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EDITORIAL

Fr DESMOND McGILLICUDDY, MHM, was representing several Non-Governmental Organisations at the UN Food Summit in November at the FAO in Rome. In his address to SEDOS two days after the meeting he gave us a first hand report of what he had experienced during the high level meeting. He tells of the expected diplomacy, but also of some successful initiatives due to the pressure NGOs were able to exert, as well as of the urgent need for religious congregations to become involved in the grave moral issue of world hunger more especially by speaking on behalf of the poor. —

Latin America is characterised by the unending story of promises of land which are never kept thus leading to violent disputes over land. CHRISTIAN RUDEL offers an excellent overview of the history of the different attempts to introduce land reforms in Latin America, indicating a few alternative experiences. —

The second part of this month's issue is dedicated to two conferences given at our 1996 General Assembly, held traditionally in December here in Rome. Fr Walbert BÜHLMANN, OFM (CAP), looked back on the ecclesiological propositions of the Second Vatican Council. Although thirty years have passed, he concluded, much of the implementation still remains to be done and is a challenging task for the coming millennium. —

We had invited the Superior General of the Maryknoll Sisters to give the second conference on the morning of our General Assembly. We asked Sr CLAUDETTE LA VERDIERE to reflect on a historical challenge many Missionary Institutes, founded *in* and *for* other times, have to face: how to adapt our missionary charisms to respond to the totally new challenges of mission in our modern world. —

SEDOS Secretariat takes this opportunity to thank you all for renewing your subscriptions to our missionary Bulletin.

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UNITED NATIONS FOOD SUMMIT — HOPE FOR THE HUNGRY?

Desmond McGillicuddy, MHM

The conference was given at the SEDOS Seminar on Tuesday, 19 November 1996, in Rome.

INTRODUCTION

The right to food flows from the right to life. Everything depends on eating and eating nutritiously: the ability to walk, to talk and smile, to go to school, to enjoy good health. There is hardly anything more basic to life than eating. If we stop eating, we die. In this basic sense, the issue of food and hunger concerns all of us.

Feeding the hungry has a deeply religious significance in the Scriptures. Jesus said: "I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink...". It is on the basis of such action that we will be judged at the end of time (Mt 25:35). At another time, Jesus told his disciples to distribute the bread he had multiplied to the hungry crowd, and they "all ate and were satisfied" (Mk 6:33-44). In the words of Jesus we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread".

When we celebrate the Eucharist, Christ becomes present to us in the form of bread and wine. When we 'remember' what Jesus did the night before he died in the 'breaking of bread', we are challenged to follow his example today by sharing bread with our brothers and sisters in need. By sharing the one bread we are united into the one body of Christ, the one community, so that we simply cannot ignore the needs of those around us. St Paul points out the impossibility of a dignified celebration of the Eucharist when at the same time the hungry are ignored (cf. 1 Cor 11). Therefore, our religious celebrations have very practical consequences in terms of our responsibilities towards the hungry of this world.

It is clear enough that we have good reasons to be involved in addressing world hunger. Does it necessarily follow that we should have participated in the World Food Summit process? Many of you may well say that our time, money and effort would have been much better spent addressing hunger directly — in Eastern Zaire and other obvious areas of need — and not attending a World Food Summit. Reports of the activities of some delegates attending the Summit — both in their home countries and in Rome itself, as reported in the media, would reinforce this view.

I would like to justify my participation in the World Food Summit on the basis of my understanding of Christian care. Indeed, as Christians we care about the hungry in the world. Such caring is an integral part of our everyday ministry. However, I feel that it is important to deepen our sense of caring by drawing attention to the injustices and inequalities that lie at the root of hunger. This means going beyond the symptoms to address the causes. The phenomenon of hunger on a world-wide scale points to underlying structural problems. Hunger in the world is not simply due to misfortune or laziness or ignorance or lack of development. People do not choose to become hungry. Nor can chronic hunger simply be attributed to natural causes (drought, etc.), although these sometimes play an important role. Hunger is rather the consequence of economic, social, cultural and political structures that are marked by injustice. People are hungry not because they lack bread but because they lack justice. As a consequence of structural injustice, or 'structures of sin' as Pope John Paul II calls them, hunger spreads and the freedom and dignity of all of us is diminished. Our caring cannot be content to relieve the hunger of a few people while the 'structures of sin' continue to perpetuate hunger on a massive scale. Our sense of caring must be broad enough to address these 'structures of sin'. Participation in the Summit has given me and many other Christians the opportunity to care in this broader sense of the term. By attending the Summit we could press key decision-makers on the world stage to address with the utmost urgency the root causes of world hunger and to implement the necessary remedial action.

The Challenge Facing the Summit

The World Food Summit was an important event, offering an opportunity to put the spotlight on the grave problem of world hunger in our day and on the

untold human suffering that goes with it. A few statistics highlight the gravity of the problem:

- Between 800 and 840 million people in developing countries today face chronic malnutrition. Around 200 million children under the age of five suffer from acute or chronic protein and energy deficiencies.
- 40,000 people die each day as a consequence of hunger and malnutrition.
- A fifth of the world's population has no access to safe drinking water.
- 88 nations fall into the category of low-income food-deficit countries.
- External assistance (bilateral and multilateral) to developing country agriculture is declining.
- The total UN budget for tackling hunger amounts to less than 5 per cent of expenditure in one developed country on slimming products.
- Fisheries are being over-exploited, forests are being destroyed and thousands of square miles of arable land are being turned into desert each year.
- Landmines are disrupting agricultural activity in 110 countries.
- The world population is expected to rise from the present 5.7 billion to 8.7 billion by the year 2030, which is bound to make greater demands on finite natural resources.
- The FAO calculates that if no action is taken to reverse the present trend, the number of chronically undernourished people may still be some 730 million by the year 2010, over 300 million of them in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Food prices on the world market have risen sharply in the past year, creating a major problem for net food-importing developing countries.
- Food aid volumes have dropped considerably in the same period.
- In many parts of the world, including the Great Lakes Region, hunger is closely associated with civil conflict.

It is against this dramatic and worsening back-ground that it was decided to call a World Food Summit. It was felt that immediate action was needed to attack the root causes of persistent food insecurity. It was hoped that the personal participation of Heads of State and Government in the Summit would mobilise the necessary political will to address the problem of world hunger in a fundamental way.

Tackling world hunger is truly more a question of political will than specialist knowledge. Although knowledge is important, it is generally known what is needed. Hungry farmers are in no doubt about what they need. They need fair prices for their products. They need access to land, water, seeds, fertiliser (preferably organic) and affordable credit. They need effective food stores. In short, they need the means to feed themselves.

Hungry urban dwellers also know what they need. They need access to work and fair wages, that is, the means to earn their livelihood. And they need access to shops that sell safe and nutritious food at an affordable price throughout the year.

Hungry people depend on their Governments and the international community not to feed them, but to create the conditions that will allow them to feed themselves. Therein lies the significance of the World Food Summit. This was the opportunity for Governments to commit themselves to creating such conditions, for example:-

- infrastructure, particularly all-weather roads to allow hungry farmers to get to the local market to sell their produce;
- research, training and extension which builds on rather than replaces farmers' traditional knowledge and skills;
- labour-saving technologies to produce, process and prepare food — targeted particularly to women who form the majority of farmers in many developing countries;
- decentralised systems of storage and early warning;
- local, national and regional food security reserves.

The Preparatory Process

The preparatory process for the Summit involved consultations with Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, and the private sector. It was preceded by a number of FAO Regional Conferences — in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, etc. A number of background technical background papers covering the key issues, e.g. agricultural trade and sustainable agriculture, were produced.

A first draft of the Rome Declaration and the Plan of Action appeared in January of this year. These are the documents which set out the actual plans to tackle world hunger (SHOW). The FAO's Committee on World Food Security, an intergovernmental body, revised the text of the documents in a series of meetings during the year. Governments made their suggestions for revision mainly as blocs — the Group of 77, the European Union, the U.S., and the Cairns Group (Australia, Canada, etc.). The text was finalised in the final days of October. It was intended that the text be signed by the Heads of Government during the Summit. However, at the last moment, some Governments

made their acceptance of the final text dependent on *not* having to sign it at the Summit.

Incidentally, the fact that everything was agreed beforehand meant that there was no real debate at the official Summit itself. The lack of debate and controversy was reflected in a certain degree of boredom and dis-orientation among the delegates attending the Summit — not to mention the media present.

The Involvement of NGOs

I would like to say a word here about the involvement of farmers' organisations, development agencies and other NGOs in the preparatory process.

Besides active solidarity with the hungry at grassroots level, religious and missionaries should also seek to influence the policies of the economic and political decision-makers in a way that will promote food security. We need to be present in the struggle to change those priorities — putting food for all before profits for the few.

The hungry farmers and town dwellers were the real 'stakeholders' in the Summit process — "stake-holders": you learn a whole new language at these Summits! The term refers to the people who had most to win or lose through the Summit process. Hungry people's own representatives, development agencies and some sympathetic Governments struggled hard in the past few months to ensure that it was their priorities, and not those of the 'steak-eaters' which predominated in the Summit's Plan of Action.

The nature of the participation of NGOs in the Summit process was very much shaped by their grassroots experiences — their successes and failures in improving the access of hungry farmers and town dwellers to productive resources and income.

As a participant in the Food Security Group of the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs to the Europe Union, I myself was involved in a series of attempts to influence the position of the EU on the Summit Plan of Action. Consultation with NGOs from the South was an important point of reference for the work of our Group. In particular, the NGO reports from the Asia, Latin America, Africa and other Regions helped to define our positions.

In fact, it is not in Brussels but in the national capitals of member States that EU decisions are made. So meetings with officials of EU Member State Governments were an important part of the Food Security Group's preparations for the World Food Summit. I was part of an Irish NGO delegation that discussed the Summit with officials from the Departments of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs in Ireland. Ireland has held the Presidency of the EU in the latter half of 1996, and we pressed the Government to take full advantage of this position to speak out on behalf of hungry farmers with all the authority of a country that still experiences the painful memories and consequences of a famine that occurred 150 years ago in our own country. While we knew that Ireland could not solve the problem of world hunger, we felt it was well positioned to generate international political will to do so.

The key way in which the Food Security Group sought to influence the outcome of the Summit was to make written submissions on the various drafts of the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action as they appeared during the year. In their submissions, the Group constantly highlighted issues such as the key role of small farmers, herders and fishers and their representative organisations in achieving food security, and the need for trade policies to be compatible with food and agriculture policies.

On behalf of the Food Security Group, I attended a special FAO-NGO consultation on the Draft Rome Declaration and Plan of Action in Rome in mid-September. The following week, I was an observer at the meeting of the Committee on World Food Security, where I watched officials struggle to find their way through a thicket of hundreds of square brackets, each bracket representing a point of disagreement on the course of action that needed to be taken to reduce world hunger.

With respect to the World Food Summit itself, which was held in Rome last week: A number of NGOs and NGO networks from around the world were accredited as observers to the Summit. In addition, some NGO networks, including my own, were represented on their national delegations attending the Summit.

A number of events were held parallel to the official Summit, including a Parliamentarians' Day and a Youth Forum. I myself attended a few sessions of the NGO Forum that took place in Ostiense Station,

not far from the FAO building. This Forum prepared an NGO Declaration that was later delivered at the official Summit, and held workshops on a number of key issues (trade, sustainable agriculture, women and food security, etc.). Apart from its educational value, the NGO Forum was an important occasion for organising lobbies of delegates attending the official Summit and for facilitating long-term networking among the NGO representatives present at the Forum and active around the world.

Another important parallel event was the Hunger Gathering. Although I did not have the opportunity to attend this event, I sense that what happened there was perhaps more relevant to the needs of the hungry than what happened in any other of the fora in Rome last week.

THE ROME DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION

During the Summit, we heard many fine speeches from Heads of Government. The Secretary General referred to hunger as "a direct affront not only to the physical integrity but also to the very dignity of the human person. Hunger is an insult to the fundamental values of the international community". The Vice-President of Ecuador stated that her Government was committed to fighting poverty and to giving primary importance to the social area and sustainable development. The President of the Council of the European Union, reacting to the statistics of hunger, said, "Through this Summit we wish to affirm our absolute resolve that this appalling situation cannot, and will not, be permitted to continue". The President of Cuba declared, "Let truth reign, and not hypocrisy and lies. Let us be aware that in this world, hegemony, arrogance and selfishness should cease". The Deputy President of South Africa added, "The hungry have a right to be fed". In the statement from the Philippines we read, "Fully committed to the noble objectives of this Food Summit, the Philippine Government has pursued, and will continue to pursue policies designed to achieve food security".

This all sounds impressive, but as one commentator put it, "words will not feed the hungry". In any case, the commitments made in the addresses to the Summit have no binding character. By contrast, commitments agreed in the Summit's Plan of Action are binding. I therefore propose to spend some time analysing the contents of this document, rather than analysing the addresses and statements to the Summit.

In my following comments, I will follow the structure of the Summit Plan of Action. I am not attempting to make a synopsis the whole document. Rather, I comment on what I consider to be the most important issues from the perspective of enabling hungry people to feed themselves. Heads of Governments made seven commitments as follows:

Commitment One:	An Enabling Environment for Food Security
Commitment Two:	Equal Access to Nutritionally Adequate and Safe Food
Commitment Three:	Sustainable Agriculture
Commitment Four:	Trade and Food Security
Commitment Five:	Emergencies
Commitment Six:	Investment in Food Security
Commitment Seven:	Implementation of the Plan of Action

INTRODUCTION

One would expect in the introduction to the Plan of Action an analysis of *why* there is hunger in the world. In fact, there is little such analysis. The general tendency is to attribute hunger to poverty or civil conflict. This simply begs further questions, such as why is there so much poverty, and what lies at the root of the growing number of social conflicts in the world?

The sense of urgency is also missing from the Introduction: Governments moved the original target date for reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level from 2010 to 2015, although a mid-term review is planed to ascertain if the target can be met by the earlier date. Moreover, one can question the morality of a target that contemplates over 400 million people going to bed hungry after 2015.

Commitment One — An Enabling Environment for Food Security

Commitment One (also Commitment Five) identifies civil conflict as one of the primary causes of hunger and malnutrition. It stresses the importance of a peaceful environment for food security. And indeed, conflict has an immediate negative impact on food security: scarce financial and human resources are diverted away from agricultural production, crops are destroyed, landmines impede agricultural activity, and people are forced to migrate from their sources of food. The tragedy in Rwanda and Eastern Zaire underlines this close connection between conflict and hunger. To address such situations, the

Plan of Action points to the importance of conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the need to reduce excessive global military expenditures and the arms trade (Art. 53 (g)). NGOs welcome this recognition of the international dimension to local conflicts.

Perhaps it was too much to hope that Commitment One would contain an analysis of the links between hunger and the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and World Bank. Such links are real and visible. Riots broke out in Jordan in August 1995, when, implementing an IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programme, the Government announced the decision to raise the price of basic foods sharply. There are strong grounds for believing that structural adjustment adversely affects food security by:

- switching production resources from food crops for domestic consumption to export crops;
- cutting spending on agricultural support (credit, infrastructure, etc.);
- inducing higher prices for farm inputs and food;
- cutting jobs in the public sector leading to increased numbers of food insecure in urban areas;
- creating a gender bias, whereby women have to make good the food shortages caused by structural adjustment through their extra labour.

Commitment One should have pressed for fundamental changes in those aspects of adjustment policies which even the FAO itself sees as generating "a new class of poor". I am quoting here from a recent FAO publication, *World Agriculture: Towards 2010*.

There is a good section on gender in Commitment One, calling, for example, for "gender-sensitive legislation providing women with secure and equal access to and control over productive resources including credit, land and water".

This section also commits Governments to ensure "that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in all policies". However, gender is hardly mainstreamed in the Plan of Action itself. Some substantive statements on the gender aspects of food security appear in Commitments Two to Seven, but they are few and far between. The Plan of Action should have named and addressed gender differentials with respect to the whole range of food security issues, namely: equality of access to food, emergency situations, sustainable agriculture, agricultural trade, investment, and the implementation of the Plan of Action itself.

Commitment Two — Equal Access to Nutritionally Adequate and Safe Food

This Commitment spells out in considerable detail all that is involved in ensuring access to nutritionally adequate and safe food, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, households and groups that cannot meet their own needs. Thus it speaks of: policies to encourage stable employment; equal access to productive resources; well targeted social welfare and nutrition safety nets; the quality and safety of food supply; use of culturally appropriate, traditional and under-utilised food crops; basic education and primary health care provision. This is a practical and useful section in the Plan of Action.

Commitment Three — Sustainable Agriculture

Commitment Three makes some positive statements on sustainable agriculture relating to topics such as the conservation of natural resources, the sustainable use of crop and animal genetic diversity, organic farming, water management, conservation of forests and fisheries resources, appropriate technology and research, and the strengthening of farmers' organisations. This was perhaps the least controversial section of the document, which reflects the strong gains made in this area since the Rio Conference on the Environment and Development.

NGOs were keen to have the phrase '*multiple functions of agriculture'* included in the text. That phrase indicates that in addition to producing food for the market, agriculture has roles such as sustaining rural communities and caring for the environment. The negotiators finally agreed to include a weakened form of this phrase, namely, "the multi-functional character of agriculture".

A basic question for Commitment Three (and the whole Plan of Action) is who are we referring to when we say "*farmer*". In September, negotiators spent many hours trying to define a "farmer". Some preferred the term 'food producer', especially the representatives of the food transnationals who produce food in their biotechnological laboratories, and are increasingly dominating markets with their products. NGOs, on the other hand, focus on small farmers, herders, fisherfolk, forest dwellers and the like (see Art. 36 (c)).

Resources and services required to become effective producers (land, water, credit, etc.) are all mentioned in Commitment Three. However, they are generally not directly linked to the situation of *small farmers* (including women farmers), particularly those in so-called 'low-potential' areas. Experience shows that most resources and services tend to flow to large-scale farmers who already have such. An effective food security policy must accord a high priority to small-scale farmers, and introduce specific measures which will ensure that resources and services flow directly to them. Commitment Three contains some useful statements on this, but taken overall is rather weak in this respect.

Commitment Three recognises the serious threat posed to long-term food security by the erosion of *agricultural diversity*. 75 per cent of crop diversity has disappeared from farmers' fields since the beginning of this century. The Plan of Action recognises the need for diversity in species and genetic resources and the need to expand the production and use of traditional and under-utilised food crops. It also recognises the right of farmers to have access to genetic resources for food and agriculture (Commitment Two), and calls for "fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such resources" (Commitment Three).

Commitment Three could have spelt out in more detail the implications of a commitment to preserving and enhancing biodiversity: the signing by all countries of the UNCED Biodiversity Convention; increased funding for biodiversity programmes, including the allocation of more resources to support farmers' own genetic resources programmes; recognition by the World Trade Organisation of a *sui generis* community rights system of ownership of genetic resources as a legitimate alternative to its own industrial patent system.

Commitment Four — Trade and Food Security

Trade was by far the most contentious issue in the discussions on the Plan of Action. I would like to comment on a few key problem-areas:

Food Security Clause

NGOs lobbied — unsuccessfully — to have a food security clause included in Commitment Four. Such a clause would have exempted staple food crops from trade liberalisation commitments.

Transnational corporations

Transnational corporations control a huge share of world food trade. In fact, six of the largest TNCs account for 75 per cent of all world trade in grain. Small-scale farmers and local co-operatives are expected to compete with these in the one so-called 'free' market. Surely they are being asked to play on a very uneven playing field. NGOs managed to have a reference to some kind of regulation of TNCs trading in agricultural commodities included in an earlier draft of the Plan of Action. Such regulation in fact existed a few years ago under UN auspices. But this — if I may use a food metaphor — was a 'hot potato' for negotiators. So, after all of 10 seconds discussion in the Malaysia Room in the FAO building on Thursday, 26 September 1996, the reference to regulating TNC activities trading in agricultural commodities was deleted from the text. If you did not know already, you now know who runs the world!

The nature of the participation of NGOs in the Summit process was very much shaped by their grassroots experiences — their successes and failures in improving the access of hungry farmers and town dwellers to productive resources and income.

Self-reliance

Earlier drafts of the Plan of Action recognised that the promotion of domestic agriculture was essential to the goal of food security. They acknowledged the need of developing countries to protect themselves from unstable world markets. But later drafts placed greater emphasis on trade measures that would open and globalise all agricultural markets. NGOs advocate trade measures which maximise local trade, within diversified local economies. The Plan of Action should have recognised the right of developing countries to pursue a greater degree of self-reliance in food production, at national or regional level. This dimension of food security receives too little attention in the document.

Market Access

The earlier drafts of the Plan of Action recommended increased international market access for developing countries' agricultural produce, and, with a view to encouraging and facilitating this, called for greater diversification and processing of agricultural produce by developing countries themselves. However, the use of escalating tariffs means that it is precisely value-added agricultural products that have most difficulty in gaining access to the markets of developed countries. Commitment Four should have called for the elimination of such tariffs.

Subsidised Exports

The document speaks of the need to reduce subsidies on food exports in conformity with the Uruguay Round Agreement. That sounds okay. However, this formulation does not go far enough to protect livestock farmers in Namibia and South Africa at this time, whose local markets are being destroyed by EU subsidised beef exports. What the EU is doing here is in fact in conformity with the Uruguay Round. It is definitely not in conformity with food security.

NGOs see it as important that the EU and developed countries in general reduce and eventually elim-inate export subsidies where these are shown to harm agricultural development in developing countries. The right of developing countries to take protective measures against subsidised food exports should be acknowledged in international law, as was suggested in an earlier draft of the Summit Plan of Action but deleted in later drafts.

Compensation

In order to offset the negative effects of the Uruguay Round Agreement on net food-importing developing countries, a special ministerial decision was signed at Marrakesh in 1994. The 'Marrakesh Decision' commits developed countries to compensating developing countries which incur losses as a result of higher world food prices or reduced availability of food aid arising from the implementation of the Uruguay Round. Commitment Four reiterates this undertaking, something that is positive. However, we must ask if such written undertakings are being translated into practice. In 1995/96 world cereal stocks fell to their lowest level for 20 years and world cereal prices more than doubled. As a result, according to the FAO, net food-importing developing countries have incurred additional losses of up to $4 billion. These countries requested the compensation promised to them at Marrakesh. But to date developed countries have said that the additional costs to these countries are not due to the Uruguay Round but to other factors such as bad weather and reforms of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. So in practice no compensation has been forthcoming, and food insecurity in these countries has increased. NGOs argue that the Marrakesh Decision should now be implemented. The best way to do this is to provide a balanced package of assistance that will help net food-importing developing countries to adapt to the changing international trading environment. In particular, the provision of technical and financial resources to improve domestic and regional agricultural production is important.

Trade and the Environment

In Commitment Four there is a call for trade and environment policies to be mutually supportive. However, in the light of the deterioration of the natural base for agriculture (overfishing, deforestation, etc.), this formulation is far too weak. Commitment Four should have advocated fair and stable prices for developing countries' commodities, reflecting their real social and ecological value. At the same time, it should have discouraged the gaining of trade advantages at the expense of the environment and basic social and labour standards. NGOs are well aware that social and environmental trade clauses can be abused to conceal protectionist motives. They therefore argue that regulation in this area needs to be agreed multilaterally, introduced progressively and supported with adequate financial and technical backing for countries that will find it difficult initially to comply.

World Trade Organisation

Commitment Four refers many of its recommendations on trade and food security to the World Trade Organisation. A disadvantage in this is that the WTO likes to operate behind closed doors when making important decisions on world trade. NGOs attending the Summit demanded access for civil society to the negotiations of the WTO, starting with the Ministerial Meeting in Singapore next month. They also believe that the more transparent FAO should be accorded a stronger role in the area of agricultural trade.

Commitment Six — Investment in Food Security

The Plan of Action points to the neglect of agricultural and rural development as reflected in the sector-ial priorities and resource allocations of individual countries and the international community. The earl-ier drafts gave precise figures — probably omitted in later drafts to save embarrassment. The amount of ODA invested in agriculture fell from US$ 13.4 billion in 1988 to less than US$ 10 in 1993 and is a diminishing share of total investment. There is clearly a gap between aspirations and reality in the area of public investment. The gap will only be bridged if there is honest critique of the underlying causes of the falling investment: the diversion of development aid to meet growing humanitarian needs and to debt servicing, falling commodity prices and insecure land tenure. Such an essential critique is absent from Commitment Six.

Earlier drafts indicated specific investment targets, for example, "to raise annual investment in agriculture and related food production activities in developing countries to some 30 per cent above present levels by the year 2010". These targets are removed from the Final Draft, which is a further indication of the unwillingness of world leaders to pay what it will cost to enable the hungry to feed themselves.

Indeed, NGOs discovered early on in the negotiations on the Plan of Action that developed countries had decided they would make no *new* financial resources available to fight hunger. Thus the phrase, "optimise the utilisation of available resources" was the key phrase in earlier drafts of Commitment Six. The disappearance of this phrase in the Final Draft is perhaps an indication of a change of mind on this.

The issue of debt relief is hardly mentioned in Commitment Six. In his address that opened the Summit meeting, Pope John Paul II repeated his call for "reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations" (n.7). It is indeed important that the scarce funds of developing countries be allocated not to paying a foreign debt that by the World Bank's and IMF's own definition is unsustainable, but be allocated instead to supporting small farmers and poor urban consumers, to primary health care and education.

Commitment Six re-affirms the need for Governments to reach the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for development assistance. This is welcome, particularly in the light of the recent cuts in aid budgets of the EU, the U.S. and other developed regions.

This section also contains a welcome commitment to target investment to small-scale food producers, especially women, and their organisations, and to support for food security programmes designed by them.

Commitment Seven — Implementation of the Plan of Action

After Trade (Commitment Four), how to implement the Plan of Action was perhaps the next most contentious issue for negotiators.

National Action Plans

The reference in earlier texts to 'establishing and implementing national action plans for improved food security' was changed to 'adopt actions within each country's national framework to enhance food security'. The weakening of resolve conveyed by this change of wording is regrettable, giving the key role of national action plans in implementing the commitments of the World Food Summit.

Responsibility for Implementation of the Plan of Action

With respect to the important issue of responsibility for implementation of the Plan of Action, this section was in fact strengthened rather than weakened as negotiations proceeded. UN bodies are given precedence over the Bretton Woods Institutions. In the latter, the rich and powerful have the most say, whereas in UN bodies there is at least the principle of one-country-one-vote. For all their weaknesses, there is also more accountability and more participation of civil society in the UN bodies.

Participation of Civil Society

Commitment Seven (and other Commitments in the Plan of Action) refers to the important role of civil society — NGOs, industry, etc. — in promoting food security. This reference is very welcome. Democratic control of the food system, apart from being the best guarantee of respect for people's fundamental human right to food, is the ultimate test of democracy itself.

NGOs around the world make an important contribution to promoting food security. And they have made a strong input into the Summit process itself. However, a world of difference is to be noted between the Declaration of the NGO Forum communicated to the official Summit on Sunday, 17 November 1996, and the official Summit Plan of Action. This indicates a dangerous chasm between governments and civil society. Governments need to be aware that NGOs will resist being taken for granted by them and being used merely as implementers of their Plan of Action.

During the week of the Summit, NGO representatives had great difficulty in gaining access to their country delegations attending the official Summit. Reasons of security were mentioned, but there must be something wrong if governments have to be protected from their people. What happened at the Summit contrasts with the constant interaction between government representatives and NGOs in the earlier stages of the Summit process.

The Right to Food

NGOs are happy to see the Right to Food recognised in the Commitment Seven, including the appropriate reference to Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Hopefully, this recognition of food as a basic human right will strengthen national and international resolve to address situations of hunger and malnutrition, especially since governments that have signed the International Covenant are required to report periodically on their performance to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva.

There was some resistance on the part of Northern Governments to acknowledging a right to food, as it can be used as the basis for calling into question the legitimacy of certain clauses in the Uruguay Round, structural adjustment programmes, and more directly the food embargoes imposed on Cuba and Iraq. But then Northern Governments realised that they could not logically argue for the inclusion of human rights and good governance under Commitment One and at the same time argue for the exclusion of the very basic human right to food from Commitment Seven.

Commitment Seven contains the weak but interesting phrase, "formulating voluntary guidelines for food security for all". As NGOs we lobbied governments at the Summit last week to accept a Code of Conduct on the Right to Food, which would set out good practice for governments, international financial institutions, transnational corporations and NGOs themselves in this whole area. This is a key area of follow-up for NGOs in the months (and maybe years) ahead.

CONCLUSIONS

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy said, "We have the means, we have the capacity to wipe hunger and poverty from the face of the earth in our life-time... We need only the will". My experience of the World Food Summit, including the preparatory process, leads me to the conclusion that the "will" is still lacking to allocate the available "capacity" and "means" to eliminate hunger and poverty in our world.

I have indicated in my presentation how the ongoing negotiations weakened rather than strengthened the text of the Plan of Action — something that may be understandable in the context of the complexities of international negotiations but is regrettable in view of the terrible suffering of over 800 million people.

The prescriptions of the Bretton Woods Institutions greatly reduced the room for play of the negotiators. Accordingly, the Plan of Action puts the needs of free markets before the needs of hungry people. This in effect has meant that the self-interest of developed countries has won the day.

Can we, nevertheless, look on the World Food Summit as a source of hope for the hungry? I believe we can for a number of reasons:

Firstly, it was not just a World Food *Conference* but a World Food *Summit*. The mere fact of it being a meeting of Heads of Government is likely to increase public and political pressure for a solution to the problem of world hunger.

Secondly, the Plan of Action contains a number of valuable commitments on poverty-orientation, sustainable agriculture and other aspects of food security which I referred to in my presentation.

Thirdly, Commitment Seven emphasises the importance of including civil society in the follow-up to the Summit and implementing of the Plan of Action. During the Summit, NGOs in the European Union arranged a meeting between themselves, representatives of the Irish Presidency of the EU,

officials from the EU Commission (agriculture and development co-operation) and government officials from EU member states. A number of concrete proposals for follow-up were discussed — something which I see as a sign of hope, especially given the diversity of interests involved. It is quite likely that similar kinds of follow-up are being arranged in other Regions of the world.

Fourthly, civil society was strongly represented in the Hunger Gathering, the NGO Forum and at the official Summit itself. I was very much encouraged by the display of energy, creativity and enthusiasm evident among the representatives of civil society in Rome last week — among them some religious and missionaries. These people and their organisations are not waiting for governments to tell them what to do. They are taking the initiative into their own hands, and therein lies real hope for the hungry of this world.

Lessons for Religious and Missionaries

Clearly, the primary contribution of religious and missionaries to the fight against hunger is not in attending Summit meetings but in practising active solidarity towards hungry people on the ground, that is, in farmers' fields, rural and urban communities, schools and hospitals. Religious and missionaries can be proud of their impressive record of commitment to feeding the hungry in many parts of the world.

This is not to say that religious and missionaries have done a perfect job. For example, their contribution in the area of agriculture has been much weaker than in the areas of health and education (which, however, themselves make an essential contribution to food security, as recognised in the Summit's Plan of Action). Training of religious and missionaries in agricultural development lags behind training in education and health care. A further weakness is that the very good work they have done and are still doing in this area is rarely documented.

Besides active solidarity with the hungry at grassroots level, religious and missionaries should also seek to influence the policies of the economic and political decision-makers in a way that will promote food security. At present, the priorities of the key policy makers in our world include free trade and structural adjustment — priorities which often increase food insecurity. We need to be present in the struggle to change those priorities — putting food for all before profits for the few. This is the task of social advocacy. More religious and missionaries need to get involved in this work, and Congregations need to allocate more people and resources to this essential activity. What is required of us is not so much agricultural expertise as to act as channels through which the voice of the hungry themselves can be heard in national and international fora. With a foot in both worlds, we can ensure that policies to address world hunger are not based simply on statistical calculations but on the real needs and capacities of hungry people themselves — people whose names and faces we know intimately. This is the contribution we can make to breaking the terrible silence that hangs over world hunger today. In the final analysis, hunger is a moral problem — it concerns the suffering of millions of our fellow human beings, and what *we*, religious and missionaries, have to say is important.

LA LONGUE MARCHE

DES PAYSANS SANS TERRE

REFORME AGRAIRE EN AMERIQUE LATINE

Christian Rudel

La terre est d'abord un bien social, pas un objet de convoitise au service des intérêts privés. La terre, patrimoine de l'humanité, donnée en gérance pour le bien de tous, doit rester en priorité aux mains de ceux qui la travaillent. Et les travailleurs de la terre ne doivent pas être spoliés, par les gros propriétaires, de la capacité d'ensemencer et de récolter les fruits nécessaires à leur subsistance et à celle de leurs proches.

La terre n' «appartient» à tels groupes spécifiques, plus ou moins puissants, qu'en vertu d'innombrables formes de violences affectant lourdement le sort des petits paysans et des minorités indigènes. L'Amérique Latine en fournit maints exemples. La réforme agraire, d'utopie généreuse, est devenue un mythe dans des pays tels que le Brésil, le Mexique ou même le Chili «redémocratisé», ou n'a reçu qu'un timide commencement de réalisation. La «démocratisation du sol» proclamée dans les discours officiels, est contamment invalidée dans les faits par les conflits de la terre; lesquels, noyés dans le sang, niés par leurs responsables et ignorés par les médias, prolongent de manière scandaleuse des injustices flagrantes et massives.

Christian Rudel dresse l'état des lieux. Faits et chiffres à l'appui, et ouvre des horizons. «Démocratiser la terre» ne peut plus demeurer un rêve sans lendemain. La patience des peuples, usée au cours des dernières décennies par trop de mensonges et de désillusions, attend des objectifs, des décisions, des réalisations.

Albert Longchamp

On ne peut donner en quelques mots une définition exhaustive, totale, de l'Amérique Latine, de cette partie la plus grande du continent américain remodelée à l'image de l'Europe pendant environ trois siècles par les colonisateurs espagnols et portugais et d'où ont surgi, dans les larmes et le sang, des «races» et des nations imprévues. Mais on peut avancer que l'Amérique Latine est le continent de millions de paysans sans terre, le continent de la réforme agraire toujours remise aux calendes grecques et des innombrables conflits de la terre dégénérant en luttes violentes, en répression et en morts par milliers.

Deux massacres de paysans ont défrayé la chronique et ému — un peu — l'opinion publique internationale ces dernières années.

Le premier de ces massacres a eu lieu à Aguas Blancas, à une trentaine de kilomètres d'Acapulco, dans l'État mexicain de Guerrero, le 28 février 1995. Ce jour-là, une embuscade tendue par la police à un groupe de paysans qui se rendaient en camion à une manifestation fit 17 morts et 21 blessés. L'affaire fit grand bruit et, finalement, le gouverneur du Guerrero dut démissionner.

La seconde affaire s'est déroulée au Brésil, le 17 avril 1996. Des paysans sans terre avaient organisé une marche sur Belem, capitale de l'État du Para, pour exiger la réforme agraire. A Eldorado do Carajas, alors qu'ils bloquaient la route 150, la police militaire de l'État, obéissant aux ordres du gouverneur, ouvrit le feu: 23 morts, plusieurs dizaines de blessés.

I1 faut rapprocher ce massacre de celui qui a eu lieu le 9 avril 1995 à Corumbiara, dans l'État de Rondonia, à la frontière bolivienne. 500 paysans sans terre occupaient depuis le 15 juillet une propriété de 15 000 hectares qui tombait sous le coup de la loi de réforme. La police intervint brutalement: 9 tués, plus de 200 blessés. Quelques jours plus tard le 13 septembre 1995, la police tirait sur un groupe de «sans terre» qui bloquait une route à Nova Xavantina, dans l'État du Mato Grosso: au moins 4 tués. Enfin — mais la liste n'est pas close pour autant — le 13 juin 1996 à Buriticu, dans l'État du

Maranhao, un affrontement faisait au moins 10 morts parmi les paysans.

En fait, au Brésil, on a compté depuis vingt ans, 32 massacres de paysans comparables à celui de Eldorado do Carajas. L'État du Para arrivant en tête de ce sanglant palmarès avec 12 massacres ! En dix ans, de 1985 à fin 1995, près d'un millier de personnes sont mortes au cours d'affrontements à propos de la terre. Par ailleurs, le bilan pour 1995 dressé par la Commission pastorale de la terre (CPT, organisme de la Conférence épiscopale des évêques brésiliens) est éloquent: 440 conflits de la terre portant sur 3 250 000 hectares et intéressant 300 000 personnes, mais aussi 141 assassinats, 43 tentatives d'assassinat et 135 menaces de mort. Autre forme de violence, la CPT signalait que quelque 26 000 paysans vivaient et travaillaient dans des conditions d'esclavage réel sur certaines exploitations agricoles.

MANIFESTATIONS PACIFIQUES POUR LA TERRE.

Avant de provoquer des affrontements sanglants entre force «de l'ordre» et paysans demandeurs, les problèmes de la terre sont à l'origine de très nombreuses manifestations, marches, grèves et rassemblements divers. Mais l'immense majorité de ces manifestations ne trouve aucun écho dans les médias internationaux.

Ainsi, en août 1990, les Indiens du Beni — vaste département bolivien, déjà amazonien, de 213,000 km^2 — entreprenaient une marche sur La Paz (700 km) pour demander que soit réglementée l'activité des grandes compagnies forestières qui, à la recherche d'essences précieuses pour l'exportation , saccagent la forêt et détruisent l'habitat des autochtones et leurs territoires de chasse, de pêche et de culture. Ils devaient obtenir, en partie, gain de cause.

Quelques mois plus tôt, en mai-juin, les Indiens d'Équateur s'étaient soulevés. Par dizaines de milliers ils avaient pacifiquement investi les villes de la Sierra pour rappeler au gouvernement la gravité du problème de la terre et l'urgence d'y remédier.

Le 26 avril 1992, après une marche de 1 100 km commencée le 9 mars, plusieurs centaines d'Indiens du Chiapas (toutes «nations» confondues, Tzeltal, Trotzil, Chol, Tojolabal, Zoque, etc.) arrivaient à Mexico pour revendiquer la réforme agraire et exiger le règlement de conflits agraires vieux de plusieurs décennies. L'absence de réforme au Chiapas est d'ailleurs à l'origine de la création de l'Armée zapatiste de libération nationale (EZLN) et du soulèvement du 1er janvier 1994. La longue marche de 1992 n'obtint que de pauvres résultats de même que d'autres marches qui avaient eu lieu avant ou qui se déroulèrent après.

Au Paraguay, le 11 octobre 1995, quelques 400 Indiens Nivaclé et Enxet, qui vivent dans le centre et le nord du Chaco, sont «descendus» à Asunción pour demander la restitution de leurs terres traditionnelles — plus de 800,000 hectares — volées par les grands propriétaires. A noter qu'à peine un cinquième des communautés indiennes ont vu leurs territoires traditionnels reconnus et délimités. Un peu plus tard, le 15 mars 1996, 30,000 paysans, rassemblés à Asunción, demandaient la mise en route de la réforme agraire.

Au Panama, début octobre 1995, les chefs des Indiens Kuna faisaient savoir qu'ils iraient jusqu'à la guerre ouverte si le gouvernement persistait dans son intention de transformer en complexe hôtelier 18,000 hectares de leurs terres traditionnelles de chasse et de cueillette situées sur la côte caraïbe.

Au Guatemala, depuis le début de l'année 1996, plusieurs dizaines d'occupations de terres ont été perpétrées, en particulier par des «communautés en résistance».

L'HÉRITAGE DE LA COLONISATION.

Les problèmes de la terre sont l'héritage de la colonisation ibérique: les Conquistadores, par «droit de conquête», s'étaient appropriés d'immenses étendues de terres fertiles et avaient transformé en esclaves, de fait, les occupants de ces terres.

Les vastes haciendas des premiers temps coloniaux, systèmes agricoles autarciques refermés sur eux-mêmes, devinrent des structures commodes pour entrer dans l'économie mercantile européenne, celle qui demandait des produits exotiques tels que sucre de canne, rhum ou cacao. Ces vastes exploitations n'eurent guère de mal à s'adapter aux exigences du marché de l'ère industrielle. Encore que nombre d'entre elles, mal exploitées ou quasiment à l'abandon, n'étaient guère plus que le signe visible de la puissance et de l'importance sociale de propriétaires qui tiraient leurs revenus d'autres activités.

Tandis que les grandes exploitations s'intégraient à l'économie dominante, les ruraux (paysans, hommes de la campagne) voyaient les terres qui leur restaient se réduire chaque jour. La croissance

démographique, lente pendant des siècles, s'accélérait, réduisant un peu plus, à chaque génération, les lopins familiaux. Très souvent, les grands propriétaires, profitant de l'analphabétisme, de l'absence ou de l'imprécision des cadastres et des lois taillées sur mesure pour les puissants, n'hésitaient pas à s'emparer de toutes les terres dont ils avaient besoin.

Donc, d'un côté, l'immense possession et, de l'autre, la micro-propriété, ne permettant guère plus qu'une médiocre survie de son propriétaire. Et, surtout, l'innombrable foule des paysans sans terre, condamnés à toutes les exploitations, à la misère, à la sous-alimentation, aux maladies et à la mort précoce. S'il n'y avait — du moins depuis le début de ce siècle — des statistiques et des études sur la question de la terre en Amérique Latine, on pourrait qualifier cette présentation de schématique et de partiale. Mais les chiffres sont là.

L'Amérindien est donc un «écologiste» de fait, qu'il vive dans les forêts tropicales ou dans les hautes montagnes. Aussi ne comprend-il pas l'Occidental qui malmène, blesse, viole la terre pour lui faire produire des récoltes toujours plus abondantes et souvent gaspillées.

Ainsi, à la veille de la grande révolution mexicaine de 1910, 8245 grands propriétaires possédaient les neuf dixièmes de la terre mexicaine. En face, 500000 familles de petits paysans se répartissaient 2% des terres cultivables et les communautés indiennes ne disposaient que du centième des terres utiles. Ruraux sans terre et ruraux établis sur des champs minuscules dépendaient en fait du travail saisonnier et mal payé, offert par les grandes propriétés. Tel était le cas d'environ 9,5 millions de personnes sur les 10 millions que constituait la population rurale du Mexique de l'époque.

En Bolivie, en 1950, les propriétaires possédant 1,000 hectares et plus n'étaient que 6% du total mais ils détenaient 92% des terres utiles.

Au Paraguay, sous la longue dictature de Stroessner, 2,193 gros propriétaires, tant nationaux qu'étrangers, et transnationales de l'agroindustrie accaparaient 78% des terres cultivables (22 millions d'hectares au total) alors que plus d'un demi-million de personnes n'avaient pas le moindre bout de terre. Au Guatemala, 67% des terres cultivables (5,2 millions d'hectares sur les 10 millions de la surface totale du pays) est accaparée par 2% des propriétaires, tandis que 500,000 familles — environ 3 millions de personnes — manquent totalement de terre.

Au Brésil, aujourd'hui, 1% des propriétaires disposent de 46% des terres cultivables tandis que 90% se répartissent le cinquième de ces mêmes terres.

LES RÉFORMES ESCAMOTÉES.

On pourrait continuer à aligner des chiffres, tristement répétitifs, pays après pays. Des chiffres qui ont conduit à des révolutions.

La première de ce siècle fut la révolution mexicaine, commencée sous le signe politique, en 1910, et poursuivie, entre autres, par les combats de l'armée paysanne d'Emiliano Zapata, aux cris de «*La terre aux paysans!», «Terre et Liberté!»* et *«La terre à ceux qui la travaillent!».*

Le projet zapatiste était clair: «La nation ... reconnaît le droit imprescriptible de tout Mexicain à posséder et à cultiver une surface de terre dont les produits lui permettront de pourvoir à ses besoins et à ceux de sa famille...» Les slogans et la conception zapatistes de la réforme seront repris par tous les mouvements paysans du continent. La réforme agraire fut finalement inscrite dans la Constitution mexicaine. La grande conquête zapatiste fut la reconnaissance des terres communautaires, à travers l'*ejido,* que l'on peut définir comme un organisme de droit privé, doté de personnalité juridique et exerçant un droit de propriété inaliénable sur une certaine étendue de terre au profit de paysans qui jouissent, sur leurs parcelles respectives, d'un droit d'usufruit à vie, transmissible à leurs héritiers. Autrement dit, les communautés paysannes étaient ainsi assurées de disposer d'une base matérielle nécessaire à leur subsistance présente et à venir.

En Bolivie, la révolution de 1952, dirigée par le Mouvement nationaliste révolutionnaire (MNR) fut aussi la révolution des petits paysans qui, avec l'appui de la puissante Confédération ouvrière de Bolivie (COB) arracha la réforme agraire l'année suivante.

En Equateur, la réforme fut mise en route sans révolution, par une série de lois — 1964, 1970 et 1972 — la première étant prise sous la pression de

Washington qui, dans toute l'Amérique Latine, ouvrait des contre-feux face aux mouvements sociaux d'inspiration plus ou moins castriste.

Trujillo, en République dominicaine, Somoza, au Nicaragua, pas plus que Stroessner au Paraguay, n'entamèrent jamais de réforme agraire. Quant aux régimes militaires (Brésil, Chili, Guatemala, etc.) ils s'étaient souvent installés pour stopper ou prévenir la réforme.

Mais, là où la réforme avait été officialisée, elle ne tarda pas à s'enliser. Ainsi, en Bolivie, la réforme — limitée aux hautes terres, mais n'affectant pas, de fait, les basses terres fertiles de l'Oriente — s'arrêta à la simple distribution des terres. La formation professionnelle, l'assistance technique, le crédit furent ignorés. De sorte que la situation de l'homme de la campagne n'évolua guère, lorsqu'elle ne régressa pas.

Quant à la réforme colombienne de 1961 elle est pratiquement restée à l'état de simples mots. Au Mexique, diverses «astuces» juridiques permirent la reconstitution des grandes propriétés et il n'y avait eu qu'un président — Lazaro Cardenas, 1934-1940 — pour prendre au sérieux la réforme et distribuer largemment la terre: plus de 17 millions d'hectares à 774,000 familles.

REFUS DE LA REDISTRIBUTION DES TERRES.

Pendant quelques décennies «dangereuses», la réforme agraire promise, à l'étude, ou parcimonieusement appliquée fut la carotte agitée devant les masses rurales pour les tranquilliser. Ne voyant rien venir, ou si peu, les petits paysans — ceux des micro-propriétés et ceux qui n'ont rien —manifestèrent, s'organisèrent, se mirent à occuper les grandes propriétés.

Au Brésil, le Mouvement des travailleurs ruraux sans terre, plus connu sous les simples initiales MST, devenu mouvement national en 1984, rassemble des centaines de milliers d'adhérents. A la fin de 1995, il avait soutenu plus de 1,200 occupations de latifundios, portant sur environ 7 millions d'hectares et intéressant 150,000 familles, ces occupations se transformant peu à peu en installations définitives. Le MST a aussi lancé des coopératives de production, installé de petites industries agro-alimentaires. I1 s'occupe en outre d'éducation des jeunes et des adultes.

Partout à travers le continent ont surgi des organisations qui travaillent à la conscientisation des paysans — qu'ils soient Blancs, Noirs, Indiens, ou Métis — à la défense de leurs conditions de vie et de travail. Elles réclament aussi une distribution équitable de la terre.

Mais les gouvernants opposent désormais, plus ou moins brutalement, une fin de non-recevoir aux demandes des hommes de la terre.

Au Mexique, l'ex-président Carlos Salinas de Gortari a mis fin, officiellement, à la réforme agraire au début de 1992 — suivi peu après par le Honduras. Au Pérou, la nouvelle loi agraire du 18 juillet 1995 a mis fin à la réforme lancée en 1969 par le régime quelque peu populiste du général Juan Velasco Alvarado, réforme qui languissait depuis longtemps. L'article 3 de la nouvelle loi précise que, pour aucun motif, on ne mettra de limites à la croissance et à l'extension des propriétés agricoles!

Au Brésil, la réforme agraire — ou ce qu'on appelle ainsi, car il n'y a jamais eu de véritable réforme — fait un pas en avant et deux en arrière. Après la fin de la dictature militaire, le président Sarney avait promis de donner de la terre à 1,4 million de familles: elles furent moins de 10% à en bénéficier. Fernando Collor de Mello avait promis la même chose à 500 000 familles: il en donna à 374!

Itamar Franco, son successeur, devait satisfaire 36,500 familles. Quant à l'actuel président, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, il a fixé à 250,000 le nombre de familles auxquelles il distribuera de la terre avant la fin de son mandat en 1998, mais son programme a déjà pris un sérieux retard.

Par ailleurs, toujours au Brésil, les terres indiennes sont de plus en plus menacées. Elles étaient protégées par l'article 231 de l'actuelle constitution, qui déclare nuls et sans effets tous les titres de propriété affectant les terres indigènes. Mais tout a été remis en question cette année par le décret 1775.

LE PRÉTEXTE DE LA DETTE.

L'arrêt ou le refus de la réforme agraire, la négation du droit à la terre sont quasiment incompréhensibles si l'on tient compte du fait que les terres cultivables laissées en friche ou mal exploitées abondent en Amérique Latine. Rien qu'au Brésil 100 millions d'hectares sont dans ce cas!

La réforme agraire, l'obtention et la possession tranquille de quelques terres, c'est l'assurance du pain quotidien. Comment justifier son arrêt ou son refus quand, à travers l'Amérique Latine une soixantaine de millions d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants se couchent chaque soir avec pour tout repas l'espoir que le lendemain leur apportera quelques miettes à manger. Sans parler d'autres dizaines de millions dont la maigre alimentation, déséquilibrée de surcroît, est à l'origine de multiples déficiences et maladies.

Ce n'est pas l'agriculture industrielle qui est capable de nourrir les populations. L'exemple du Brésil est flagrant: premier producteur mondial de café, second producteur de sucre, de soja et de cacao, ce pays ne produit que 75 à 80 millions de tonnes de céréales et laisse quotidiennement affamés une quarantaine de millions de ses citoyens.

Comment persister dans le refus de la réforme agraire lorsque les problèmes sociaux générés par ce refus sont tous les jours plus évidents?

Les plus graves de ces problèmes sont liés à l'exode rural et à l'apparition d'immenses bidonvilles — foyers de chômage, de délinquance et de misère — autour de toutes les métropoles et grandes villes d'Amérique Latine. On estime qu'au Brésil 30 millions de ruraux ont émigré vers les villes entre 1970 et 1990. Au Mexique, l'exode de ruraux sans terre a contribué à faire de la «zone urbaine» de Mexico une des plus grandes agglomérations du monde — presque ingouvernable — où errent quelque 50 000 «enfants des rues». Des enfants des rues que l'on retrouve à Rio de Janeiro, à Sao Paulo, à Asunción, à Port-au-Prince et ailleurs.

Certes, pour expliquer l'arrêt ou le refus de la réforme agraire, les dirigeants mettent en avant l'énorme coût de l'opération, dépassant trop souvent les possibilités financières des États concernés. Mais il est un autre argument avancé: la nécessité de tout mettre en œuvre pour rembourser la dette extérieure. De fait, cette dette est extrêmement lourde — surtout pour le Mexique et le Brésil — puisqu'elle s'élevait, à la fin de 1995, à 580 milliards de dollars pour l'ensemble des pays d'Amérique Latine et des Caraïbes.

L'agriculture sera donc mobilisée. Mais il s'agit de l'agriculture «moderne», produisant pour l'exportation et demandant de vastes exploitations, aussi bien pour les cultures que pour l'élevage. Mobilisées, aussi, les ressources minérales, pétrole, cuivre, fer, etc. Et leur extraction ainsi que leur premier traitement «consomment» de grandes étendues de terres. Mobilisées enfin, les ressources touristiques. Mais la création de parcs, de réserves naturelles et de complexes hôteliers et balnéaires consomment aussi beaucoup de terres et de côtes.

Bien évidemment, les États latino-américains ont dû laisser tout, ou partie, de la mise en valeur de leurs ressources et richesses aux grandes transnationales. Quoi qu'il en soit, cette mise en valeur s'est faite au mépris des droits des populations autochtones et de l'environnement. Des pollutions en tous genres affectent d'immenses étendues de terre, se répercutant sur l'alimentation, la santé et la vie de centaines de milliers d'humains.

DEUX VISIONS DU MONDE.

Bien qu'aujourd'hui le refus ou l'annulation de la réforme agraire s'appuient sur des considérations économiques, ce n'est, dans une large perspective historique, qu'un épisode d'une longue lutte entre deux conceptions du monde: celle des Amérindiens (à laquelle ont souscrit nombre d'Afro-américains) et celle des Européens, premiers conquérants, relayés par les Nord-Américains blancs.

Pour les Amérindiens la terre est certes un moyen de subsistance mais aussi, avant tout, la «Mère des Hommes», la Mère universelle, que l'on appelle Pachamama dans les Andes. Ils entretiennent avec elle une relation affective et religieuse. Parce que la «Terre-Mère» donne la vie et dispense à tous les vivants les moyens de l'entretenir, elle ne peut être l'objet d'appropriation personnelle. L'Amérindien est simplement l'usufruitier du lopin de terre que lui confie la communauté pour qu'il puisse vivre, lui et sa famille. Mais la terre dispensant la vie à tous les hommes, ceux d'aujourd'hui et ceux de demain, l'usufruitier du moment doit en prendre soin, en user avec sagesse et modération, ne lui demandant que le strict nécessaire, afin de la transmettre «en bon état de marche» aux générations futures.

L'Amérindien est donc un «écologiste» de fait, qu'il vive dans les forêts tropicales ou dans les hautes montagnes. Aussi ne comprend-il pas l'Occidental qui malmène, blesse, viole la terre pour lui faire produire des récoltes toujours plus abondantes et souvent gaspillées. Et qui l'éventre pour lui faire dégorger ses richesses minérales, tout cela au profit d'une petite minorité de la génération présente.

C'est sans doute là le plus grand point de friction et de heurt entre les deux civilisations, les deux visions du monde: celle qui veut vivre en harmonie avec la vie et les «lois» du cosmos et celle du profit immédiat par l'exploitation de toutes les ressources et leur consommation maximmum. D'un côté, diront les philosophes, la civilisation de l'être et de l'autre, celle de l'avoir. Les Amérindiens ne sont pas des producteurs, au sens de l'économie néolibérale. On ne peut faire des affaires avec eux. Ils apparaissent donc, aux yeux des maîtres de l'économie mondiale comme des inadaptés, incapables d'initiative, des gêneurs dans la marche vers le développement et le «progrès». En un mot, des inutiles qui, conséquence inexorable, doivent d'une façon ou d'une autre disparaître.

I1 y a déjà longtemps que les puissants et les riches sont arrivés à cette conclusion de la nécessité d'éliminer les Amérindiens. L'histoire des nations indépendantes issues de l'empire espagnol est pleine de tentatives, plus ou moins réussies, d'en finir avec les terres communautaires indiennes et de faire ainsi disparaître les populations autochtones. Tandis que les États-Unis, à partir de George Washington, ont, de déportations en guerres ouvertes, poussé les Amérindiens vers ces «réserves» où de nombreuses «nations» achèvent de mourir.

En décrétant la fin de la réforme agraire et de 1*'ejido,* le Mexique moderne poursuit le même objectif. car les terres des *ejidos,* incessibles, inaliénables et imprescriptibles étaient la base assurée de la survie, tant physique que culturelle et identitaire des communautés. Le Brésil officiel, en faisant traîner en longueur la légalisation et la démarcation des territoires traditionnels des Indiens d'Amazonie, en permettant la remise en question de ces territoires, va dans le même sens. Et le Chili de la démocratie retrouvée a du mal à compter correctement les autochtones et n'est pas disposé à reconnaître leurs terres ancestrales, en particulier celles des Mapuche.

VERS DES EXPÉRIENCES ALTERNATIVES

En fait, les Amérindiens ont résisté. Aujourd'hui, du nord au sud du continent, ils sont au moins une cinquantaine de millions. Et leur conception de la terre trouve des échos de plus en plus larges.

Ainsi, Herbert de Souza, plus connu sous le nom de Betinho, une des grandes «consciences» du Brésil actuel, a faite sienne cette conception. Dans a «*Les pieds sur Terre»,* une «lettre» écrite au cours de la campagne lors des élections présidentielles de 1994 pour exiger la réforme agraire — il préfère le terme de «*démocratie de la terre»* - il écrit: «*La terre est un bien planétaire, elle ne peut être le privilège de personne, elle est un bien social et non privé, elle est le patrimoine de l'humanité et non une arme de l'égoïsme particulier. Elle est faite pour produire des aliments, pour générer des emplois, de la vie. Elle est le bien de tous, pour tous. C'est le seul destin possible de la terre».*

De même, l'organisation «Via Campesina» (Voie paysanne) au cours de sa deuxième conférence internationale (18-22 avril 1996, à Tlaxcala, au Mexique) soulignait que *«la terre-mère ne peut être ni vendue, ni achetée. Ce n'est pas un bien, c'est notre futur et notre passé d'où proviennent toutes les choses. Il faut que nous, les paysans, les petits et moyens producteurs, nous nous opposions fermement aux pratiques des transnationales»* (L'organisation Via *Campesina* se définit comme «*un mouvement international qui coordonne des organisa-tions paysannes de petits et moyens producteurs, d'ouvriers agricoles et de communautés indigènes, et qui défend leurs intérêts de base»).*

Partant du principe que «*I'alimentation est un droit fondamental»,* Via Campesina s'est prononcée pour la réforme agraire, une réforme qui doit assurer la souveraineté (ou l'indépendance) alimentaire *(soberania alimentaria)* définie par le contrôle *«que doivent avoir les petits et moyens producteurs sur la terre, l'eau, les semences et les ressources naturelles»* afin d'obtenir une production durable.

Cette réforme agraire doit se faire au nom de la fonction sociale de la terre. La distribution de la terre aux petits paysans doit être accompagnée de mesures législatives pour que la terre reste aux mains de ceux qui la travaillent. De plus, les divers gouvernements devront faciliter le crédit aux paysans individuels et aux communautés, étudier et réaliser des plans à long terme d'investissements pour le développement rural (habitat, écoles, transports, centres de santé, etc.) et la création d'instituts de recherche.

De leur côté, les paysans doivent s'organiser (coopératives ou tous autres organismes) pour participer à l'élaboration et à l'exécution des politiques agricoles, «*car c'est la seule manière que ces politiques prennent en compte les indigènes, les paysans et les petits et moyens producteurs».* L'accent sera mis sur la revalorisation des pratiques et des connaissances ancestrales des communautés rurales, afin de mettre au point de nouvelles techniques de production. Aux bénéficiaires de la

réforme de mettre en marche une «*agro-industrie paysanne»* afin de tirer le meilleur parti possible de la production, mais en ayant soin de ne pas reproduire le modèle néo-libéral en la matière. A noter que dans les nouveaux établissements paysans qu'il accompagne, le Mouvement des sans-terre brésilien favorise l'implantation de cette agro-industrie paysanne.

D'autre part, ce que l'on pourrait appeler la «conscience écologique» n'a jamais disparu de la pratique des Amérindiens, des Afro-Américains et des petits paysans d'Amérique Latine. I1 suffira donc de peu de choses pour que reprenne dans toute sa vigueur cette grande idée des civilisations passées: le respect et la protection des sols, de l'air, des eaux, de tout ce qui concourt à la vie. D'ailleurs, les initiatives en ce sens se sont multipliées ces dernières années.

Un exemple, la *Casa ecológica Teotihuacan,* au Mexique. Cette initiative appelle à un véritable retour aux sources amérindiennes. Dans un de ses manifestes, on peut lire: *«Nous sommes aux côtés de ceux qui demandent à la terre seulement ce qu'ils vont consommer, aux côtés de ceux qui ne veulent pas blesser notre Terre-Mère pour satisfaire des désirs superflus, et de ceux qui ne veulent pas donner à ceux qui font mauvais usage des aliments».*

«Nous sommes avec les commerçants qui se satisfont de petits bénéfices, avec ceux qui acceptent la concurrence dans une perspective d'évolution positive. Nous soutenons les commerçants qui vendent les produits de la terre, aussi bien les «humbles», et parfois laids, mais nourrissants, que les grands et les beaux, car l'actuelle commercialisation sophistiquée promeut et développe une économie de gaspillage et une industrie polluante...»

Au plan pratique, la Casa ecológica Teotihuacan a entrepris de démontrer comment, par des recettes simples, à la portée de tous — utilisation des matériaux régionaux pour les constructions, captation et conservation des eaux de pluie, remise en honneur et utilisation des plantes locales, telle 1*'agave maguey,* culture et recours aux plantes médicinales traditionnelles, etc. — un terrain de 4 000 mètres carrés peut assurer l'autosuffisance alimentaire et la vie tout court d'au moins 60 personnes. Un hectare devant suffire pour environ 150 personnes.

Cette expérience — et de nombreuses autres de même sens et esprit — a le même objectif que la réforme agraire: démocratisation de la terre pour assurer la survie des populations pauvres et oubliées du continent, en butte aux méfaits, aux ravages, à l'hostilité du système économique actuel, producteur d'immenses exclusions. I1 s'agit de mettre sur pied de petites communautés paysannes «résistantes», et de leur donner les moyens de vivre, de traverser le moment néo-libéral présent ainsi que les inévitables turbulences qui ne manqueront pas de suivre l'effondrement du système.

Les combattants les plus conscients de la réforme agraire et les promoteurs des projets de base de survie ne doutent pas que ce pour quoi ils luttent est l'amorce d'une nouvelle civilisation, plus humaine, plus juste, plus digne.

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THE NEW ECCLESIOLOGY OF VATICAN II: WHAT IS THE REALITY AFTER 30 YEARS?

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The conference was given at the SEDOS Seminar on Tuesday, 3 December 1996, in Rome.

Some 30 Years ago I understood the Universal Church as a framework of a reciprocal dynamic inspiration and exchange of theological and pastoral experiences between the different local Churches. The Latin-America-Church f.i. developed the experience with the basic communities. It went from there to all the Continental Churches.

This dynamic vision of a Church in her vitality and variety is, so it seems to me, deteriorating into lame monotony. Although Church documents and papal exhortations speak about inculturation, all concrete attempts at inculturation are blocked by Rome with the pretext that they are "not in accordance with the Universal Church". That means that one is acting according to the absurd principle: Whatever is not wanted everywhere, especially in Rome, should not happen anywhere.

The new beginning made during the last Council in understanding the Church as the People of God, realised in local Churches, risks being swallowed up by a new type of hierarchy as opposed to the first element, and a new centralisation as opposed to the second element.

In my reflection I lay the stress on this second element, the new centralisation, or on *the relation between the Universal Church and the continental Churches*. I do this in four steps.

1. The historical background

The new theological vision of the Church which emerged from the Second Vatican Council was not really new. Rather it corresponded to the original model. Indeed, Jesus left to his disciples neither a political constitution nor a Canon law. He gave them "only" a message and the Holy Spirit. When there arose in the community of Jerusalem the first — as it is said in the Acts — really "fierce dissension and controversy" on account of Paul's practice of baptising the gentiles without imposing the Mosaic law on them, the Apostles called together the community to settle the question (cf. Acts 15). In this assembly — the First Jerusalem Council — happened what we call today a radical "change of paradigm", declaring (1) freedom from the Mosaic law, and (2) that the Apostles and the elders "together with the whole community" shared in the opinion making and decision taking process, and (3) the fact of different local Churches with a different discipline, the Church of the Jews, and the Church of the Gentiles. Among the Church of the Gentiles we have then got again a multiplicity of Churches, referring to Peter, to John, to Paul, all with respectively different patterns of behaviour. Moreover we know the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation, receiving each one a different message (Rv 2).

This original variety of many local Churches grew, through a long and often tragic history (I cannot enter into details), into the one catholic Church, reaching her climax in the First Vatican Council proclaiming the infallibility of the Pope and his universal jurisdiction on all the Churches. Through our missionary activity we introduced that model of the one and uniform Roman-Catholic Church in all the other continents.

2. The New Theological Vision

The Second Vatican Council of course did not withdraw that statement of Vatican I, but completed it with a strong emphasis on the Bishops as true successors of the Apostles, on the idea of collegiality and on the many local churches, "in which and from which the one and unique catholic Church comes into existence" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23). "The Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 26). These local communities are allowed and invited to have a certain local colour in theology, liturgy and ecclesiastical discipline, what will lead to a legitimate pluralism (cf. *Lumen*

Gentium, nn. 13, 23; *Sacro-sanctum Concilium*, nn. 37-40; also *Evangelii Nuntiandi*). Therefore the locality of the many Churches is a constitutive element of the Church as well as the universality of the one Church.

Such reflections were the fruit of a "new theology" developed before the Council by theologians such as Congar, Chenu, De Lubac, Rahner, all of whom had been under Roman verdict, but then been acknowledged by the Bishops in the Council. On the other hand, the "schema" on the Church prepared on the basis of the traditional Roman theology and presented and defended by Cardinal Ottaviani came under the verdict of the Council as "abundant in triumphalism, legalism, clericalism" (Bishop De Smedt of Bruges).

Then a new Pentecostal storm happened in the Council and I do not hesitate to call that assembly not only the Council of the century, but the Council of the millennium, having brought to an end the Church of the Middle Ages and of the Counter-Reformation, and having prepared the Church for the coming third millennium.

This radical change is largely due to Pope John XXIII who not only convoked the Council, but who also gave it a typical pastoral line. During the previous Conclave some Cardinals spoke already of a second Council, but they saw it as a prolongation of Vatican I condemning the many errors of modern times. However, in the opening address John XXIII explicitly said, not to condemn errors, but to use the medicine of mercy, to live credibly according to the Gospel, to accompany the people like an understanding mother, offering it his pastoral help.

This Pope and his Council immediately changed the climate in the Church and in the world. We remember with a certain sadness these years of a general breaking-up of a new hope. What is the reality now after 30 years?

3. The Sad Reality in the Present

At the end of the Council the Bishops left Rome with the anxious question: What will happen now to the Vatican Curia? During the Council they had emitted several criticisms and suggestions, but omitted to interfere concretely in the problem. Paul VI took up the topic in a final homily, repeating the expressions of Bishops he had heard, the Curia-people being "too old, incompetent, egoistic, corrupt", and he gave his word of honour to remedy the situation. In 1967 he published his Decree on Renovation *Regimini Ecclesiae universalis*. But, as a matter of fact, it did not bring a great change of the reality. John Paul I was, to my opinion, not killed by the Curia-people, as insinuated by D. Yallop's book: "In the Name of God", but he died from the Curia-people and their resistance to his spontaneity and his reform-ideas. John Paul II, aware that the Curia was not yet reformed according to the will of the Council, a year after his election, convoked all the Cardinals of the world for a three-day-seminar on two topics: the finances of the Vatican, and the reform of the Curia. At the end he asked his "counsellors" to send him their proposals for the reform of the Curia within three months. When in 1988, after nine years of waiting and hoping, the document "Pastor bonus" appeared, we had to say: "a blow into the water", or as Italians say: "un fico secco". After all: the commission which worked for nine years on the document was mostly of composed Roman Cardinals — instead of Bishops from the local Churches with some experts on management — and so it was clear in advance that nothing important would happen, for nobody can behead himself!

So we stand, 30 years after the Council, still in front of a powerful administration centre which, in spite of the Council, astutely succeeded in building up a stronger centralisation than ever in Church history, be it for the nomination of Bishops and professors of theology, or for any concrete attempt of inculturation. Not only lay-people, priests, religious suffer from this situation, but also many Bishops and Episcopal Conferences — and even the Pope. I know this from a Bishop who is a personal friend of the Pope. This man to whom we attribute a certain merit for the collapse of the Marxist system (cf. the new book by C. Bernstein and M. Politi, "His Holiness"), did not succeed in radically reforming his Curia. So he leaves much freedom to the administration, using his time for audiences, Pastoral Visits, Encyclical Letters and Prayer.

We ask: Is, therefore, this situation hopeless? I find nothing is hopeless, as long as we are not hopeless. There are even some signs of conversion in the Vatican. The Latin-America-Bishops-Assembly in Santo Domingo 1992 was still, in a humiliating degree for the Bishops, dominated by the strong Vatican Delegation, whereas at the African Synod in 1994 there prevailed a more open, friendly, dialogical climate. Again in German-speaking Europe for 10 years we have had a chain of bad nominations of Bishops, so that clergy and laity were unhappy to be Church with such a man. Since three years however we have got — at least in this region, because here Church-people are sensibilised! — a

chain of good nominations. The Pope must have got the insight, that with the former type, who stressed Canon law, authority, and obedience, he was damaging unity, which can no longer be imposed on mature people, but only be won by dialogue.

4. The Hoped-for Reality in the Future

The tension between the Curia on the one hand, Council and Church on the other hand, is not only old, it is "normal", because innate to the system. The historiographer of the Council of Trent, H. Jedin, says that the Curia in that time was trying to hinder the preparation as well as the implementation of the Council, which, is spite of this, began working 30 years later in the local Churches.

So it will be also in our case. At the basis of the Church, the Council worked more than at the top. When we compare what we thought 50 years ago and today in terms of ecumenism, of the theology of the religions, of freedom of conscience, then I may say that we live in an extraordinarily good church-time and that we speak too much of the crisis of the Church and too little of the challenge and chance of the Church.

I know that there is much abuse of the freedom of conscience. Too many people say lightly: "I do what I want". But abuse does not abolish use, which has been approved by the Council in *Dignitatis humanae*. In fact, many people, lay and cleric, no longer practice "filial" or blind obedience to church laws, but do, with full responsibility and good conscience, whatever has to be done, so that a person or a group of persons is really helped in their materially, psychologically, morally bad situation, even as Jesus healed sick people also on the Sabbath. This is called not legalistic, but pastoral behaviour. The same Jesus did not only give to Peter in the singular, but also to his disciples in the plural the power to forbid and to allow (cf. Mt 16:18 and 18:18). You cannot reduce these "disciples" to the twelve Apostles. There were meant the group of men and women in Jesus' fellowship, today the Christian groups, the parishes the parish-counsels. We know the great statements of the Council on the People of God, that all of them have the Holy Spirit, the feeling for faith, co-responsibility, participation in Christ's priestly, prophetic and king-like charism. Many people at the base of the Church act accordingly and risk tensions with the Church authority. Here, I see the Holy Spirit at work so as to ensure that those beautiful statements do not stay in the documents, but are transposed into real life. And later on the Church authority, which in the meantime is isolating itself more and more, will then realise this reality, acknowledge it and reach the Church-people again.

So we wait for a Pope John XXIV, who will bring to a good end what John XXIII has begun. But, will the Council now, 30 years later, not be forgotten by the young generation? I think rather, it is now entering into its last and decisive phase: After the charismatic inspiration of John XXIII, the traditional preparation by the Roman Curia, the new Pentecostal storm through the best Bishops and their theologians, the breaking-up of the People of God, the restauration-effort through the Curia, we are reaching the sixth and final phase now, the definitive implementation of the conciliar impetus, that means we shall even go beyond the conciliar texts, but always in the direction indicated by the Council. In doing so we remain faithful to the Council but I do not wish to enter further into this process, as I only wanted to indicate this great hope.

Now I shall try to present some ideas about the hoped-for reality for the future of the local Churches, and that in their greatest scale, I mean the Continental Churches. It would be unrealistic to expect in the near future a change of course from above, i.e. from the centralisation policy of the Vatican. But from below, in the Continental Churches, there is the possibility and the need to begin and to do something to achieve a relative autonomy and variety, and this on three levels:

a) Continental Theologies

Thirty years ago the five-volume handbook "*Mysterium Salutis*" was published. At that time it was assumed that this book, although written exclusively by European authors, would be considered the post-conciliar theology for all the world. In Latin-America the two-volume standard-work "*Mysterium Liberationis*" has been published and translated into several languages. It is the first attempt to develop a theology of a non-European Continental Church. It is not at all directed against European theology, but is considered as a fortunate supplement, being less intellectually abstract, as it takes its starting point from the reality of the poor in order to liberate them. There is now the expectation that Africa will be preparing a theological *compendium*, possibly with the title "*Mysterium Incarnationsi*", which puts the mystery of Jesus' incarnation at its centre and draws radical conclusions from it for the inculturation of the Church in Africa. Asia would then follow with a compendium "*Mysterium Revelationis*" which

depicts the identity of the Christian Churches within the cosmic dimension of revelation.

Then Europe would be called upon to set out once more — also in the role of a pioneer with regard to the other continents — to think about a compendium "*Mysterium Saecularisationis*", to describe God's salvific action even in the secularised world, outside of the ecclesiastical structure, to give the full value to the immanent, historical salvation in the issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation, before we speak of the transcendent salvation as hope against all hope and giving motivation for our hard job within this our world.

b) Continental Saints

The more than 600 new Blesseds and the 270 new Saints created during this Pontificate were all appraised according to the same scheme of the three theological and the four cardinal virtues. All right. But increasingly the Continental Churches should be bringing forth their own saints with quite distinctive features.

Latin America already has a significant number of "Saints of justice" who even suffered death not for the sake of a tenet of the faith, but for the principle that all people, created in the image of God, should be living a life in human and divine dignity. Africa could enrich us with "Saints of the joy of living". It is really astonishing and a cause for joy, how the African people, inspite of all the economic and political hardship, manage to be joyful, and able to celebrate life as such in nocturne dances, also in the liturgy — in contrast to Western people who for all their comfort cannot, in the same measure, enjoy life. From Asia we would expect to bring forth "Saints of mysticism", who give constant witness in the Church and world to the "one thing necessary" (Lk 10:42).

Europe and North America would then finally have to develop and create quite a new model of sanctity, namely, "Saints of the economy", that is men and women who are at the centres of control of the economy and who, with competence and energy, will no longer put profit first, but ensure that the individual and the whole of humankind be considered the norm and yardstick of activity in the national and international economy. After its long hegemony in the world, Europe is challenged to the deaconry. After what M. Gorbatchow and Nelson Mandela achieved in the political field, we have to wait and pray for people who can create a new reality in the economic world.

Such saints really would be a delight in heaven and on earth! The feast of All Saints would thus get a new image!

c) Continental Patriarchates

After such initiatives of the Continental Churches on the spiritual and theological level, Rome is challenged to take a concret step on the structural level.

In the Book of Revelation we read seven times: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" (Rv 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). It is hoped that the Spirit also has a message for the community of Rome, namely that the centralist power structure by which the Vatican, inspite of the distance of thousands and tens of thousands of kilometres, decides everything for the Universal Church, is not in accordance with the Spirit of Jesus. Jesus indeed warned his disciples against any power-mentality: In the world the rulers make their subjects feel the weight of authority. "That is not the way with you; among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all" (cf. Mk 10:43ff). What would have happened if Jesus had been a member of the renovation-commission of the Roman Curia?

Due to the fact that all missionary activity in the colonial world started from Europe, also Rome developed the universal leadership imposing the Roman model on those countries. Now in a free world should not the legitimate aspiration for national and continental autonomy also be more respected in the Church? This could be done in a new edition of the Pentarchia, the five Patriarchates of the first millennium, so that each continent, probably divided again according to linguistic units, could receive patriarchal status with a far-ranging autonomy? No less a person that J. Ratzinger, then not yet a Cardinal, expressed this idea already in 1968 in his book "*Das neue Volk Gottes*". He said that the "*urbs*" (the city of Rome) has become the "orbis" (the whole world), that the local Church of Rome identifies herself with the Universal Church, so bringing an impoverishment to the multiplicity and variety of the Churches.

Such a patriarchal status would enable Latin America to decide for itself how to deal with liberation theology. Africa would be in a position to find a way to become an African Church, and not only a Church in Africa according to the Roman model.

Asia would have the freedom to determine the procedure of entering into dialogue with the other religions. And finally Europe/North America, faced by the challenge of secularisation would have to respond to the specific Church situation.

Till now, such specific continental needs are unfortunately blocked by Rome with reference to the Universal Church. The problem of women in the Church e.g., is not taken seriously by Rome, because "it regards only Europe and North America". What would happen in a family with four children between 12 and 20 years, were the father or mother to say to the elder ones: "You cannot go out in the evening, neither can the younger ones". Considering this and other needs, e.g., "*viri probati*", even Bishops are resigned enough to say: "Useless to insist, because there is no realistic expectation that they could be realised on the scale of the Universal Church". They ought to say: "On the scale of the Roman Church". — Of course, such a structure would also bring the possibility of new Continental Councils, whereas the continental Episcopal Synods we have had till now, are only consultative, and all the decisions are reserved to Rome.

In such a new Church reality it would be necessary to re-think the function of the Bishop of Rome. Besides the horizontal communion (*koinônia*), consisting in the service and exchange between the Churches of theology, of successful pastoral experiences, of personnel and financial resources, there will be the need to establish a vertical communion of all the Churches in a final bond of unity and peace (cf. Eph 4:3). Pope John Paul II is aware of the fact that the other Churches expect from him "a new way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation", and he invites the theologians to help him in this research (Encyclical Letter "*Ut unum sint*", 1995, n. 95). — On the one hand it is to be hoped, that historical developments are not prematurely declared to be essential elements which cannot be given up. On the other hand it can be said, that this research has already been done in the papers of the Anglican-Roman, the Lutheran-Roman, the Orthodox-Roman commissions, and in the books of Rahner-Fries, Lehmann-Pannenberg, Cullmann, etc. Anyway, in these very days from the 2nd to the 5th December a Symposium is being held in Rome on the nature of the Primacy with reference to "*Ut unum sint*", n. 95.

So there is some hope for our hoped-for reality of the Church in the future. If the structural changes within the Catholic Church, which we have described above, were to be realised, many complaints within the Catholic Church would disappear, and at the same time the way would be open to reach, after centuries of painful divisions, the aim of ecumenism: To come to "unity of reconciled plurality", as experts say. So I repeat: We live in an extraordinarily great Church-time and we probably speak too much of the crisis of the Church and to little of the challenge and chance of the Church.

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Recommended reading:

With Eyes to See, 1990, Mary Knoll (in several languages).

Die Überraschungen meines Lebens, Graz 1994.

TRADITIONAL MISSIONARY INSTITUTES: FACING NEW CHALLENGES IN MISSION

Claudette La Verdière, MM

The conference was given at the SEDOS Seminar on Tuesday, 19 November 1996, in Rome.

INTRODUCTION

Personally, I have profited greatly from SEDOS. Since 1967, upon my arrival in East Africa as a young Sister, the Bulletin informed my earliest mission experience, as it does to this day. During my term in office, I have been able to participate in two of the annual Seminars, in 1991 and 1995. In 1992, our Congregation was represented by Sister Bernice Rigney who attended from Kenya. SEDOS consistently puts out relevant, thought- provoking articles to help all missioners face the mission challenges of our times.

My topic today is how traditional missionary institutes face new challenges in mission. I will address the three major challenges for us at this point in time as we approach the new millennium. The challenges are distinct but not unrelated to one another.

The first challenge can be described broadly as historical. There have been many changes in the mission world in the past half century. What new questions do those changes raise for traditional missionary institutes?

I would describe the second challenge as demographic. In the West, there have been major changes in the way Catholics respond to the missionary nature of the Church. How have we been affected and how must we adjust?

The historical and demographic changes in the world present us with a new theological situation. Hence, the third challenge explores the theological attitude that is needed to respond to the reality at this point in history.

I will address these questions from the point of view and from the experience of the Maryknoll Sisters of St Dominic who number 730 and who are present in mission in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America, and Oceania, altogether, in 31 countries.

Before I begin, I want to tell you something about our Congregation of the Maryknoll Sisters. I am sure our story parallels that of many institutes that are represented here today. We were founded in the United States before the First World War in 1912 and were recognised by the Holy See in 1920, principally in view of mission to China.

From the beginning, Maryknoll Sisters have been very closely associated with the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. The Society was founded in 1911 and the Congregation, in 1912. Although a year apart, we claim a common foundation through Fathers James Anthony Walsh, Thomas Frederick Price, and Mary Josephine Rogers. Let me briefly unfold the story through that of our foundress, Mary Rogers, the youngest of the three and the one who lived the longest. She was the faithful bearer of the Maryknoll tradition until she died in October 1955.

As a young Catholic student at Smith College in Massachusetts, Mary Rogers, known as Mollie, was greatly influenced by the Protestant girls who were preparing to leave for seven years of evangelisation work in China. Witnessing their enthusiasm, Mollie was prompted to ask herself, *"What are we Catholics doing for mission?"*. With this question reverberating in her mind, she recounts how she felt drawn to the parish church. On her knees before the tabernacle, she prayed to be enlightened and to be generous in her response. In 1906, following the advice of her spiritual director, Mollie wrote to Father James Anthony Walsh, then Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Boston. She asked him for background materials for the mission class she proposed to start at Smith College for the Catholic girls, concluding rhetorically: *"Who knows but that the little work we do here may be the*

beginning of greater efforts in later life?". Mollie could never have suspected the prophetic ring with which her question would resonate in the heart of every Maryknoll Sister down through the years!

Walsh responded promptly. When they met later that year he showed her the galley proofs of the first issue of THE FIELD AFAR, the mission magazine that he and some of his colleagues were launching to stir the mission spirit and imagination of American Catholics. He also shared his dream of beginning a foreign mission seminary. From that day on, Mary Rogers became a faithful collaborator, helping to translate letters from French missionaries, writing articles for the magazine and doing whatever else would support his mission efforts. She was soon joined by other women. Walsh and Price established the seminary in New York in 1911. It was only a few months later, on 6 January 1912, that three women also came to New York to assist in the work they had come to know and love.

In the course of time, as more women came to join, they realised that they too were called to mission. They aspired to religious life and prepared themselves through a novitiate training even as they continued to do all sorts of chores. It was not so easy for them to achieve recognition from the Holy See. Twice they were refused. In Rome and in Europe, the prevailing conviction about American women was that they could never sustain the rigours of mission life. However, two refusals did not weaken their determination. In the meantime, in 1918, the first group of newly ordained Maryknoll priests left for China. They were accompanied by Fr Price who died just a year later in Hong Kong of a ruptured appendix. Then, on 14 February 1920, when there were 42 women at Maryknoll, approval came from Rome and a new mission-sending religious congregation was born. Initially known as the Foreign Mission Sisters of St Dominic, the title was later changed officially to Maryknoll Sisters of St Dominic.

Upon receiving approval, the women's response was remarkable. Within a year, 21 of them completed their novitiate and made their first vows. Mary Rogers became Mother Mary Joseph and two months later, in April 1921, she assigned four Sisters to work among Japanese immigrants on the west coast of the U.S. In November the same year, she assigned six of her Sisters to China. Two years later, seven more Sisters followed. The fledgling group of Maryknoll Sisters lost no time getting on with the task. The purpose of the institute was mission. From the first group of three women in 1912, we grew to a congregation numbering 1,400 professed members at its peak in the mid 1950's. Today we are just over half that number.

Although Walsh, Price and Rogers were the prime movers, they never forgot that behind them were many Bishops, priests, religious and lay people who shared their vision. Until the turn of the century, the United States was mission territory; we received missionaries from Europe. By 1911, after years of encouragement from European Bishops and priests, the Church in the U.S. was coming of age. With the founding of Maryknoll, we became a mission-sending Church.

As well as presenting the challenges facing traditional missionary institutes through the lens of the Maryknoll Sisters, I will also address them from my own experience in the Congregation. I was attracted to Maryknoll in the early 1950's while the foundress, Mother Mary Joseph Rogers was still living. In September 1956, a year after her death, I entered the postulancy and made my profession in 1959. Following a period of service and studies at Maryknoll, New York, I was assigned to the Africa Region as a teacher at Rosary Secondary School in Mwanza, a port city on Lake Victoria in Tanzania. After 22 years in East Africa — four in Tanzania and 18 in Kenya — I was elected president of the Maryknoll Sisters in 1990 and am now completing my six-year term. Let me now begin to address the challenges against that background.

I. A HISTORICAL CHALLENGE

The first challenge is historical. When Maryknoll was founded and when I became a Maryknoll Sister in the 1950's, there was still a timeless and unchanging quality about the Church and the world of mission. This was so in spite of the ravages of the Second World War, the rise of atheistic Communism and the approaching demise of the 19th century Colonial Empires. Looking back, the tremendous changes that were taking place in the world announced the changes that have been taking place in the Church. It was only a matter of time. The Second Vatican Council represented a watershed for historic transformations in the Church. Hindsight always has 20/20 vision.

Far into the 20th century, we still thought in 19th century terms regarding mission. Missionaries were those who set out to plant the Church; foreign missionaries became the Bishops and pastors for a whole territory. For Maryknoll, a large territory that had been served by the Paris Foreign Mission Society

(*Missions Etrangères de Paris*) in South China, was entrusted to the newly founded Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. That territory became the first overseas mission field for the Maryknoll Sisters.

The nature of the work was very traditional in the sense that the Holy See confided to a group of missionaries a mission territory where the Church had not yet been established. As did other missionaries, Maryknoll Fathers, Brothers and Sisters went into these territories to preach the Gospel and to plant the Church among peoples that had not yet been evangelised. Foreign missionaries established and administered institutions which depended on them for survival and growth. The Church was easily seen as a foreign import, especially in cultures that had been shaped by very old religious traditions such as Taoism, Buddhism and, in Japan, Shintoism. We needed to make the Church at home in the new cultures so that the local people would embrace the Church and those institutions as their own.

Thus, the work of the missionaries was well defined. In China, the Maryknoll Sisters were expected to staff institutional works such as orphanages, schools, catechist centers, dispensaries and hospitals. With the leadership and zeal of Fr Francis X. Ford, one of the first group of Maryknollers assigned to China in 1918, the Sisters were to experience something quite different, first in Yeungkong and then in Kaying. Like the early apostles, Ford would have them travel "two by two" to the most remote parts of the parish and mingle with the women to win their hearts (MARYKNOLL IN CHINA, Wiest, Jean Paul, p. 99). As you know, in China there was a strict separation of the sexes which made the evangelisation of Chinese women very difficult. Although Ford had experienced this difficulty he did not imagine the new approach until 1922 when Mother Mary Joseph made her first visit to China. He reflected on what he had observed and, in a letter to Walsh, he wrote:

> *"Mother Mary Joseph saw China from the inside of the kitchens, the interior of the family quarters and smiled her way into the hearts of the womenfolk. She saw family life as we cannot see it... I always thought it was the foreign face and clothes that frightened children, but I look and dress more Chinese than the Reverend Mother did, and yet they ran to her and lost their bashfulness. Her whole trip emphasised the hold our Sisters will have on Chinese women and the utter need of such influence to gain these women's hearts"* (Wiest, p. 101).

Thus, Ford initiated a method "without precedent in the mission history of the Catholic Church.... [His method] was not only highly successful in converting women, but it also revolutionised the role of religious women in the work of evangelisation" (Wiest, p. 101).

The initiative in Yeungkong was short-lived because of anti-foreign incidents in 1925. However, the plan was only postponed. In 1934, it was put into full operation in Kaying. Mother Mary Joseph approved Ford's innovative approach wholeheartedly and blessed it in a letter she wrote to him in 1935: *"This particular phase of work has always been dearest to my heart. I believe it is essential missionary work, along with the training of native Sisters"* (Wiest, p. 103).

The direct apostolic work of the Sisters was described as an experiment. Everyone involved harboured the hope that the Holy See might not put an end to it. In March 1939, when Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, wrote a letter to Mother Mary Joseph telling her of Rome's approval, the Sisters were jubilant. "I *wish you to know",* he wrote, *"that I believe your greatest accomplishments lie in the conversion of non-Christian souls. I am aware of the courage and devotion which many Maryknoll Sisters have displayed in the work of conversion, particularly in the vicariate of Kaying, where they have gone from house to house among the people and they have proven valuable helpers to the fathers in reaching the non-Christians. Let us hope that this work may grow and that God may bless it with abundant fruit"* (Wiest, pp. 103-4).

The opportunity for the direct apostolate had a galvanising effect on young imaginations. From then on, every Maryknoll Sister prayed to be assigned to Kaying. As a Congregation, we continued to establish and staff institutions in China and other regions of the world because we believed in their importance and their enduring influence in the work of evangelisation. However, through the years, the Kaying experiment has always held a certain fascination for us. Because the "two by two" approach was very effective, deeply satisfying and had been blessed by the Church, to this day it continues to influence our choice and style of ministries everywhere.

I inserted this experience for two reasons: it fits in so well with today's Gospel — Jesus rejoiced when he welcomed his Disciples back from their mission journey into which he had sent them in pairs, and: it is part of the experience and imagination we bring to new mission areas these days.

When the missionaries were expelled from China in the early 1950's Maryknoll Sisters were already in Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Japan. After the War in 1946, when some of these missions were closed to us, the Sisters went to South America, to Bolivia and Peru, and to Tanzania (East Africa), in 1948. They continued to go as catechists and pastoral workers, teachers and school administrators, nurses, doctors and social workers, both for institutional ministries and direct evangelisation.

My personal story parallels that of the Congregation. In January 1968, when I arrived at Rosary Secondary School, my first mission experience was definitely in an institutional setting. Daily, as a young teacher in a boarding school, I took my post in the classroom and in the study hall, in the dormitory and in the dining hall — evenings, Saturdays, Sundays — it was more than a full-time job. But I was young and, for the most part, the students were responsive. I spent happy years knowing I was contributing to the education ministry of the Regional community which, in 1957, had established the first full Catholic secondary school for African girls in Tanzania, at Morogoro, 120 miles inland from Dar-es-Salaam. On the secondary level, Morogoro was only the second such school for girls in the entire country (*Hearts on Fire,* Lernoux, Penny, p. 213). Among the many accomplished graduates from the school Ms Gertrude Mongela stands out. Until recently, she was an Assistant to the Secretary General of the United Nations and co-ordinated the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. She graduated from this school in Morogoro in the early 1960's.

The traditional missionary work succeeded very well in place after place. The local Church grew and its people made the church truly their own, taking responsibility for church institutions and apostolates.

In young African nations such as Tanzania, where independence from colonial rule had only recently been achieved, nationalisation of institutions was in the air. I was present when Rosary, which by that time had become Nganza Secondary School, was transferred to the administration of a Tanzanian headmistress. By 1969, when it had become obvious that the Government would nationalise the schools, Sr Josephine Lucker, who was headmistress, had seized the initiative and had prepared Miss Daria Pana to become headmistress. Catechesis and religious education was already shared by the Catholic Tanzanian teachers. We were all pleased with the smooth transition which pointed to a stable future.

Three months into the school term, however, we were not at all prepared for Miss Pana's sudden transfer to another school. We received a new headmistress who had no idea of the history or traditions of "our" school and who had definite ideas of her own. Only then did the implications of our no longer being in charge begin to dawn on us.

In an existing mission field, missionaries who are in places where they have long served need to adapt to the new situation of not being in charge. Now, we have to contribute collaboratively instead of holding administrative responsibility. This single factor makes an enormous difference in the way we now approach the local Church. Attitudinally, as everyone knows, that is easier said than done. But for missionaries, that is precisely the challenge of inculturation.

Today, the local Church is established in almost all the countries where Maryknoll Sisters serve. This development and growth in the Church is a sign of the fruitfulness of missionary work. It has also created a radically new situation for traditional missionary communities. We have had to acculturate. Otherwise we would have continued as a foreign Church, parallel to the local Church.

Perhaps the best way to describe the challenge is in relation to missionary efforts undertaken today. In more recent years, in South Southeast Asia, Maryknoll Sisters have responded to mission in Bangladesh, Thailand, Cambodia, Nepal and East Timor. With the exception of Cambodia, the local Church has been established in these countries and is served by local Bishops, priests, sisters and lay ministers, along with a fair number of missionaries. However, even in a country like Cambodia where the local Church is still in the hands of expatriates, the following letter (1994) from Sister Luise Ahrens, my immediate predecessor as president of the Maryknoll Sisters Congregation, illustrates how Maryknoll Missioners can be in service to the local Church.

> "In Cambodia, we are a group of Maryknollers — sisters, brothers, lay missioners and priests — all working more or less in the capital, Phnom Penh". [The lay missioners whom she

mentions are from the Maryknoll Mission Association of the Faithful. For almost 20 years, lay missioners served with Maryknollers in mission through an associate programme sponsored by the Society of priests and brothers. In 1994, the lay missioners established their own Association of the Faithful and now participate in mission with the Society and the Congregation as equal partners]. "We meet together once a week to share ministry plans and information as well as liturgy and supper. Once a month, the gathering is for pastoral theological reflection.

"The ministries that we are involved in reflect the state of the country as it recovers from 20 years of civil war; in three of those years, the regime killed off all the leaders and intellectuals as well as destroyed all buildings that were used for healing, educating or development. So, one of us is at Phnom Penh University, trying to do general re-building and helping with the contacts with the outside world, the contacts that need to happen for a real university to be established here. It is the only university in the country.

"We are involved in skills training for the handicapped, most of them amputees from landmines and we have also begun recently a prevention and rehabilitation health programme for the blind people in Cambodia... We are looking at an area on the fringe of Phnom Penh to begin a village development programme along with *Caritas* and the local Church. Most people agree that the Khmer people must learn to work together and trust one another. Ours is a small step towards that goal... Almost any skill can be placed at the service of the Cambodian people as they try to recover their country from the desolation of the past.

"We are learning that the best thing we can do is to communicate our respect for individuals, showing through our lives and work that people have value in and of themselves. At this point, this seems almost more crucial than the tasks in ministry in which we are engaged".

When two of us from our Central Governing Board visited Cambodia this past February, the Sisters arranged to have us meet Bishop Ramousse. His awareness of the profound shifts in relationships in the local Church was very evident in our conversation. The way the various groups of missioners work hand in hand with him as he leads in the path of respectful accompaniment, gives him great hope for the future of the Church in Cambodia.

Nowadays, the initiative to request missionaries generally comes from the local Church. The Bishop puts forward the needs he hopes missionaries can meet. When a missionary institute takes the initiative, it approaches the local Church and enters into a similar dialogue about how the particular institute can be of service in that Diocese. In both instances, the dialogue is in the context of mutuality. We are called to be mutually in service to one another.

The qualities required of a missionary are implied in Sister Luise's letter. Missionaries must be very well formed. They have to know why they are in mission otherwise it is impossible for them to continue. Unless they remain in touch with their purpose, they easily lose sight of it. We sometimes hear missioners ask themselves what they are doing in a certain place, suggesting perhaps that they are no longer needed.

On this matter, a Chinese Ursuline provincial working in Taiwan, presents the perspective of someone from the local Church: "Some missionaries may think that they are no longer needed, that they have been replaced. On the contrary, missionaries are very much needed. They witness to the universal dimension of the Church and call the local Church to do the same. Local people have a tendency to become absorbed by their own local problems and turn in on themselves. Missionaries are very important to connect us with the universal Church". The Church is missionary by nature. For a local Church to prosper, it must have an outward thrust. As John Paul II has proclaimed in his introduction to *Redemptoris Missio*, "For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalises faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentives. *Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!* ".

II. A DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

The second challenge for a traditional missionary institute is demographic. When I entered the Maryknoll Sisters in 1956, I was one in a group of 74. One was Chinese and another, Chinese-Portuguese, both from Hong Kong; there was a Peruvian from Lima, a Filipino from Hawaii — at the time a territory of the U.S., as Puerto Rico is now, — two Canadians and 68 Americans from the U.S. Today we have eight candidates in the novitiate. Of that number, one was born in the U.S., two are Vietnamese Americans, who fled their

former country as boat people, two are Korean, three are Filipinos. In the past year, two Sisters were professed, one from Tanzania and the other from the Philippines.

The changes in our demographics bring with them two major challenges. The first has to do with numbers. There would be no question of blanketing a mission field with Maryknoll Sisters. We try not to let the significant reduction in numbers be a cause for concern among us. We recall the faith of our foundress when, in 1921, she did not wait until large numbers had been professed before launching out in mission. We, who are called to do for our time what our founders did for theirs need to do all in our power to encourage and nurture vocations and trust that God will bless our efforts. The possibilities for collaboration with lay missioners, members of other Congregations, and the local Church point to a new springtime in mission. Mission does not depend on numbers or on youth — they may help — but on people who love the Gospel of Jesus Christ and are impassioned to share it.

The second major challenge for the Maryknoll Sisters with regard to demographics is that we are a centralised community. Yet, our membership represents 21 countries, with various cultures and languages. While our numbers are growing smaller, our membership is increasingly more diverse. For us, this challenge has two aspects:-

First, the Institute has to ensure that the candidates coming to the U.S. from another country are well prepared to be missioners in a country other than their own. Candidates who approach us but want to work in their own country are advised to join a local institute. Those who join Maryknoll must be willing to accept that, at least initially, their first mission experience after profession will be in a culture other than their own, where they will need to struggle with a new language. In a culture not our own, we are as a child among the people, not even having the words that are as refined as those of a five-year-old in that country. The local people and their children become our teachers. As we learn to listen and accept to be taught by them, we are gradually transformed into missionaries. For us, this is a post - Vatican II insight. For many years, women who came to Maryknoll from another country, were often assigned back to their own country of origin after profession. Since they had the language, the culture — who could be better? We had not yet learned what being missionary was all about.

Second, the Institute has to find a viable host community, where there are enough Sisters to welcome and accompany a new member. As a result of having so few entrants, our Regions do not receive new missioners on an annual basis, sometimes not for many years. This creates a gap which exacerbates the difficulty of a new missioner's adjustment. Nowadays, the age gap is often compounded by a culture gap. In Phnom Penh, the small community of three experienced members, all Americans from the United States, was still adjusting to Cambodia when it was asked to welcome a newly professed Sister who entered the Congregation from Arequipa, Peru. In such instances, the community's adjustments are multiple, both in mission and in community. Our struggles to transcend cultural differences to form communities in which the members thrive, are as integral to mission as are our apostolates. We must not underestimate the value of our witness.

Maryknoll Sisters have welcomed women from other cultures into the community from the beginning. In recent years, the sharp decline in U.S. entrants, by contrast with women from other cultures, has called us to examine critically the way in which we are all called to form community. For many years, women from other countries simply joined and were more or less assimilated. The startling change in our demographics has helped us realise that to become a community in the Gospel sense, all of us need to change.

III. THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

The third challenge for a traditional missionary institute is theological. When Maryknoll was founded, the Church seemed unchanging and the tendency was to see changes in the world as deviations from an unchanging norm except for technological progress. Today, everyone recognises that change is an integral part of the modern world and the pace of change is accelerating on every side.

For a great many, the tendency is to react to the changes in an effort to restore a past that is seen through idealistic lenses. We recognise the tendency as reactionary and the term often used for such reactionary tendencies is fundamentalism. Everyone who reads the newspapers today all over the world knows about fundamentalist movements in Islam, for example, in Judaism and in Christianity.

In a traditional missionary institute, as in every quarter today, the challenge is to face changes and deal with them creatively in light of the Gospel. That means that basic values have to be truly basic and

not identified with surface manifestations. A missionary institute and its members has to be rooted in God the Creator of the entire universe and the ultimate Provider for all peoples and cultures. This is what the Scriptures do by introducing the story of Israel with that of creation and of the ancestors, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, who became Israel.

God is revealed to us in the Scriptures, in the created universe, and in the life of the Church as Mystery. That Mystery is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Our tendency is to define and set clear limits to everything around us. The changes in the world require something else. We need to be in touch with Mystery in the biblical, Pauline sense of something continuously being revealed (cf. Eph 1:7-10).

From our efforts, we expect results but they do not always happen. Missionaries in Rwanda and Burundi have to be prepared to accept a very difficult reality. What they thought was a success is being washed away almost completely. If Paul were writing Galatians 3:26-29 today, he would add "There is neither Hutu nor Tutsi". Today, mission in Rwanda and Burundi has to be very different from what it was even a year ago.

Rwanda leads all of us to appraise our efforts in mission. None of us can be complacent. We all have a great deal to learn from the tragedy of Rwanda and so many other places such as Sudan, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador... we could name many other places where tragedy is waiting to happen. One of the most helpful tools at our disposal is pastoral theological reflection, a process, which can have many different forms and with which most are familiar. Generally, we recall a situation or experience and describe it as concretely as we can. We then submit our findings to the judgement of the Gospel which, in turn, enables us to recognise what we may need to change, including ourselves, vis-à-vis the situation. Accordingly, we then choose an appropriate response. Naturally, when pastoral theological reflection is done in community, it stands to yield much richer insights. Unless we are willing to analyse problems better we are in constant danger of either becoming part of them or of repeating them.

Hope is not based on accomplishments but on Christ's promise when he commissioned the first missionaries "I will be with you ..." (Mt 28:20). Perhaps by now, everyone here knew personally a missionary who has died violently. I recall so distinctly a Comboni seminarian, Alfredo Fiorini, a very gentle man whom I had in class at the Theological Centre of Religious in Nairobi. The subject of shedding one's blood for the sake of the Gospel comes up naturally in a New Testament class. All the same, it has an air of unreality until it actually happens to someone you know. It is a few years ago now that I read in FIDES about Alfredo's death in Mozambique. A medical doctor by profession, Alfredo decided not to apply for ordination with his class. Instead, he decided first to spend some years in mission as a doctor. He was on an errand of mercy when his car was stopped and he was gunned down together with his companions. His name comes to me often in prayer and I sit quietly confronting the Mystery. May his example and that of so many other of our friends who have given their lives open our hearts to the Mystery of the God of mercy, who is always with us and who never abandons us to the poverty of our own resources.

In sum, I have presented three major challenges for a traditional missionary institute such as the Maryknoll Sisters. The first was described as historical. The many historical changes in the world challenge us as missionaries to accept that we are no longer in charge and to re-focus our energies and assume a collaborative role in partnership with the local Church. This requires a change in attitude — an opportunity to become missionary: people who share their *Faith* as well as give a certain service. The second was described as demographical. In this section, I considered two major challenges, one regarding our diminishing numbers and the other our cultural diversity. In both instances, we rely on the faith of those who went before us to sustain us. Through them we have been abundantly blessed. The third, the theological challenge, dealt with a needed openness to Mystery as the most creative way to face all that challenges us now and will surely continue to do so into the future.

I am very grateful for your kind attention. I welcome your comments and questions. Thank you.

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COMING EVENTS

JPIC Commission of USG/UISG

POVERTY IN ROME
IS IT THE GENERALATES' CONCERN OR...?
A concrete preparation for the jubilee 2000

Keynote address: Dr. Amadeo Piva, Director Social Services of the town of Rome

Witnesses:

Rev Francesco Da Luce, SJ Director Astali Center	Refugees and migrants.
Sr Marguerita, NDA, Provincial Superior	Trafficking of women for sexual abuse.
Mr Alexius Perera, Caritas Roma	On the situation of the homeless.

Tuesday, 18 February — 14.45 hrs.
Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia, 476,

SEDOS AFTERNOON SEMINAR

— CATHOLIC BIBLICAL FEDERATION —

THE CHURCH AND THE CHALLENGE OF CULTURES IN ASIA

Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, S.D.B. of Assam, India

GESÙ CRISTO PROCLAMA LA BUONA NOTIZIA (Lc 4:14-30)
Preparare il Giubileo

Teresina Caffi, SMdM

Friday, 28 February, 15.00 - 18.30 hrs.
Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia, 476,

SEDOS ARICCIA SEMINAR 1997 (20 - 24 May, 1997)

(The Residential Seminar is *ONLY* for Member Congregations)

A SPIRITUALITY FOR MISSION INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

Iam Linden, Director CIIR, (London)

1) Global Justice: Essential Element in the Mission of the Church Today
2) A Spirituality for a Post-Modern Society — The Missionary Challenge of 'Politics in a Secular World'

Marie-Angèle Kitewo, SND (Zaïre)

3) La Spiritualité de l'Église en Afrique et le ministère de guérison
4) Une Spiritualité Africaine — Défi à la Créativité d'une Église

Fr Samuel Rayan, SJ (India)

5) A Spirituality of Mission in an Asian Context
6) Local Cultures — Instruments of Incarnated Christian Spirituality