May 17 - 21)

Speakers:

Fr. John Tong (China)

George Soares-Prabhu, SJ (India)

Ms. Michiko Ota (Japan)

Place: Villa Cavalletti

WORKING GROUPS

May 11 HAITI

June 8 PHILIPPINES

June 16 SUDAN

Place: SEDOS Secretariate; via dei Verbiti, 1

Time: 16:00 p.m.

AFRICA

THE KAIROS OF A SYNOD

SEDOS - PAX CHRISTI - AEFJN - IDOC

Place: Fratelli Cristiani, via Aurelia 476, 19:45 hrs. - 22:00 hrs.

(Translations to :Italian/French/English/Spanish)

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 6.4. | <i>MSGR. MICHAEL FRANCIS</i>
(Archbishop of Monrovia, Liberia) | - Hopes of a Pastor - The Church in Africa:
Sacrament of Justice and Peace |
| 6.4. | <i>MSGR. BERNARD BUDUDIRA</i>
(Bishop of Bururi, Burundi) | - Les Espoirs d'un Pasteur - Le Défit d'une
Eglise Africaine Inculturée, Burundi |
| 8.4. | <i>JEAN-MARC ELA</i>
(Caméroun) | - L'Eglise:
Quelle Libération pour quelle Afrique? |
| 8.4. | <i>FRANCESCO PIERLI, MCCJ</i>
(Kenya) | - Modelli di Presenza Missionaria in Africa
Sfida di una Spiritualità dell' Incarnazione |
| 12.4. | <i>BENEZET BUJO</i>
(Zaïre) | - L'Eglise en Dialogue avec les Religions
Traditionnelles - Etique Africaine |
| 12.4. | <i>AYLWARD SHORTER, M.Afr</i>
(London, Missionary Institute) | - Inculturation - Lose or Win the Future
The Rising of a New Ecclesiology |
| 15.4. | <i>B. MBUY BEYA, J.M. ELA, B. BUJO</i>
(J. MBULA BAHEMUKA,
A. NASIMIYU, J. WALIGGO) | - Panel (Fr): Un Mariage Chrétien et Africain
- Panel (Engl): Urbanisation - Modern World |
| 18.4. | <i>Pax Christi: CARDINAL DANNEELS</i>
(JAN GRUITERS, Others) | - Continent Torn up by Civil War: Sudan |
| 22.4. | <i>Pax Christi:</i>
(EFREM TRESSOLDI, MCCJ, Nigrizia) | - Churches and Democratisation in Africa |
| 26.4. | <i>JUDITH MBULA BAHEMUKA</i>
(Nairobi University) | - Place and Role of Women in African Society
Sufferings and Hopes |
| 26.4. | <i>BERNADETTE MBUY BEYA</i>
(Zaïre - Shaba) | - La Femme dans l'Eglise Africaine -
Possibilités d'une Présence |
| 29.4. | <i>ANNE NASIMIYU (Kenya)</i>
<i>JOHN WALIGGO (Uganda)</i> | - Africa and the North: Dialogue of Solidarity
- Africa and the North: A Question of Justice |
| 3.5. | <i>MSGR. HENRI TEISSIER</i>
(Archbishop of Alger) | - L'Eglise dans les Pays Islamiques -
Evangélisation, Dialogue, Présence |
| 3.5. | <i>ETIENNE RENAUD, M.Afr</i>
(Tunis) | - Vivre le Synode:
Repartir pour quelle Mission? |
| 6.5. | <i>MSGR. PETER SARPONG,</i>
(Bishop of Kumasi, Ghana) | - Mass of Thanksgiving: Maria in Traspontina
Borgo S. Angelo, 15 (via Conciliazione) |

