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## EDITORIAL

In our first article of SEDOS 1995, we listen to the voice of the suffering Church in Algeria. Brother MICHEL, SM., whose confrere was killed at his side, outlines briefly the history and the socio-political reality of the conflict.

Archbishop HENRI TEISSIER in his meditation given to religious, develops some characteristics of a possible solidarity, rising out of the 'Evangelical Spirit of the Beatitudes'. He stresses the importance of maintaining a few vital units of communitarian presence.

The well-known West African theologian LAURENTI MAGESA sees the Synod for Africa as a new chance for the local churches. In his mind, the decisive phase of the Synod held in Rome has to start now in Africa.

Father FRANC CAREY, M.Afr., presents a sober picture of the consequences of AIDS in Zambia and suggests a few possibilities for how Church and State can respond to the growing number of orphans of AIDS.

Several important contributions on the relation between 'Gospel and Cultures' came lately from the World Council of Churches in Geneva. KONRAD RAISER, the present General Secretary of the WCC, elaborates on the theological consequences for the progress of Ecumenism.

At the end of November 1994, Sister GISELE BELLEMARE, MSOLA., a long time missionary in Rwanda - Zaïre, addressed SEDOS on the 'future for missionaries' in a tortured Rwanda. See how it may have a future!

We conclude the January number with the very helpful 'Subject and Author Index' of our 1994 SEDOS Bulletins. We thank Philippa Wooldridge for the great effort.



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*Trois Filles de Chine*  
Plon, Belgium, 1993

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*Discipleship of Equals:*  
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Hallman, David. Ed.:  
*Ecotheology -*  
*Insights from South and North*  
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Yameogo, Hermann:  
*Repenser l'État Africain*  
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*Reconciliation - Mission and Ministry*  
*in a Changing Social Order*  
Orbis, 1992

Corm, Georges:  
*Il nuovo disordine economico mondiale -*  
*alle radici dei fallimenti dello sviluppo*  
Torino, 1994

Calvez, Jean-Yves:  
*La Chiesa di fronte al liberalismo*  
*economico*  
Lavoro, Roma, 1994

### Chers frères et soeurs responsables

Nous confions à votre prière l'avenir de l'Algérie, et l'avenir de nos petites communautés de chrétiens. Nous comptons sur vous pour faire comprendre autour de vous les raisons qui motivent notre fidélité à la vocation que nous avons reçue du Seigneur en Algérie. Dans la lettre des évêques d'Algérie écrite lors de la rencontre de la CERN, nous résumons ainsi notre appel actuel: "Il ne s'agit pas d'un attachement obstiné à un projet de vie ou à une idéologie. Ce ne serait pas suffisant pour risquer une vie humaine. Il s'agit d'une fidélité à des personnes elles-mêmes dans l'épreuve. Il s'agit d'un témoignage rendu à l'amour fidèle de Dieu, avec Jésus qui nous a aimés jusqu'au bout".

Bonnes fêtes de Noël à vous aussi, pour en accueillir la joie et en témoigner là où vous êtes.

Henri Teissier, Archevêque d'Alger

# ALGÉRIE - QUELLE CROISADE ?

F. Michel, SM

*(L'auteur de cet article est un Frère Mariste qui a dû quitter rapidement l'Algérie, après l'assassinat de son compagnon de vie et de travail à la Casbah).*

## 1. Le déclin :

Le 8 mai 1994, un pas de plus dans l'escalade de la violence était franchi: en assassinant Soeur Paul-Hélène Saint-Raymond, PSA, et Frère Henri Vergès, mariste, bibliothécaires à la Casbah, les intégristes visaient non deux individus, deux Français, deux religieux mais plutôt les "oeuvres sociales", la "vitrine", l'influence de l'Eglise et des chrétiens sur la jeunesse: Le GIA revendiquait ce crime, quelques jours plus tard en conspuant les juifs, les chrétiens "qui mènent croisade contre l'Islam..."!

Le dimanche 23 octobre dernier, Soeur Esther Paniagua et Soeur Maria Caridad Alvarez, Augustines espagnoles, étaient tuées à l'entrée de la chapelle de Bab El-Oued où elles se rendaient à la messe dominicale. Nouvelle escalade : cette fois-ci, c'est bien la communauté chrétienne qui est visée et atteinte. Que peut-on reprocher à ces deux religieuses qui servent les pauvres du quartier et les malades des hôpitaux ? *"Pourquoi ? Sans doute pour les remercier d'avoir soigné les nôtres pendant des années et des années, d'avoir guéri un membre de notre famille, réconforté un voisin... Peut-être se trouve-t-il parmi les assassins... ? Sait-on jamais de quoi s'alimente cette sauvage folie meurtrière ? Pour les remercier donc sûrement... Elles allaient faire leurs petites prières pour nous, malheureux algériens, soumis aux fléaux... Vers quel monde de ténèbres va-t-on nous jeter, nous qui ne rêvons que de lumière?"* (Said Mekbel, in "Le Matin" du 27.10.94).

Oui, le dialogue Pouvoir-FIS a échoué. L'armée et la police intensifient la répression. Sous le même toit se côtoient souvent un policier et un intégriste. Les mamans doivent gérer de douloureux et impitoyables face à face où la haine, le mépris, la suspicion, les règle-

ments de compte et la soif de vengeance sont plus fréquents que le pardon. L'Algérie s'enfonce dans la guerre civile depuis l'arrêt du processus électoral en janvier 1992 et la destitution du Président Chadli.

Où est-il celui-ci ? bien tranquille dans sa villa d'Oran, même pas poursuivi par les brigades des finances. Les juges se taisent. Ont-ils peur ? L'assassinat du Président M. Boudiaf, le 29 juin 1992, qui aurait pu être un De Gaulle algérien, tant le peuple le soutenait, marque une autre date dans ce processus auto-destructeur. Quoi d'étonnant qu'une étudiante m'ait dit, en larmes, le 2 mai dernier : "Notre pays est entré dans l'empire du mal".

Certes, on peut jeter le discrédit sur le Parti unique (FLN), corrompu, qui n'a pas su gérer l'agriculture (calquée sur le modèle socialiste des collectivisations), qui n'a pas su ou voulu placer la manne pétrolière dans des investissements productifs capables de générer des emplois pour la foule des jeunes. Quelle misère de voir tous ces diplômés en quête de travail !... tous ces jeunes "dos-au-mur", à longueur de journées attendant une embauche même précaire. Chadli, en légalisant un Parti religieux (le FIS), avec qui il avait pactisé secrètement peu avant les élections législatives, a commis une erreur politique grave, contraire à la Constitution en vigueur alors dans le pays.

En soutenant l'Irak au moment de la guerre du Golfe, l'Algérie s'est privée du soutien de l'Arabie Saoudite, a choisi le mauvais camp en compliquant ses relations avec ses voisins, avec l'Egypte et les Emirats arabes. Au bord de la faillite économique, obligée d'importer 80% de son alimentation, ce qui avec la dette extérieure grève son budget, obligée de se soumettre finalement aux exigences de réformes pronées par le FMI, de quitter le socialisme et son dogme de l'Etat-Providence pour mettre en

place un économie de marché (avec les conséquences que l'on devine sur l'emploi et les prix), l'Algérie assiste avec amertume à sa propre dégringolade vers la catégorie des pays en voie de sous-développement.

Où est-il le temps où Boumedienne se présentait en leader du Tiers-Monde?

Et maintenant, les combattants retour d'Afghanistan noyautent et arment des groupuscules de jeunes déçus par leurs dirigeants politiques, par l'école devenue source d'endoctrinement, par les municipalités du FIS qui n'ont pas pu tenir leurs promesses électorales. Il ne reste plus qu'à fournir des armes à des soi-disant brigades d'auto-défense pour que l'affrontement se généralise jusqu'au bain de sang... La CIA et les grandes puissances manoeuvrent-elles par en-dessous pour faire de l'Algérie le prochain champ de bataille qui succédera à l'ex-Yougoslavie ? Peut-être.

## 2. L'Eglise

Les quatre diocèses regroupent 25000 chrétiens environ dont beaucoup de bi-nationaux (étrangers mariés à des Algériens). Mais depuis deux ans, un grand nombre d'employés de compagnies étrangères ont regagné leur pays d'origine, sous les menaces intégristes. Il ne reste plus que les "permanents" (prêtres, religieux) pour fréquenter régulièrement et discrètement les lieux de culte (chapelles).

Pour les fêtes, la radio nationale (Chaine 3) retransmettait en direct la messe présidée par l'Archevêque d'Alger Mgr. Henri Teissier. Les journaux signalaient des événements (fêtes, réunion du SCEAM, obsèques de Mgr. Jean Scotto); certains journalistes ont dénoncé avec courage les assassinats de religieux (-ses). Malgré tout, l'Eglise - après avoir cédé hôpitaux et écoles - doit se faire encore plus discrète. Certaines communautés, menacées ou trop isolées, ont dû quitter leur lieu de vie. La librairie oecuménique située sous la cathédrale a fermé ses portes, ainsi que la bibliothèque Ben Cheneb. On assiste impuissants à une nouvelle forme de persécution.

## 3. Perspectives d'avenir

Tableau sombre, perspectives terribles; phrases insupportables d'un esprit aigri, pessimiste à tout crin ? Non, j'ai vécu trois années magnifiques là-bas, au contact d'une jeunesse algérienne courageuse, lucide, digne, capable

de construire un bel avenir pour ce grand, fier et beau pays. Et bien que l'on ait tué quatre de mes ami(e)s, je suis prêt à retourner là-bas aider ces jeunes qui ne veulent pas mettre le foulard islamique (iranien) ni baisser les bras ni abdiquer leur liberté de pensée malgré la terreur qui s'abat sur toutes les familles. Comment les aider ? En ne désespérant pas de demain, en priant, en maintenant les accords, les échanges à tous les niveaux. Il ne faut pas laisser sombrer ce pays dans la violence et le désespoir, même et surtout si le FIS prend le pouvoir.

L'Algérie peut et doit rester un pays musulman et démontrer aux nations qui ont la même culture, la même religion qu'elle, à la face du monde entier, qu'il est possible d'être, de vivre dans la modernité et dans l'Islam. Ne pas commettre l'erreur de l'Iran qui a sacrifié une génération de jeunes par idéologie. La nation algérienne doit se souder dans un grand projet commun, de liberté pour tous et de reconstruction politique et économique. Le pays ne peut pas rester les armes à la main, sans constitution et sans parlement, avec un code de la famille moyen-âgeux. La solidarité des pays méditerranéens doit se concrétiser rapidement. Que de chantiers à ouvrir pour loger toutes ces familles entassées dans une ou deux pièces. De gros efforts ont été consentis pour scolariser tous les jeunes, électrifier, doter de routes et d'eau tout l'arrière-pays. L'Algérie est capable de faire beaucoup plus si elle le veut. Elle a des cadres bien formés, compétents, dynamiques, qui ne demandent qu'à faire leurs preuves, mais dans la paix et la concorde retrouvées.

Qui veut le malheur de l'Algérie ? des aveugles, des fous assoiffés de pouvoir sous couvert d'une religion dévoyée. Oui, demain, Berbères et Arabes, aidés par de nombreux amis, peuvent construire une belle et grande Nation, dans le respect des traditions et des opinions de chacun: c'est un choix de société lucide et courageux qu'il faut faire. Amis algériens, votre avenir est dans vos mains; pensez à vos enfants. Montrez au monde de quoi vous êtes capables, que vous pouvez et voulez être des bâtisseurs d'avenir. Imitiez vos champions et championnes d'athlétisme : surpassez-vous. Donnez-nous une image forte et positive de vous-même et de votre pays. Amicalement et courageusement.

**Rendre sa vraie place à l'Algérie dans le grand concert des nations: voilà quelle croisade il faut entreprendre dès aujourd'hui et pour demain.**

# ALGÉRIE :

## UN LIEU POUR VIVRE LES BÉATITUDES

Mgr. Henri Teissier

*(Rencontre avec les religieux et les religieuses - Novembre 1994).*

Je voudrais d'abord reprendre avec vous les convictions que j'exprimais le 1er novembre.

Vous savez, comme religieux et comme religieuses, qu'il y a des états de vie qui rendent visibles et présentes les Béatitudes. C'est le sens de la vie consacrée comme l'a rappelé le Synode des évêques sur ce thème.

Mais il y a aussi des situations humaines qui sont en quelque sorte comme un lieu naturel pour les Béatitudes. Le texte de Mathieu fait allusion à l'une de ces situations. Il y a d'abord celle de la pauvreté de cœur. **"Bienheureux les pauvres de cœur, le Royaume des cieux est à eux"**. La pauvreté de cœur est donc un lieu pour les Béatitudes.

Mathieu nous indique d'autres lieux pour les Béatitudes. Si déroutant que cela puisse paraître, il y a le temps d'affliction : **"Bienheureux ceux qui pleurent, ils seront consolés"**. Il y a aussi les temps de la persécution : **"Bienheureux êtes-vous lorsqu'on vous persécute et que l'on dit faussement contre vous toutes sortes de mal à cause de moi... Soyez dans la joie et l'allégresse, car votre récompense est grande dans les cieux."**

Si nous regardons la situation qui est la nôtre aujourd'hui en Algérie nous sommes donc convaincus que c'est une situation pour que grandissent parmi nous les fruits des Béatitudes. Nous faisons d'ailleurs tous l'expérience de cet approfondissement de notre fidélité à l'Évangile: grande unité entre nous, profonde solidarité avec le pays et ses souffrances, ouverture au pardon, service de la paix, offrande de vie renouvelée chaque matin, prière du fond du cœur pour le pays, pour notre Église et pour nous-mêmes.

Les morts tragiques d'Esther et de Caridad, après celles d'Henri et de Paul-Hélène ont remis chacun de nous devant la vérité profondément humaine de l'eucharistie : offrande à Dieu en communion avec le Juste innocent venu de Dieu pour manifester le plus grand amour et communier à cet amour.

### REJOINDRE AUTOUR DE NOUS LES HOMMES ET LES FEMMES DES BEATITUDES

Ces lieux et ces temps pour vivre les béatitudes sont ouverts aussi à tous les algériens, hommes et femmes, qui ont le cœur disponible au don de Dieu.

En eux aussi nous découvrons les Béatitudes de l'abandon à Dieu, de la soif de justice, et même du pardon et de la paix. Et nous prenons ainsi la mesure de notre vocation en Algérie qui est d'être ici le peuple des Béatitudes. Notre tout petit nombre devient alors un avantage. Il nous permet de mieux découvrir la présence autour de nous de tous les hommes et de toutes les femmes des Béatitudes. **"Bienheureux ceux qui ont faim et soif de justice, bienheureux ceux qui pardonnent, bienheureux les doux, bienheureux les artisans de paix"**.

### SIMPLES COMME DES COLOMBES, AVISÉS COMME DES SERPENTS (Mat. 10,16)

Ces convictions spirituelles ne doivent pas cependant nous empêcher de voir la réalité dans tous ses aspects.

Peu soulignent les aspects positifs :



approfondissement des interrogations des algériens sur eux-mêmes, sur Dieu, sur la religion, la société, la violence, l'identité de chacun, etc., qui donnent à nos rencontres une nouvelle densité ; évolution de toute la société vers une perception plus claire des enjeux de cette crise pour son avenir ; courage quotidien de ceux qui assument dans ce contexte leur tâche, malgré les menaces, etc...

Mais, dans le même temps, des attitudes négatives se développent aussi. Certains s'habituent à la violence et se laissent prendre par les appels à la fermeture et à l'exclusion. Nous savons maintenant que notre groupe des prêtres, des religieux/ses et des laïcs missionnaires peut aussi être pris comme cible. En mai dernier à Ben Cheneb, c'était sans doute notre action sociale dans un quartier populaire et au bénéfice de jeunes qui avait été visée. Le dimanche, 23 octobre, c'est la simple présence d'amitié et de prière dans un quartier qui était frappée.

Ces deux attaques contre des religieux et religieuses ont suscité l'indignation et la honte au coeur de beaucoup d'algériens musulmans.

Mais nous devons être lucides, certaines réactions n'allaient pas dans le même sens. Il y a aussi un courant de pensée qui considère que nous n'avons plus notre place dans une société musulmane.

A la vérité, ce courant a toujours existé et c'est justement l'un des aspects du défi missionnaire et humain que l'Eglise nous a confié : essayer de faire naître la confiance, l'estime réciproque et si possible la collaboration pour l'homme et le partage des valeurs culturelles et spirituelles entre deux sociétés séparées par l'histoire et les références religieuses.

Ce qui est nouveau, c'est le passage de la société algérienne à un affrontement violent entre les divers courants. Nous ne pouvons plus échapper au risque d'être atteint par cette violence. Depuis novembre dernier, déjà depuis un an, nous avons tous accepté ce risque. Nous lui avons donné sa dimension spirituelle en plaçant notre offrande de vie dans la suite de celle de Jésus, lui aussi frappé, victime innocente, par une violence qui voulait défendre les intérêts de l'Etat, de la religion et de la nation.

Mais depuis un an, la situation générale de la sécurité s'est progressivement dégradée atteignant d'abord des zones rurales d'où nous avons

dû partir, puis des quartiers d'Alger d'où nous avons été éliminés.

Il faut pour l'avenir que le noyau de notre Eglise demeure et pour cela, il faut des volontaires. Mais, il est normal au seuil de cette nouvelle année pastorale, et dans la prévision d'une étape encore plus dure, des tensions de la société, que chaque communauté et chaque personne se détermine.

Cette détermination - ce discernement - nous l'avons déjà fait cet été, et c'est un honneur pour notre communauté que d'avoir constaté à la rentrée que tous ou presque avaient tenu à revenir vivre ici la vie et la vocation de notre Eglise.

Nous avons prévu un nouveau discernement de rentrée pastorale les 17 et 18 novembre, à l'initiative de l'U.S.M.D.A. La réunion du bureau de l'U.S.M.D.A. qui s'est tenue le lundi 24 octobre, et, avec les évêques le mardi 25 octobre a modifié le projet primitif.

Comme l'évolution des situations n'est pas la même dans toutes les régions, il nous apparut préférable de prévoir maintenant une réflexion démultipliée par diocèse et par congrégation. Nous n'en avons pas encore fixé le mode et la date pour le diocèse d'Alger. Mais elle a déjà commencé pour les communautés frappées plus directement par la crise.

Les éléments de cette nouvelle consultation ont été définis comme suit, lors de la rencontre du bureau de l'U.S.M.D.A.

# **1. Préserver les moyens matériels de notre avenir**

Désormais, aucune communauté ne peut exclure l'hypothèse d'une évolution de la situation dans son secteur qui la contraindrait à quitter ce secteur. Il faut donc que chaque communauté prévoie dès maintenant une solution provisoire d'occupation de ses locaux, qui puisse permettre un retour après la crise.

# **2. Préserver les moyens humains et spirituels de notre avenir**

Plus important encore, il faut préserver les moyens humains et spirituels de notre avenir. Si une communauté ou une partie de la communauté est conduite à quitter son lieu habituel de service et de témoignage, il serait grave que les personnes se dispersent et perdent leur vocation au témoignage parmi les musulmans.

Pour cela, il faut aussi que les congrégations et les communautés réfléchissent soigneusement aux situations de repli qui pourrait affecter totalement ou partiellement la communauté. Il faut prévoir des temps de repli qui nourrissent, renouvellent et approfondissent notre vocation, tout en assurant l'équilibre psychologique et spirituel des personnes.

### 3. Former le noyau de permanence de notre Église

Le groupe des prêtres, des religieux, religieuses, et laïcs missionnaires assure déjà le noyau de permanence de notre Église. Si d'autres départs deviennent nécessaires, ce noyau peut se réduire. Il faut cependant que les communautés et les personnes s'interrogent à chaque étape pour savoir qui est appelé à former ce noyau de permanence jusqu'à la fin de la crise.

Dans ce questionnement, il est évident qu'il faut tenir compte des diverses composantes de la décision:

- l'implantation géographique de la communauté.
- la composition de la communauté et la résistance physique, psychologique ou spirituelle des personnes.
- l'évolution des risques dans le quartier ou le secteur professionnel.
- la sauvegarde des droits des personnes dont la communauté a la charge par vocation (maternité, asile de vieillards, etc).
- le charisme de la Congrégation et son lien avec la vocation de notre Église.

### CONCLUSION

Pour aider chacun et chacune dans cette nouvelle étape, je vous propose à nouveau les convictions sur notre vocation et sur la situation du pays que j'avais soulignées lors de la prière pour Esther et Caridad à la Maison Diocésaine.

"Comme lors de l'attentat contre le frère Henri VERGES et la soeur Paul-Hélène, c'est notre vocation qui est visée à travers ce double assassinat.

Nous pourrions bien quitter le pays et chacun de nous est libre de le faire quand il aura la conviction que c'est nécessaire pour lui.

Mais cette vocation à la rencontre, au service, à la communion des valeurs et des cul-

tures, nous savons qu'elle est reconnue par beaucoup d'hommes et de femmes de ce pays, notamment parmi les plus simples, comme ces familles assemblées dans la cour de Bab-el-Oued, quand les soeurs sont repassées chez elle, cet après-midi.

Cette vocation nous savons aussi que par delà la crise présente, elle fait partie de l'avenir de l'Algérie, car aucun peuple ne peut aujourd'hui construire son destin dans le refus de l'autre.

Cette vocation elle fait partie aussi de l'avenir de la foi car Dieu appelle tout homme à respecter son frère et à construire une humanité solidaire".

J'ajouterais : cette vocation, elle est née il y a déjà plus de cent cinquante ans dans notre pays avec la fondation de la nouvelle Église d'Algérie. Elle a ses racines dans l'envoi au Maroc par St François de ses premiers franciscains ; dans les missions données aux dominicains en Tunisie au XIII<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle; dans l'offrande de vie des Trinitaires et des Mercédaires, dans l'engagement depuis 1646 des lazaristes en Algérie, sur envoi voulu par St. Vincent de Paul lui-même. Cette vocation a donné naissance sur cette terre à plusieurs congrégations et à des spiritualités qui ont nourri l'Église universelle. Cette vocation rejoint profondément les appels du Vatican à un témoignage auprès de l'Islam, appels d'ailleurs largement mûris dans l'Église d'Algérie.

C'est une vocation de notre temps pour l'avenir de l'Église et de la paix dans le monde dont nous sommes ensemble responsables, par la grâce de Dieu et l'intercession de Notre Dame d'Afrique.

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On 27 December 1994, four more missionaries of the White Fathers have been killed in Algeria.

*Christian Chessel (36)*  
*Jean Chevillard (69)*  
*Charles Deckers (70)*  
*Alain Dieulangard (75)*

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On 19 December 1994, *Alfons Stessel (65)*, a Scheut Father, has been killed in Guatemala, coming home from an Advent service.

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# A NOTE ON THE FUTURE OF THE AFRICAN SYNOD THE END OF THE ASSEMBLY

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Laurenti Magesa

*(Fr Laurenti Magesa of Musoma Diocese, Tanzania, is now a Scholar in Residence at the Maryknoll School of Theology in New York, U.S.A.).*

The Bishops' Assembly of the African Synod ended in Rome, in May 1994. Just how "African" was the Assembly in terms of motivation and commitment to the African ecclesial cause? How "African" was it with regard to content? In other words, did the Assembly itself, and the preparation leading to it, measure up to the central theme of the Synod, that is, the task of building an inculturated Church in the African continent, an African Church?

Questions may still linger in some people's minds about one or the other of these issues, even at our present vantage point. Such questions must not be brushed aside or ignored if they can help, in any way whatsoever, to clarify the future orientation of the Church in Africa. But, at the same time, another perhaps more important warning must be sounded. We must be careful not to get stuck in unresolvable and fruitless misgivings about the Synod and what has taken place until now.

I think that it is imperative at this point that we move forward and go beyond the somewhat cynical attitudes unfortunately fostered among many informed individuals by the inadequacies of the Synod process itself up to the time of the assembly. What I am suggesting is that criticism and critique of ecclesial events, such as the African Synod, must always be accompanied or followed by efforts towards positive construction. Some would refer to this effort as "lighting a candle" rather than simply "cursing the darkness". In the same way, others prefer to describe the glass of water of the Synod not as "half empty" but as "half full". By whatever

name it is called, however, we have to realise that perspective is important. It can be a powerful influence in how we do things.

Of course, the final redaction of propositions of the Synod Assembly is yet to be published. This is awaited in the form of a Papal Apostolic Exhortation. But judging from the published interventions of the bishop-delegates during the Assembly, as well as from the Final Statement at the end of it, there are some clear indications for positive pastoral action. One observes there a considerably high degree of concern about important issues affecting the life of faith of African Christians. There is also an obvious measure of commitment to providing African answers to these African issues. It is to be hoped that this concern and commitment will come out even more explicitly in the Apostolic Exhortation, expected to be published at the Pope's discretion -- possibly some time during 1995.

Thus, once again, whatever reservations remain concerning the Synod and the whole process leading to it, it now seems more positive to build upon and promote the degree of motivation for, and serious commitment to, changing the face of the African Church as shown by many of the delegates and as evidenced by the Synod Documents now available to the public. Promotion of this motivation and commitment must occupy the most prominent place in this third and decisive phase of the African Synod for the inculturation of the Church in Africa. We would hope that this spirit and the pastoral plans for action are what the Pope will come to encourage and celebrate



in those representative parts of the continent that he is expected to visit and to promulgate the Exhortation.

A deliberately positive outlook, clear planning and firm action is the way to actualise the HOPE that the Synod process has itself been and has engendered in the Church. In other words, positive planning and creative action are the road to construct an inculturated Church. What kind of Church is this? It is a Church whose faith is not considered by the people, in their heart of hearts, to be completely strange? In particular, it is a Church whose practice of faith does not estrange or alienate people from themselves and the world around them. It is, on the contrary, a Church and a faith that help to integrate people, to make them whole in every way. It is a Church that, after the manner of Jesus Christ himself, comes to offer life in abundance at all levels.

Is not this always and everywhere the call of the Church? This vocation seems more intensively required in Africa after the recent assembly of Bishops of the African Synod. As someone expressed it, "The Assembly has ended but the Synod has begun". There can be no better expression of the tasks that lie ahead for the African Church. For the Bishop-delegates, getting to know one another was an obvious achievement of the Assembly. Getting to share the pains and hopes of their people and to appreciate them was another. What now faces the entire African Church is how to ease those pains and realise those hopes in a concrete way. As we have mentioned, it was for the ultimate purpose of *changing* the alienating (that is "painful" and "hopeless") aspects of the Church in Africa, in so far as it was not truly an incarnated Church, that the African Bishops held that month-long palaver in Rome.

I shall not dwell here on the specific issues that arose during the discussions in the Assembly. As the already published statements show, they pertain to all the themes of the Synod spelled out prior to the Assembly in the *Lineamenta* and *Instrumentum Laboris*. The most pressing issues are not theological but pastoral. They involve a concern for and commitment towards a contextualised way for the Church of living authentically in the African environment. How can the word of God be proclaimed understandably and accepted maturely in Africa? In an address, Fr J. Healey posed the problem as involving "a new way of being Church" and not merely "a new way for the Church to be".

The Assembly Documents published so far exhibit a realisation that the African Church also is, as are all other Churches, charged by Christ himself to transform the world; to turn it into the Reign of God. Thus the preliminary documents, as well as the available Assembly Documents, speak about the use of modern means of social communications for this purpose. They decry the situation of injustice, lack of peace, and the presence of numerous instances of murderous violence in the region. They call for respect and understanding between and among religions and faiths. Above all, they call for a "model" of Church that will enable the realisation of these aspirations. It is not an easy agenda by any means.

Due to its complexity and uncertainty, there is a real danger, then, that this agenda may in reality, and even in name, be shelved and forgotten after the "celebrative" phase of the

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***In reality the African Synod is just beginning. The success or failure of the Synod will be determined most decisively now on African soil, after the Assembly in Rome.***

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Synod. It is therefore a very good and encouraging thing to note that some Bishop-delegates to the Synod have already spoken publicly about it *in-depth* since their return. Some have even organised seminars and workshops to discuss the hopes of the Assembly and have planned more in the near future. I refer to places like Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia where some work to this effect has already been done. But this is certainly not the case for most of the continent. What is happening in the latter case? Can the fear of prejudicing the Papal Exhortation justify this silence? Where is the pastoral strategy here?

To begin with, popular enthusiasm about the procedure of the Synod was never sufficiently high in many parts of Africa before the Assembly to justify any kind of present complacency. Given that fact, what would now seem obvious and necessary would be to maintain and promote whatever popular interest there was by immediately reporting on the Assembly. "Keep the conversation going!" would have been the name of the game. If, then, conversation about the Synod is not happening, it needs to start immediately.

Now I should like to describe a way which, I think, will ensure that conversation about the Synod happens in all places in the African Church and that interest in the African Synod is kept alive throughout the continent. This ought to be a way of life for the Church which should come to grips with the fact that in reality the African Synod is just beginning. The success or failure of the Synod will be determined most decisively now on African soil, after the Assembly in Rome.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE SYNOD

There has to be a mechanism, a plan, a strategy - call it what you will - designed to ensure that the concerns and commitments of the Synod Assembly are widely known, and that interest and enthusiasm on the part of all the faithful are maintained to analyse and implement them. We speak of enthusiasm because with regard to evangelisation it is an indispensable quality or virtue. Enthusiasm for

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***Communication - an open and honest communication - is the first step. As I have indicated, the way to keep interest about the Synod alive is through conversation. What people need now is information concerning the Synod Assembly.***

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the Word is a fundamental aspect of the missionary nature of the Church. It is also obviously essential to the task of the transformation of the Church in Africa after the Synod.

Lack of enthusiasm about the future of the Synod would be a sure way of removing it from our active consciousness. We all want to live "normal" lives, and unless the concerns of the Synod are made part and parcel of our normal daily routine, as soon as possible, they will be relegated to the subconscious, or even expelled from our memory altogether.

Some structures, and what I will refer to as substructures, fortunately already exist which can be used to maintain and promote further the enthusiasm the Synod process has generated up to this time. The main structure is the Diocese. The substructures may not be very pronounced

in some areas, but they are there in most places now in Africa and for the purpose of the Synod they are indispensable. These are the small communities of the faithful and other similar associations.

To my mind, for the Synod project of transforming the Church in Africa to succeed, much will depend on these units and how they are used from now on. This is not to say, obviously, that new ways to implement the commitments of the Synod may not be thought up. I am simply saying that for the time being these are the available structures. At the same time, I fear that in trying to find entirely new structures, we may run into the danger of spreading our energies too thinly, and thus lose sight of the central aspirations of the Synod. Moreover, given the dominant mood of a good number of leaders and members of the African Church today, the wiser approach towards change is not novelty but the revitalisation of existing structures.

The question now is clear: by using these existing structures, what can be done to promote, in practice, the success of the aspirations of the Synod?

Communication - an open and honest communication - is the first step. As I have indicated, the way to keep interest about the Synod alive is through conversation. What people need now is information concerning the Synod Assembly. What went on there? What were the predominant concerns expressed on the Assembly floor? Did voices differ on different issues due to different circumstances? On what questions was there agreement or near agreement, and on which ones was there no consensus? What aspects of disagreement were there in the general agreements? Conversely, what aspects of agreement were there in the general disagreements?

In addition, people need to know whether or not their own particular concerns were expressed by their delegates. What hearing and discussion did they receive? A sense of pride is not completely foreign to the nature of a local Church, nor is it necessarily wrong. Having worked for almost five years preparing for the Synod Assembly, to know that one's work was considered gives one a good feeling of achievement, a feeling that is important also for spiritual growth. It also encourages among the community a sense of the importance of participation in the affairs of the Church, and a desire to do so.

Let it be said straight away that withholding information about the Synod in any way is tantamount to making it irrelevant. It is to kill any popular interest in it. Once again, without popular interest, the Synod will not be able to influence change in the people's lives. But, then, the African Church has already gone to much expense in prayer, time, money and emotional energy since 1989 to allow this to happen. Let us not mock God by inaction (cf. Gal 6:7). As things are, the procedure in the dissemination of information has to begin, then, with the African Bishops.

All Bishop-delegates to the Synod must see themselves in this procedure as morally accountable. They are first of all accountable to their Episcopal Conferences. This means that they must report back to them in a very thorough way what they brought back from the Assembly. This will best be done in conversation, as has been the case in Nigeria (according to Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Abuja), with all Bishop-delegates present before the entire conference. The conversation may, of course, be supplemented by a written report, a joint work of the delegates; but it ought not to be a substitute for it.

Each Bishop, in turn, must see himself, in the same way, as morally accountable to the faithful in his Diocese. The conversation started at Episcopal Conference level has to be realised on the Diocesan level as well. This will, for the time being, best be done through Diocesan Synods and Christian community meetings. Bishop Josaphat Lebulu of Same, Tanzania, has also suggested this. The purpose in this procedure must, of course, not be to **control** but to **empower** the people through **knowledge**.

While empowerment through information and knowledge is the ultimate aim of keeping people informed, so as to keep the *tempo* of enthusiasm for the African Synod going, it will be relevant to its realisation what **skills** are used in organising and conducting the Diocesan Synods on the African Synod. There are two types of skills that can be employed in this task: it is possible to use hierarchical skills as well as more egalitarian skills. We as a Church in Africa are very much accustomed to the hierarchical skills which, in a sense, are easier to apply than the egalitarian ones. And simply as a means of *imparting* information and knowledge they are tempting to use, but what is called for now is much more than mere imparting of information.

What we are talking about here is, once again, **empowerment** achieved through people's reception and digestion of information and acquisition of true knowledge. We are talking about the transformation of people's lives towards an appreciation of their own dignity as children of God. In this cause the use of hierarchical skills will be detrimental. What is likely to produce beneficial results will be the use, on both structural levels, of egalitarian skills. The Synod itself mentioned them.

Archbishop Monsengwo Pasinya of Kisangani, Zaire, underlines the fact, mentioned in the Synod's **Final Message**, that in the Assembly attention was given to the theme of the **Church as family**. Evangelisation was seen in the context of humanity being the "family of God". "The family takes a central position in African society. African culture is a culture of the family" (ANB-BIA Supplement, 15th May 1994, p. iv).

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Archbishop Monsengwo, touching on the practicalities of the value of the family in the context of the Synod, goes on to explain:

"The Synod can be summarised as follows: The Church in Africa seeks to become more and more the **family of God**. The Church wants African families to become more and more Church themselves. This Church-family should transform the society in which it finds itself, into the kind of family-society where there is more fellowship, more equality and more love. To achieve this, we have to be ready to share with the entire Church the faith we ourselves have received. This is inculturation" (ANB-BIA Supplement, 15th May 1994, p. v).

Those who attended the Synod Assembly, as well as those who have otherwise acquired and

digested information about the Synod, "have to be ready to share with the entire Church" that gift. This is the Archbishop's characterisation not only of the Church, but also of the Synod and of the entire task of inculturation.

The Diocesan Synods on the African Synod we are envisaging, must be designed as genuinely **participatory** affairs. They have to ensure that besides the obvious and necessary presence of the Bishop, clergy and religious in each Diocese, there is real and full "participation of the laity", the "equitable and full participation of women", and the "loyal and faithful participation of the theologians". Such was the message of a group of theologians from Africa in Rome to the Synod Assembly. What is required, these theologians pointed out, is an atmosphere of "openness to all, unprejudiced dialogue and fraternal communion" (ANB-BIA, No. 259, 1st June 1994, p. 6).

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Historian and theologian John-Mary Waliggo from Uganda is fond of pointing out the danger of using uncritically the image of family to describe the reality of the Church in Africa. He likes the image, but he cautions that "family" should not be understood in some of its worst manifestations as an entity that consists only of the father with the rest regarded as children. No, the authentic family, he says, consists of father, mother, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and so on. So should the authentic Church-family. It is not constituted only of the Bishop but is made up of all the faithful in the Diocese.

The most serious danger which threatens the realisation of the concerns and commitments of the Synod may be described as revolving around the mentality and practice of "exclusiveness". The African theologians just mentioned it thus:

We want to point out three dangers of exclusiveness within the Church of today: the exclusiveness of the clergy against the laity; the exclusiveness of the *magisterium* over against the theologians, both male and female; the exclusiveness of the male hierarchy over against women and their ministries in the Church (ANB-BIA, No. 259, 1st June 1994, p. 6).

What has to be taken very seriously into account, in spirit, word and deed as strategy for the Synod, is the fact that the whole community of believers is led by the Spirit. Within the Church everyone must be allowed to prophesy and to dream dreams. And the top dream for the Church in Africa during this time of the Synod is inculturation. Justice and peace, the theme which was mentioned most frequently during the Assembly (40 times), is certainly part of the entire process of inculturation.

#### PRESENCE OF CONTOURS OF THE DREAM

In this respect, the African Church is truly blessed. The main outlines which can make the dream of inculturation real and tangible already exist among us. They have existed for a long time. But there has, and continues to be one big problem. It is that these contours are often wrongly analysed by the leadership of the Church and proscribed.

For the majority of Christians in Africa, however, these contours indicate, in the most existential way possible, their expression of faith in Christ. The Diocesan Synods can therefore be means for a conversation with them, particularly as they manifest themselves in what, for lack of a better term, is called "popular Christianity".

As I have just noted, popular Christianity or popular Catholicism means how the general faithful have assimilated and live out the demands of the faith. It is distinguished from "official" Christianity, the way of reception and expression of the faith fostered by Church leaders. It would be correct to characterise the former at the "*sensus fidelium*", the faith of the Church and the latter more narrowly as the "*magisterium*", that is the segment in the Church charged with the responsibility of collating, purifying and articulating the "*sensus fidelium*". It seems obvious that the "*magisterium*" and the "*sensus fidelium*", rely

on one another. Obviously, the "*sensus fidelium*" is the basis, but dialogue between it and the *magisterium* is essential.

Sidbe Semporé, a theologian from Burkina Faso, explains accurately this need for dialogue:

...popular Catholicism (he says) is for pastors and the Church of Africa, a leaven of conversation and questioning. For the Church in a state of Synod, it represents a necessary passage. The "African Synod" can bear fruit only if it listens to the 'ordinary' Christians, taking into consideration the part of the Gospel lived by the majority of Catholics from the basis, as well as the profound interrogation of the African milieu. The path already covered in Africa since a century of Christianity is a way of the Gospel strewn with snares. For this way to lead to the Sources of Life, the Church in Africa, must cast off its old borrowed cloak in order to put on an Easter 'African gown', with a real Pentecost 'loincloth'! (cf. P. Turkson and F. Wijssen, eds., *Inculturation*, Kampen: KOK, 1994, p. 46).

Popular Christianity, in which to a great extent the success of inculturation, and therefore of the African Synod lies, finds justification in the universal work of the Spirit. During this "state of Synod", the Spirit may invert the hierarchical structure of the Church to some degree. And this may to a certain extent constitute a threat to some people in leadership positions. Yet it is central to the realisation of dialogue and authentic conversation during the Diocesan Synods. For this purpose one must accept, as Leonardo Boff has put it, that "the Church must be thought of not so much as beginning with the Risen Lord, now in the form of the Spirit, but rather as beginning with the Holy Spirit, as the force and means by which the Lord remains present in history, and so continues his work of inaugurating a new world" (L. Boff, *Ecclesio genesis*, N.Y.: Orbis, 1986, p. 150).

Engaging popular Christianity seriously in dialogue with official Christianity does not constitute a diminution or removal of the true authority of Church leaders. On the contrary, it constitutes its enhancement, extension and authentic realisation. This should assuage any fear that some Bishops and priests in Africa harbour about the process of Diocesan Synods in which egalitarian principles are the controlling factor.

Now, the fact is that the official Church has leadership *de jure; de facto*, where the practical expression of Christian life, six days a week, is concerned, it exerts little influence among the great majority of the faithful. Whether we admit it or not, there are now in reality two parallel Churches, the juridical Church and the Church of the Spirit. They are destined not to converge unless and until they converse on terms of understanding and mutuality. But if they meet on those terms and integrate, the authority of the official Church will extend naturally over the entire Church of Christ.

It must not be forgotten that the Synod process is not meant to be an exclusively intra-Catholic affair. To begin with, inter-religious/inter-faith dialogue is one of its themes. At the Assembly itself, there were invited observers from other faiths present. Moreover, the freedom of the work of the Spirit

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mandates that we observe how people of other religions and faiths respond positively to the Spirit of God which is in them. All of this means that some of the contours for realising the aspirations of the Synod are to be found among non-Catholic faith groups. They must be approached not primarily as adversaries but as sources (*loci*) of revelation.

Speaking of shifts now affecting the mission and ministry of the Church, the missiologist A. Bellagamba has recently written:

If the felt need for religious experience is a megatrend in the world, then, in the Church's mission to the world, **dialogue** is the response that is needed at present. To make direct conversion the chief object of mission among peoples who are searching, under the influence of the Spirit, to kindle their own faith, deepen their own religiosity, may be an anachronistic attempt, perhaps even contrary to the movement of the Spirit.

There is certainly a place for direct proselytism, direct conversion in every soul whom the Spirit may choose from among the people. These will gladly follow the Lord Jesus. But one of the major objects of mission may very well be dialogue among religions, rather than proselytism (*Mission and Ministry in the Global Church*, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992, p. 3)

With reference to the Diocesan Synods and local Christian associations that we are proposing as ways of continuing the Synod, one thinks of the independent Churches, indigenous Churches and African religions. What is their organisation and what is its theological justification for it? What are these groups' forms of ministry and worship, and why? There is no lack of literature today on all of these questions. That is true. But in the context of Diocesan Synods on the African Synod, face to face encounters with these communities will be more fruitful. They will indicate more clearly the orientation the Church ought to follow towards genuine inculturation.

### CONCLUSION

The question that I suspect many readers are now asking themselves is probably this: Will all this happen? Indeed, I am asking the same question myself. As I see it, the very question is an indication of the danger confronting the future process of the Synod. It means that the process has not yet been able to show concrete signs of change in the life of the African Church. And so a related question would be: What need we do to make these and other progressive steps towards inculturation begin to work?

Here is where each one of us becomes an apostle of and for the Synod in his/her own way. Are you Bishop, Chancellor or Vicar General, Sister, Catechist, Priest? Do whatever you can to show to everyone who cares to listen, the importance of the above strategies for the Church, for the growth of your Diocese, parish and community. Are you a teacher, musician, counsellor? Do the same with your students, listeners and clients. Are you involved in Christian associations at any level? Engage them democratically in discussions about the implementation of the Synod.

The list of situations can be continued. But the point is simple and clear. Whoever you

are, wherever you may be, initiate, insist on and sustain dialogue about the implementation of the Synod. In dialogue lies the hope that the whole process has not, and will not, be in vain.





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## AIDS AND ORPHANS

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Frank Carey, M.Afr.

There is already a vast number of AIDS orphans in Zambia and, unfortunately, their number will increase dramatically in the coming years. UNICEF estimated an orphan population of 79,000 by 1991 and projected that it would rise to 600,000 by the year 2,000. Events appear to show this is heavily underestimated. Zambia's orphan problem has already reached crisis proportions, and children are being cared for in ways that were not thought possible a few years ago. A large population of children already work on the streets and care for themselves in Zambian towns and cities. These are the so-called 'street children'. Are they a result of families' failure to cope with the economic situation or, are they AIDS-orphans? A recent study estimates that 40 per cent of Zambian households are currently caring for one orphan or more. On aggregate, the Report suggests, there is already one orphan per household in the country.

The vast majority of people who die from AIDS are young parents, between the age of 19-40. There are many reasons why it is difficult to state the exact number of people who die from AIDS each year. Research suggests, however, that despite a widespread information and education campaign for AIDS prevention, there has been no reduction in the transmission rate of HIV. If present trends continue, it is estimated that as many as 700,000 people will contract HIV in the course of the next five years; they will probably be dead within 10 years of becoming infected. This will inevitably cause a huge increase in the number of orphans.

Studies also suggest that between 60-80 per cent of married women with HIV have been infected by unfaithful husbands. People who die from AIDS were probably infected with HIV several years previously. In the study of AIDS in a thousand households it was discovered that 25 per cent of the children had lost both parents; 25 per cent had lost their mother; and 50 per cent had lost their father. This suggests

that husbands were infected before their wives and die before them. The tragic fact is that their infected wives will also eventually die from AIDS and leave their children as orphans.

### **Children with Sick Parents:**

Children's welfare inevitably declines as soon as one or both of the parents become chronically ill. Children under the age of five are particularly vulnerable and many die prematurely as a result of preventable or curable sicknesses. Sick parents are unable to provide the care and attention they would normally provide and so children's well-being declines. Indeed, it may happen that children have to look after their parents rather than the other way round. The parents' illness interferes with the domestic routine, and this too may have an adverse effect on children's health. The supply, preparation and distribution of food may be disturbed and lead to poor feeding and malnutrition for the very young. The family also suffers from the effects of reduced financial income but increased illness-related expenses. Children may suffer, consequently, from the lack of access to educational and medical facilities that they would enjoy if their parents were healthy. There can be no doubt that all children suffer profound emotional and psychological pressure during the long, drawn out illness of their parents which precedes their death. The children of relatives caring for the sick parents may be similarly affected. It is important to pay attention to the welfare of children in homes where one or both of the parents is sick with HIV/AIDS.

### **Death of Parents:**

Children rarely have the opportunity to come to terms with the grief of their parents' death. The profound economic and social consequences of a parent's death prevent this. If the father dies first, the children will at least be cared for by their mother. However, the

mother's death may result in immediate destitution and homelessness for the family. If the father was employed, this may mean the end of cash coming into the house. The family may also lose their home if the house was connected to the job or if they are no longer able to pay the rent.

By far the biggest blow, however, is the custom of property grabbing by relatives of the deceased man. This may leave the wife and children absolutely destitute. According to the Inheritance and Succession Act of 1989, all household goods, property and belongings of the deceased should be shared between the surviving spouse, the children, the parents of the deceased and other dependents. The following ratio is supposed to determine the distribution of goods: 50 per cent of the estate should go to the children; 20 per cent to the surviving spouse; 20 per cent to the parents of the deceased and 10 per cent to other relatives. Unfortunately, this Act is often ignored and is no protection against greedy relatives. There needs to be an awareness raising campaign to change public opinion with regard to this practice. It is also suggested that the law should be changed to make it a criminal rather than civil law so that the police might have power to intervene.

### **Orphans in Female Headed Households:**

When the father dies the household normally stays intact with the children cared for by the widow. This means that AIDS widows swell the ranks of the female headed households whose numbers have already increased dramatically over the last two decades. The members of these households are already among the poorest of the poor and suffer from multiple deprivations. Their situation poses increased problems for the health and welfare of mothers as well as children. The big difference is, however, that the mother's health will eventually collapse as her own HIV destroys her immune system. This means that children's welfare is likely to deteriorate dramatically. Eventually, most of these mothers will die and the children will suffer the ultimate tragedy of losing both parents.

### **When the Mother Dies:**

When the mother dies the children will probably be taken from their home to be cared for by relatives. There are very few cases of households headed by widowers. (Indeed widowers are often able to remarry, particularly

if they are not sick and have employment). The children are normally cared for by relatives of the wife. They may be taken into another household without being separated from their siblings, or they may be divided amongst several households.

### **When Both Parents Die:**

When both parents die, there are two other possibilities for looking after the children. They may stay together as a family unit under the care of the oldest child. So far, there are only a few child-headed households, but it is probable that they will increase as the number of AIDS orphans increases. It is clear that the situation of all children in this kind of household is extremely vulnerable. Nevertheless, the fact that they remain together and enjoy mutual support as well as, possibly, the support of friends and neighbours, may reduce the psychological and emotional trauma.

### **Orphans and Grandmothers:**

There is evidence to show that the majority of orphans are in fact cared for by maternal grandmothers who are mostly, widows and living, for the most part, in the poorest conditions in urban areas. Once again, this increases the number of female headed households but adds a new handicap, namely, age. Once again, these households may not only border on destitution but be completely destitute. They too, are without any doubt among the poorest of the poor. These elderly widows are expected to work extra hard in order to rear their orphaned grandchildren. This is likely to have a harmful effect on their health with serious implications for the welfare of the orphans. Children in these homes face a particularly precarious future unless some other family members take on the responsibility.

### **Institutional Care of Orphans:**

So far, the burden of caring for orphans has been left exclusively to the extended family. An acute problem arises when orphans have no extended family. The fact is, in recent years, an underclass of people who have no viable contact with any of their family, has appeared in Zambia. There are very few orphanages in Zambia. The assumption has always been that these are not needed as the extended family takes care. This raises a number of extremely important questions given the scale of the present crisis.

There are enormous practical and financial problems in seeking to provide an institutional solution to the growing number of AIDS orphans, but these problems cannot be simply ignored. It is clear that some sort of semi-institutional arrangements are needed to supplement the efforts of families caring for orphans.

### **Principal Needs of Orphans:**

The most basic need of all orphans is justice! They need to have their fundamental human rights respected. Zambia has signed the International Convention which guarantees the Rights of the Child. It recognises that children, unable to articulate and demand their basic human rights are in special need of protection. They are voiceless and need spokesmen and spokeswomen. Orphans are particularly vulnerable and defenceless. Their needs are even greater than ordinary children. Instead of receiving more help, however, they may be deprived of all help. They lack status and may be resented because of the extra demands they are perceived to make on relations and community.

The scale of suffering among AIDS orphans is so great that it is normally seen only in war or natural calamity. They have the right to adequate food, clothing and shelter. They have the right to medical care when they are sick. They have the right to education. All these rights - and many more besides - are found in the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

If the family is broken up after the parents' death, this is likely to be a very traumatic experience for an orphan, who is separated from brothers and sisters. They are also uprooted from their familiar support network of friends and neighbours. Children of school-going age may have their schooling disrupted and even, perhaps, discontinued completely. In addition, the children may suffer from prejudice and discrimination in their new home. This is almost inevitable given the great problems most families already have in making ends meet. This is most likely to happen in the distribution of food, clothing and school fees. Children may also suffer abuse and exploitation. They may be used as cheap labour. In the case of girls, unfortunately, there are reports of some who have been sexually abused by the head of the household; they are warned that if they report it they will be chased from the house.

### **What the Churches Can Do:**

Churches act as a social conscience at all levels of society, from local to national. It is time to address the needs of the large numbers of present AIDS orphans and make provision for an increasing number in the future. In order to help orphans and their guardians, it is necessary to identify them. Churches should unite at ward or village level and make a register of orphans. They could also make an assessment of their most pressing needs. Once the number of orphans, and their main needs are known it is possible to contemplate a community-based scheme to help the families in which the orphans are cared for. One possibility, for example, is to establish a community-based feeding centre where orphans are guaranteed at least one good meal each day.

Such a centre could also ensure that orphans are not deprived of medical and educational facilities because of the lack of money to pay fees. Counselling should also be given to children whose parents are sick as well as to orphans.

The growing number of orphans reminds us of the atrocious plight of all children in female-headed households; these should also be considered as eligible for the kind of support that the community might be able to offer orphans.

There is one especially important action that Churches could inspire the community to undertake on behalf of the orphans. This is to educate public opinion in such a way that relatives stop the practice of property grabbing when a husband dies as this is the same as stealing from orphans.

### **What the Government Can Do:**

The Government has to recognise the gravity and extent of the problem of orphans and take practical steps to address their plight. There are two Government schemes which could help to improve the welfare of orphans: the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme and the so-called Social Safety Net (SSN). Neither of these works effectively at the moment. The Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) aims at assisting the poor and destitute in society, and all those who, due to circumstances beyond their control, cannot look after themselves. It addresses groups such as lactating mothers who have difficulty feeding their newly born babies, such as single mothers and widows; orphans, abused

and unsupported or abandoned children; old people without families to support them; the disabled; victims of disasters such as drought, fire, etc. Others who may be considered by the PWAS include; indigent persons awaiting repatriation or indigent Zambians returning from abroad and other displaced persons; invalids incapacitated by ill health and indigent persons discharged from hospital, prison, etc., and stranded destitutes who may want to return to their villages.

Each district has a PWAS committee. In practice, this operates poorly. There is poor targeting of individuals and inadequate support of those who are identified. Accusations of favouritism have also been made in choosing recipients.

The Social Safety Net Committee is supposed to develop policies to provide assistance to the 'chronically poor' and the 'temporarily poor and vulnerable' due to natural causes (for example, drought victims) and victims of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The main concern of the Social Safety Net should be to get people back on their feet.

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***The basic need of all orphans is justice! They need to have their fundamental human rights respected. They are voiceless and particularly vulnerable and defenceless.***

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The Ministry of Education needs to reinforce the Education Act of 1966. This will allow children to attend school even if they cannot afford school uniform or the PTA fees.

Once there is a register of orphans and an assessment of their principal needs carried out at least at district and town level but eventually at ward and village level, the Government can be helped to contribute to assisting the needs of the orphans through these and other appropriate programmes. Orphans need advocates who are both informed and persistent to plead their cause at local, district, provincial and national levels. It is important that the Government be helped to address the social problems of today and not merely those of a former age.

### **Conclusion:**

The scale of the problem of AIDS orphans is so vast that it is unclear in how far the extended

family is able to cope. Evidence suggests that elderly grandmothers living in the poorest possible conditions are the biggest providers of care for orphans. It cannot be presumed that in these times of economic austerity the extended family is able to care for orphans satisfactorily.

Orphans are subjected to atrocious physical, spiritual, emotional and social suffering. A large proportion of them either have no schooling at all or drop out early. Zambian towns and cities have witnessed the emergence of 'street kids' in recent years. Very little work has been done to examine the scale, the causes and sufferings of these children. They appear to be left to fend for themselves without adult help. Many adults view them as apprentice criminals. As the number of orphans grows, it is almost inevitable that the number of street kids will also grow. This makes it imperative for the Churches at all levels to take enlightened and sustainable initiatives to ensure that we are not found guilty of abandoning the children.

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# GOSPEL AND CULTURES

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Konrad Raiser

*(Konrad Raiser is the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva).*

## Some Initial Clarifications

The question of the relationship between the Gospel and the diversity of human cultures has been a subject of intensive study over the last two generations. In these discussions, the focus was either on Christianity and culture, Christ and culture, Church and world, or mission and indigenisation. Since the Vancouver Assembly in 1983, the issue of "Gospel and culture" has been placed again on the agenda of the World Council of Churches. This formulation suggests that what is at stake is not so much a question of ideas (Christianity and culture) or of structures (Church and society), nor of missionary strategy (inculturation or indigenization). What is to be explored rather is the dynamic interaction between the Gospel and human cultures.

The Gospel in its original literal meaning is the Good News of God's eschatological action of salvation. For Jesus, the Gospel of God is the Good News that the Kingdom of God has come near (cf. Mark 1:14). In the teaching of Paul, the Gospel is the message of the cross and the Resurrection of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1:18ff; 15:1ff), which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith (Rom 1:16). The person of Jesus Christ as the incarnate son of God has become the very content of the Gospel. The Gospel, therefore, is not a propositional truth, but rather an event that unfolds in the personal relationship to God in Jesus Christ.

When the recent studies refer to culture, they use this concept in line with definitions provided by modern cultural anthropology, which distinguishes culture from civilisation on the one hand, but also from folklore on the other hand. Culture is the expression of the identity of a human community. Culture refers to the delicate fabric of habits, symbols, artistic representations, tools, rules of behaviour, moral values and institutions through which the human community orders its relationships to nature, to

other communities and to reality as a whole. Through processes of socialisation and through tradition, a culture is being transmitted to the following generations. In this sense, culture is specifically human; it is the second "nature" of human beings in their social relationships. Any

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*The history of Christian mission shows that the best missionaries have been those who knew out of their own experience about the ambiguities concerning the relationship of Gospel and culture and who, therefore, were open for the possibility of cultural transformation under the impact of the Gospel.*

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understanding of culture includes the language, history, ethos, family patterns, etc. of a given community. In traditional societies, the realm of culture also includes social and political institutions and particularly religious symbolisations and the accompanying praxis, while these have been progressively distinguished from culture in modern societies.

Neither the Gospel nor human cultures are static, but are affected by historical change. Cultures have influenced and transformed each other through movements of migration, through trade and conquest. The theory of evolution from primitive to higher forms of culture was an attempt to order the perplexing variety of human cultures from the perspective of the dominating culture. But also the Gospel as the living word of God in the human person of Jesus Christ has found changing expressions in the course of the spread of Christianity from its original Jewish context into the realm of Hellenistic culture and from there to the ends of the

earth. The canon of the Scriptures in the New Testament is in itself a symbol for the diversity of cultural expressions of the Gospel message. The major Christian traditions articulate their understanding of the Gospel in different ways, which are to a large extent culturally conditioned (thesis, atonement, justification, salvation, liberation).

It is clear from these brief indications that culture is anything but a uniform monolithic phenomenon. For any analysis of culture, it is important to recognise the basic difference between the culture of the *élites* and the culture of the simple people, the culture of the powerful and the culture of those who experience themselves as objects of domination. All empires have attempted to establish a unitary culture, often against the strong resistance of the subdued peoples. The experience of cultural alienation as a consequence of colonialism or of the present technologically mediated global culture has in many places led to the search for a reaffirmation of cultural identity that is expressed, for instance, in the deliberate use of the indigenous language or the reappropriation of the particular history. But even the affirmation of cultural identity can be misused by those in power to hide their interests, as became evident in the conflicts around the universal recognition and implementation of Human Rights.

### **Theological Issues Regarding Gospel and Culture**

In his classic study *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), the American theologian H. Richard Niebuhr has presented a typology of five major forms of the relationship between Jesus Christ and human cultures: (1) Christ against culture; (2) Christ of culture; (3) Christ above culture; (4) Christ and culture in paradox; (5) Christ the transformer of culture. This analysis has lost nothing of its validity. In more recent studies, a simplified typology has been proposed in the sense of a dialectical or a dialogical relationship between Gospel and culture. "Dialectic" is understood here in terms of the perpetual conflict, the struggle and irreconcilability between Gospel and culture. Thus in the German "dialectical theology", the Gospel was put over against all human culture. The Gospel was understood as the otherworldly revelation of God that challenges all human culture, including all religions. This dialectical understanding of Gospel and culture as developed in the earlier phases of Karl Barth's theology has had a profound influence on

ecumenical discussion. The dialogical interpretation recognises that there is an interaction between Gospel and culture that can result in adaptation or even identification, but can also leave both poles in relative autonomy. Most examples for the dialogical approach operate with the distinction of content and form. They would insist that the content of the Gospel must remain unchanged, whereas the forms of its expression will always be culturally conditioned.

Typologies have a limited use for the analysis of complex phenomena, but they can never replace a fuller theological interpretation. Any theological clarification of the relationship between Gospel and culture must start from the understanding of creation and incarnation. Culture is part of God's creation, even if it is the result of human interaction. No culture is outside the realm of God's action, but all cultures bear the marks of the ambiguity of human history: they can be life-enhancing and liberating, or they can be oppressive and destructive. To maintain a basic conflict between Gospel and culture would not only contradict the belief and confession that God's creation is good, but it would deny the revelation of God in the human person of Jesus of Nazareth. That God has taken on human form in Jesus Christ means that the reality of God has become part of the human, historical and by implication also cultural reality, that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ in the context of Jewish culture and history.

The dialectical position is justified wherever it articulates critical resistance against the tendency to identify the Gospel with any particular culture. It continuously stresses that the Gospel itself is God's intervention against the destructive tendencies of human culture. The dialogical position is justified wherever it points out that the Gospel is God's living word addressed to concrete human persons which, therefore, has to enter into human language, history and cultural expressions in order to transform them. The Gospel is not to be understood as a general doctrine of salvation (*gnosis*), but it is living, life-creating word. The dialogical position can refer to the biblical images of the salt that dissolves, of the leaven that penetrates the whole dough, of the grain of wheat that has to die in order to bring fruit. The dialectical position can refer to the constant effort of Paul to defend the Gospel against distortion and to protect his congregations from the proclamation of "another Gospel".



The interaction of Gospel and culture obviously escapes any neat and simple definition. This becomes obvious when the foregoing distinctions are being applied to a number of questions that inevitably arise in ecumenical discussion.

1. The witness of the New Testament insists that there is only one Gospel, just as there is only the one undivided Christ who is the Lord of the Church. This Gospel as the message of salvation for all people is universal in its reach. How can the uniqueness and universality of the Gospel be preserved in the face of the diversity of its cultural expressions? One attempt in responding to this question has been the distinction between the unchangeable content of the Gospel and its changing, culturally conditioned form. Any formulation of the content of the Gospel, of its central affirmation, has to make use of one or the other of the culturally conditioned credal formulae, like the confession that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human. There is no articulation of the message of the Gospel that is timeless and independent of culture and history. The "Tradition of the Gospel" is accessible to us only in the diversity of "traditions" beginning already in the New Testament. The New Testament witness itself becomes the living Gospel only in the encounter with a particular human culture. That people hear this witness as Gospel, as the Good News of salvation for them, is the work of God through the Holy Spirit. Ecumenical discussions, therefore, frequently underlined that the one Christ has many faces in different colours. The World Missionary Conference in Bangkok, for instance, said: "Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ... The universality of the Christian faith does not contradict its particularity. Christ has to be responded to in a particular situation". And the subsequent assembly at Nairobi affirmed: "We can say that Jesus Christ does not make copies; he makes originals". All attempts to protect the one Gospel of Jesus Christ against distortion and deformation run the risk of identifying the Gospel with one particular culturally conditioned form of expression. The oneness and universality of the Gospel cannot be affirmed apart from, but only in the inter-relatedness of its diverse forms of expression.
2. Does this mean that all the different expressions and articulations of the Gospel are equally valid, that there is no way of discriminating between adequate and inadequate, true and false affirmations of the Gospel? The fear is widespread that the acknowledgment of a legitimate cultural diversity in the expression of the Gospel relativises its unchangeable truth. It is important, therefore, to emphasise the difference between Gospel and culture which will never disappear. It is true, on the one hand, that any proclamation of the Gospel that is afraid of the risk to dissolve like salt or to die like the grain of wheat and to become part of a given culture, does not really bring the living God into contact with human reality. But it is equally true, on the other hand, that a proclamation of the Gospel which is afraid to uncover and judge the alienating, oppressive and life-

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***The Gospel will find its way in any culture, even the most secularised one, uncovering its internal contradictions, challenging its alienating and oppressive features, strengthening and encouraging its inherent life-enhancing energies and responding to the search for healing and wholeness, for reconciliation and liberation.***

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denying elements of a given culture, is depriving people of the true liberation offered by God. To live through the power of the Gospel means to live within, as an integral part of a given culture and yet to preserve the ability of critical distance. The Church as the community of people who live according to the spirit of the Gospel always bears the mark of a particular culture. But the Church should never become the institutional expression of a civil religion. The Church is called to be sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God, of God's new creation.

3. Can we legitimately speak of a "Christian culture"? The Byzantine and the mediaeval civilisations considered themselves to be Christian cultures, and they are still being

held up as models. There are voices today that call for a reconstitution and reaffirmation of the identity of Europe as a Christian culture. There is no doubt that these cultures have been shaped by the transforming power of the Gospel, but, like any human culture, they cannot escape the ambiguities of human history and need to be confronted with the critical challenge of the Gospel. The Gospel will find its way in any culture, even the most secularised one, uncovering its internal contradictions, challenging its alienating and oppressive features, strengthening and encouraging its inherent life-enhancing energies and responding to the search for healing and wholeness, for reconciliation and liberation.

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*Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ... The universality of the Christian faith does not contradict its particularity. Christ has to be responded to in a particular situation... "We can say that Jesus Christ does not make copies; he makes originals".*

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### Implications for Mission and Ecumenism

Gospel and culture are inseparably related in a dynamic interaction. There is no proclamation of the Gospel that is not shaped by a given culture and, therefore, there can be no mission apart from the conditions of culture. All witnesses of the Gospel have been part of a particular culture. The history of Christian mission shows that the best missionaries have been those who knew out of their own experience about the ambiguities concerning the relationship of Gospel and culture and who, therefore, were open for the possibility of cultural transformation under the impact of the Gospel. There is also sufficient historical evidence to show that Christian mission frequently was most successful where it faced a situation of cultural change. When and where the inherent contradictions within a dominant culture come to the surface, the Gospel can become effective with its liberating power. By contrast, there are clear limitations to a missionary approach "from above", i.e., using the structures and forms of expres-

sion of a dominant culture. In the contemporary situation of worldwide cultural change, Christian mission "from below", i.e., following the way of Christ in identifying with those who long for liberation and struggle for justice, human rights and full social participation, gains new significance.

In the course of the missionary spreading of the Gospel, again and again there have been situations where an old and established inculturation of the Gospel has been challenged by new attempts at cultural incarnation. This has been the case already in the conflict between the new Churches established by Paul and the Church in Jerusalem. The divisions of the Church since the fifth century have been strongly influenced by cultural differences. The emergence of such tensions and conflicts is not accidental, in particular where a new understanding of the Gospel begins to challenge a dominant culture that has been sanctioned by the Church, whether from within or from without.

In the early period, the life of the Christian Church was characterised by a considerable cultural diversity that found expression in different languages, liturgies, thought forms and Church orders. In order to maintain communion in the face of cultural diversity, the Church has developed the conciliar or synodical form of life. Communion never was understood as uniformity, but found expression in the mutual recognition of culturally diverse Churches. The agreement on the canon of Scriptures, the rule of faith and the common recognition of ministries in the Church originally did not represent static norms. Rather, they served as a common frame of reference within which mutual recognition was possible.

The ecumenical movement today aims at rediscovering viable forms of this communion/*koinônia* in the midst of cultural diversity. At the same time, it has to respond to the emergence of a global, technologically mediated uniform culture that is serving as an instrument of domination. Sometimes this global culture has been interpreted as a modern expression and as a consequence of the specifically Christian universalism. At the same time, others point with a sense of urgency to the danger that the Christian Churches might adapt too easily to this global culture, being misled by its "ecumenical" pretensions. They call for a more deliberate contextualisation of the proclamation

of the Gospel and of theological reflection in order to strengthen cultural identity. In this perspective, the task of the ecumenical movement is to promote and facilitate intercultural dialogue.

The ecumenical focus on contextualisation is a direct fruit of the more recent missiological discussion. Mission presupposes genuine familiarity with the indigenous culture, language, etc. For this reason, mission and evangelism are in the first instance the task of people who belong to a given cultural context. At the same time, it remains true that often the missionary who comes from outside can better articulate the critical challenge of the Gospel over against the dominant culture because he/she is not bound by indigenous ties of loyalty. Any missionary, on the other hand, has to be ready to be converted again and to receive the Gospel afresh in the encounter with another culture. Cultural adaptation of missionary witness (inculturation or indigenisation) is only the first phase in the interaction between Gospel and culture, that will ultimately lead to a transformation of both the given culture, and the forms of witness for the Gospel.

The encounter between Gospel and culture, therefore, is never terminated. Wherever the invisible rule of God in Jesus Christ is being confused and identified with political, cultural or religious domination as a consequence of a particular inculturation of Christianity, the critical challenge of the Gospel as the call to conversion has to be articulated again. The ecumenical encounter of Christians and Churches from different cultures is the most effective invitation to such continuing mutual criticism and self-correction. The intercultural condition of the ecumenical movement thus can become an impulse for new missionary advances.

For more than thirty years, ecumenical missionary thinking has been guided by the understanding of "mission in six continents". While this perspective remains valid, it is important today to acknowledge the difference between the missionary situation in Europe, North America and, with some modifications, Latin America, on the one hand, and in Africa, Asia and the Pacific on the other. The central missionary problem in the "old" Churches is the "cultural captivity" of the Gospel. Christian mission in this context would have to articulate in the first instance the liberating opposition of

the Gospel over against the dominant religious-cultural synthesis. In the "younger" Churches, the missionary problem continues to be the experience of "cultural estrangement". Christian proclamation and its embodiment in Christian community life in many places is still felt to be an element out of a foreign culture that disturbs the established cultural traditions. The missionary task here is to find ways of entering into and appropriating the indigenous culture. In the other case, the central task is to articulate a critical distance and difference. Both missionary situations, however, are faced with the necessity to articulate the universal message of the Gospel in the face of the emerging global unitary culture. The different orientation in missionary witness has an analogy in the way of Christ. His call to repentance, i.e., to a critical change in orientation and life, was addressed particularly to the representatives of political and religious power. The poor, the sick, the marginalised, on the other hand, were invited without precondition to enjoy participation in the Kingdom of God. The Churches in the ecumenical movement have to discover and appreciate anew the difference and the inner relatedness of these two forms of missionary witness.

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## RWANDA - QUELLE SUITE ?

Gisèle Bellemare

*(La Soeur Gisèle Bellemare, MSOLA, était pendant plusieurs années Supérieure de la province du Zaïre-Rwanda. Elle a donné cette conférence le 24 novembre au séminaire du SEDOS).*

Si j'ai accepté l'invitation de SEDOS pour parler ici aujourd'hui, c'est à cause du lien très fort qui unit notre congrégation au peuple rwandais. Depuis 1909, il y a quelques centaines de soeurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame d'Afrique qui ont lié leur vie à celle de leurs soeurs et frères rwandais. Et cette année douloureuse marque le 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la fondation des Benebikira, la première congrégation religieuse féminine rwandaise.

C'est donc une même affection pour les Rwandais qui nous rassemble ici, cet après-midi. Ce que je vais dire concerne davantage les missionnaires qui étaient présents au Rwanda et qui se proposent de retourner. Et je vais simplement partager les questions que je me pose, que nous nous posons au niveau du conseil général, sur l'avenir de notre collaboration missionnaire avec l'Eglise du Rwanda.

Ma réflexion a comme point de départ des faits et j'en retiendrai trois. Ces faits me troublaient déjà il y a 4 ou 5 ans. A plusieurs reprises ils ont été amenés comme sujets de réflexion lors des réunions de notre conseil provincial d'Afrique Centrale.

Le premier concerne le nombre de congrégations religieuses féminines présentes au Rwanda. Si ma mémoire statistique est fidèle, en 1993, il y en avait au moins 65!

Le deuxième se rapporte à des questions posées par feu le Président Habyarimana dans les années 89-90. A cette époque, il rencontrait les divers groupes en activité dans le Pays. Et dans ce cadre, il avait exprimé le désir de rencontrer les religieux et les religieuses. Pour répondre à ce souhait sans apparaître liés à la politique, les deux bureaux des Unions des Supérieur(e)s Majeur(e)s, hommes et femmes, avaient proposé de le rencontrer en privé, sans journalistes ni photographes. Parmi les questions qu'il avait apportées, celles-ci avaient particulièrement touché les participants et participantes:

"Pourquoi les religieux et les religieuses n'étaient-ils plus présentes, comme autrefois, sur les collines dans les villages, pour visiter les gens?

Pourquoi n'y avait-il plus de leur part, une action sur le terrain, pour travailler avec les gens, à améliorer leur vie?

Pourquoi un style de vie se différent?"

Ces questions ne sont pas très différentes des interpellations adressées par la Responsable de la branche féminine de l'Association rwandaise des travailleurs chrétiens, dans un message à ses frères prêtres, pasteurs de son peuple, au tout début de cette année 1994, dans le cadre de l'Année de la Famille.

Le troisième fait regarde les nouvelles constructions de grands bâtiments des congrégations religieuses et de l'Eglise. Ces dernières années, la ville de Butare a connu une grande expansion : beaucoup de nouvelles constructions ont rempli ses collines. Parmi ces bâtiments, beaucoup de grandes maisons religieuses. Entre 1990 et 1993, chaque fois que je passais au Rwanda, la vue des camps des déplacés, de tous ces gens dénués de tous biens, de toute nourriture, logés dans ces cabanes de branchages couvertes d'un plastic qu'ils appellent des blindés, dans la boue et le froid de la saison des pluies, tout cela me tournait le coeur à l'envers... Les congrégations religieuses ne sont pas restées insensibles à cette souffrance et à cette pauvreté. J'ai été témoin de tout ce qu'elles ont investi en personnel et en argent et de tout ce qu'elles ont inventé pour porter secours aux déplacés selon tout ce qui leur était possible... Mais je me suis souvent demandé comment eux voyaient notre vie, nos installations même modestes... Comment les gens qui remplissaient la cathédrale de Butare le dimanche, voyaient-ils toutes ces maisons de religieux et de religieuses dans la ville? Quel était l'impact de notre présence dans la vie ces paysans?

Mes questions sont toujours restées sans réponses. Et si je les met au grand jour devant vous, ce n'est pas pour les toutner en procès, ni pour porter un jugement d'accusation ou d'acquiescement. Non, c'est plutôt parce qu'elles sont le départ d'un long cheminement intérieur où sont en train de mûrir en s'approfondissant, des réflexions qui s'articulent autour d'un "pourquoi" et d'un "comment" retourner au Rwanda. Et c'est tout simplement que je vous partage ces réflexions...

### **Pourquoi retourner au Rwanda?**

- parce que nous sommes liés à l'Église du Rwanda et co-responsables avec elle, de ses faiblesses, de ses erreurs, mais aussi de ses actes de dévouement, d'éducatons, de libération, de guérison : signes concrets de l'annonce de la BONNE NOUVELLE.

- parce que tous les rwandais et toutes les rwandaïses sont non frères et soeurs où qu'ils se trouvent actuellement et quelle que soit leur origine. Personne ne laisse tomber son frère ou sa soeur quand ils traversent des difficultés.

- parce qu'il y a des appels de frères et de soeurs rwandais pour une collaboration en vue de rebâtir leur nation traumatisée par la violence et la perte de sens sacré de la vie et de la personne humaine. Et pour cela, il y a un URGENT besoin d'investir dans l'humanité, dans la reconnaissance d'un péché collectif pour trouver des chemins de dialogue et de réconciliation. Cela ne peut se réaliser qu'à travers l'expérience d'une écoute fraternelle et compréhensive. Le message pur et simple de l'Évangile peut parler très fort aux coeurs, dans la souffrance, et susciter la rencontre avec le Dieu de Jésus-Christ, le Dieu de pitié et de miséricorde.

- parce que missionnaires, hommes ou femmes, notre vocation "*ad extra*" ne vise qu'un seul but, essayer de promouvoir les valeurs du Royaume : l'amour de la vie, la justice et l'équité, les droits humains, l'entente mutuelle, le respect et l'accueil des autres cultures, des autres religions et de leur vision différente du monde.

### **Comment retourner au Rwanda?**

- D'abord en étant ce que nous sommes : des religieux et des religieuses, i.e. des hommes et des femmes pour tous. Tout rwandais et toute rwandaïse aujourd'hui est une personne qui souffre, une personne qui porte une blessure douloureuse, et même peut-être très profonde, une blessure dans son humanité. Tout rwandais, toute rwandaïse où qu'il, qu'elle se trouve, quelle que soit son origine, a droit à notre com-

passion (compassion = pâtir avec).

Si quelqu'un désire retourner au Rwanda et découvrir en lui ou en elle, un sentiment humain fort pour un côté ou pour un autre, il n'est pas encore prêt pour participer à la reconstruction de l'unité du peuple. Avant de repartir, tout missionnaire a besoin d'avoir fait l'expérience de la réconciliation avec lui-même, l'expérience de la guérison d'une certaine culpabilité d'avoir quitté, abandonné d'avoir failli... Il a aussi besoin d'intégrer ses expériences douloureuses, besoin de se reposer et de devenir plus humble... Car il a y aussi des missionnaires blessés... Pour qu'une réconciliation puisse devenir possible, il paraît important d'avoir une présence pastorale là où sont les rwandais, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur du pays. Il faut être conscients que même si nous cherchons à être pour tous, nous risquons d'être soupçonnés d'être d'un côté ou de l'autre...

Artisans de Paix, il doit être clair pour tous que nous sommes contre la guerre, contre toute guerre et contre les armes qui la perpétuent... La guerre est comme un feu de brousse. Celui qui l'allume pense toujours pouvoir le contrôler... même si dans son expérience de vie, il a pu constater qu'un feu de brousse peut devenir incontrôlable et brûler tout le village.

Artisans de paix, il est important de rester libres vis-à-vis des tendances politiques, libres pour soutenir toutes les décisions et les actions en faveur de la justice pour toutes les catégories de la population et pour désapprouver ce qui écrase et opprime les pauvres. Et pour cela, il est nécessaire d'être proches de ce qu'ils vivent.

- Ensuite en travaillant étroitement avec les fils et les filles de l'Église du Rwanda qui sont déjà engagés dans ce processus de reconstruction et de guérison des coeurs, des esprits, de la conscience morale, de toute la personne humaine. La plupart des ouvriers apostoliques : prêtres, religieux et religieuses, ont eux-même besoin d'une aide appropriée pour intégrer leur vécu douloureux et entamer un processus de guérison personnelle afin d'être capable de collaborer à la guérison de leurs frères et soeurs. Les prêtres, religieux et religieuses constituent un groupe de personnes formées sur lequel le pays et l'Église doivent pouvoir compter dans l'avenir. C'est pour nous un groupe à privilégier. A cause de leur choix de suivre de plus près le Christ de l'Évangile, ils sont appelés à faire passer dans leur vie, ou du moins à essayer de faire passer dans leur vie, les valeurs évangéliques de pardon et de réconciliation. En vivant ensemble d'ethnies différentes ils peuvent devenir des témoins de la possibilité de refaire le tissu social. En se met-

tant au service de tous sans distinction, ils peuvent aider à briser la spirale de la violence, à rompre l'engrenage de la vengeance en invitant leurs frères et soeurs à prendre conscience des forces de vie qui sont encore en eux, pour s'y appuyer et rebâtir ce que les forces de mort ont détruit.

- Est-il nécessaire de souligner que toute reconstruction, quelle que soit sa nature, n'aura de valeur que si elle est faite en collaboration avec les Rwandais? Dans cette reconstruction, les femmes sont une catégorie importante de personnes. Ce sont toujours elles qui sont les plus touchées dans des événements tragiques. C'est elles qui veillent à la survie des enfants et qui prennent sur elles les plus durs sacrifices pour trouver à boire et à cuire. C'est avec elles qu'il est nécessaire de réfléchir pour chercher les solutions les plus raisonnables dans leur situation présente, pour élever leurs enfants et ceux qu'elles ont recueillis pendant les événements. Beaucoup d'entre elles sont veuves. Elles désirent la PAIX et c'est surtout elles qui reconstruiront la nation et seront les artisans du nouveau peuple rwandais.

Il y a aussi des milliers d'enfants orphelins ou non-accompagnés, qui vivent par centaines en orphelinats. Ils sont les adultes de demain, ceux sur qui reposent la PAIX et l'UNITE de la nation, dans 15-20 ans. Ils ont été témoins de scènes effroyables. Il faut absolument former des personnes capables de les accompagner dans une démarche d'intégration des ces événements douloureux et de dépassement dans un sens positif et constructif de non-violence. De nombreuses religieuses rwandaises peuvent s'investir dans cette mission, c'est une véritable mission apostolique, cette mission de formation et d'éducation.

### **Quelles propositions concrètes est-il possible de faire actuellement ?**

Certaines congrégations internationales ont déjà des membres qui sont retournés au Rwanda n'est plus en guerre, mais il n'est pas encore en paix...

Peut-on envisager de vivre à deux ou trois dans une communauté de soeurs rwandaises, comme les benebikira, les Abizeramariya etc. et travailler avec elles ? Cette vie en communautés internationales pourrait avoir une influence positive sur la réconciliation...

Comme missionnaires, nos engagements, qu'ils soient pastoraux ou sociaux, doivent garder comme objectif de refaire le tissu social, en visant la guérison de l'humain, la reconstruction de la personne. L'écoute compatissante est une

condition primordiale. Le pardon n'est pas inné dans la personne humaine, c'est un DON de Dieu, un don à demander et à accueillir... Il faut du temps pour qu'une blessure se cicatrise. Notre parole a besoin d'être discrète, humble... Les gestes et les actions surtout, parleront de réconciliation... montreront de la compréhension... "Seuls des témoins humbles et pleins de tendresse pour l'homme (et pour la femme) rebâtiront sur les ruines".

On peut aussi penser à créer, de façon temporaire, des communautés intercongrégations, comme ce qui a été réalisé auprès des déplacés, les 3 ou 4 dernières années.

Il y aurait un immense service à rendre en acquérant une formation d'aide aux personnes traumatisées. Il y a des possibilités d'organiser des sessions dans ce sens selon une méthode développée par l'Institut de Formation Humaine Intégrale de Montréal. Cette méthode met l'accent sur la découverte et l'utilisation des forces humaines vitales présentes en toute personne. C'est en s'appuyant sur ces forces qu'il est possible de reconstruire.

Il y a actuellement des religieuses, des religieux, engagés dans une action de ce genre à Bukavu et à Goma, les premières auprès de religieuses réfugiées et les seconds auprès des personnes qui encadrent les orphelins.

En vue d'un engagement pour la Paix et pour plus de justice, de tous ceux et celles qui sont pleins de sympathie pour le Rwanda et Même pour toute l'Afrique, il y aurait des réponses à chercher à de nombreuses questions, pour une action concrète dans nos pays du Nord.

- Comment aujourd'hui, la faim et les déplacements de population sont-ils devenus une arme de guerre ? Quels intérêts ces armes servent-ils ? Les intérêts de qui ?

- Le Rwanda était un pays surpeuplé. Sa population devenait de plus en plus pauvre. Comment le gouvernement a-t-il pu acheter des armes ? A quelles conditions ? Comment le FPR a-t-il pu se procurer des armes ? A quelles conditions ? Qui paiera tout cela et comment ?

- Y a-t-il moyen de faire la lumière de la vérité uniquement à partir de ce que nos télévisions nous ont montré ? Quel est le pourcentage de ce qui a été tu pour mettre en valeur l'action de tel ou tel pays ?

Avez-vous déjà comparé les commentaires sur les mêmes images selon que vous regardez la télévision belge, canadienne, française, italienne, suisse ou la CNN ? Ce pourrait être une étude intéressante et révélatrice.



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## mission moments

### CHILDREN WITHOUT CHILDHOOD (HONG KONG)

He escaped in a small boat in the middle of the night. He was picked up and locked behind barbed wire in a strange country, guards screamed at him in a foreign language. Now at 14 years of age, he is returning to a homeland he hardly remembers, where an unstable future awaits him.

He is one of those whom the United Nations calls "children living in especially difficult circumstances". The term encompasses the refugee, the internally displaced, the migrant labourer and the sexually exploited. They are the hundreds of thousands of children in Asia without a childhood.

The children who have lived in refugee camps have suffered the loss of dignity and self-reliance in the prison-like atmosphere where they witnessed and were often the victims of violence. In Hong Kong's Whitehead Detention Center, where I worked from 1990 to 1992, a 14-year-old Vietnamese boy told me he was beaten unconscious by local authorities. Another was locked in a hut, which was then set on fire. Both were "unaccompanied minors", separated from their families.

Going home for these children means being sent back to both poverty and conflict. In 1993 all 370,000 Cambodian refugees, including 138,000 children, in camps on the Thailand-Cambodia border returned home. They travelled into mined territory, where they continue to lose limbs.

Many Asian nations have shifted to a cash economy. While this has improved life for some, it has resulted in new problems for others.

Maryknoll Father Daniel Boyd talks about the plight of young migrant workers in Thailand. Each May and November, in the lulls after planting and harvesting, many youths leave their rural homes to find jobs in Bangkok. Boyd directs a hospitality house there for them. "These young people are unprepared for the pressures of city life", the missionaries says, "and often arrive with 80 cents in their pockets. They find themselves homeless, hungry, confused and ripe for exploitation". Promised jobs on construction sites turn out to be illegal, underpaid or dangerous. Many youngsters turn to prostitution. The Center for Protection of Human Rights estimates that Thailand has as many as 800,000 prostitutes between the ages of 12 and 16.

Boys as young as 12 migrate along to southern Thailand to work in one of the largest fishing fleets in the world. Maryknoll Father Thomas Pesaresi works with these boys, who, he says, "rummage along the beaches with nowhere to go. Out on fishing trawlers for two weeks at a time, they have no opportunity for schooling, and some trawler owners encourage drug use as an easy way to control the group".

In Vietnam, Maryknoll Father Thomas Dunleavy reports, "Cities are alive with runaway children, who are shoeshiners, beggars, prostitutes and pickpockets".

Children in Asia's developed countries often live in another type of "difficult circumstances". Maryknoll Fathers Sean Burke in Hong Kong and Regis Ging in Japan say pressure to succeed begins as early as nursery school. Japan has instituted the *juku* a cram school. "They even have *jukus* to get you into kindergarten", says Ging. "For those studying to get into High School or College there is a terrible

burden of expectations. These students carry the glory of school and family". The stress causes some to get ill at the thought of school. The Japanese have named this disease *tokokyohi*.

Add to this pressure the breakdown of family life in Japan, where, Ging says, children never see fathers who work long hours and often commute four hours a day. With parents and teachers overworked, children do not get the attention they need and some turn to violence. Quieter students become targets of harassment. "The tormented students do not have the personal strength to stand up to it", says Ging, "and some eventually commit suicide".

Suicide is also common among students in Hong Kong, where children as young as 12 jump from high rises, with incidents being reported in the news every few weeks. Burke explains, "These children live between the world of their parents - a time of poverty and desperation when starving Chinese fled across the border into Hong Kong as refugees - and the world of the affluent, technological West, which they see reflected in advertisements on TV and in the storefronts of their city. It is a difficult moment, particularly since they are steeped neither in the Buddhist traditions that sustained their parents nor the Christian tradition of the West".

The trials of the depressed teenager in Japan or Hong Kong no less than suffering of a refugee child or a migrant child labourer in Cambodia or Thailand have profound implication not only for these children but for the rest of the world. With almost 60 per cent of the world's population in Asia and with half of Asia's population under the age of 20, the future of these children will shape the future of the world.

## COMING EVENTS

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