sedos

Bulletin
2002

Vol. 34, No. 10 - October

Éditorial

Le père **Michel Gourgues**, o.p., dans son article Le Pater ou le souci prioritaire de la mission, *situe la prière enseignée par Jésus dans l'ensemble du message biblique. À partir d'une lecture exégétique, il fait ressortir les implications missionnaires du Pater.*

Analysant la société actuelle et découvrant à la fois la manière dont sont perçues les religions et aussi ce qu'impose aux masses le nouvel ordre économique, **Justin Vettukallel***, dans* The Church's Mission in a Changing World*, s'interroge sur les meilleures voies par lesquelles l'Église, dans son activité missionnaire, peut aller à la rencontre du monde tel quel dans sa réalité profonde.*

P. A. Kalilombe, *M. Afr., dans A Call to Self-Reliance of the Church in Africa, constate qu'en ce début du nouveau millénaire les Églises d'Afrique sont encore dépendantes, sous plusieurs aspects, de l'aide extérieure. Après avoir examiné les causes de cette pauvreté en Afrique, l'auteur se penche sur sa signification dans le contexte de la mondialisation et ce en quoi elle est fruit du péché. En conclusion, il évoque ce que l'Église doit faire, notamment pour promouvoir l'autosuffisance, et pourquoi elle doit le faire.*

Partant du fait que certains instituts religieux sont essentiellement missionnaires, tandis que pour d'autres la mission "ad extra" n'est qu'une composante de leur activité apostolique, que dans certaines communautés les membres proviennent de divers pays et dans d'autres ils sont tous du même, **Michael Amaladoss***, SJ, dans* Les Instituts missionnaires*, s'interroge sur la nature d'une nouvelle théologie de la mission. Il signale que beaucoup d'instituts éprouvent de la difficulté à s'adapter à cette situation. L'auteur évoque ce qu'impliquent les inculturations successives qu'a connues le message évangélique.*

Dans son article Gospel and Culture. Encounter in the Life of the People, **L. Stanislaus**, *SVD, affirme que l'Église devient vivante lorsque Bible et culture se rencontrent dans un respect mutuel. L'auteur se demande quelle est la responsabilité des croyants par rapport à leur foi, où se situe leur responsabilité de collaborer pour établir des structures sociales justes.*

Bonne Lecture !

Bernard East, o.p.
Directeur Executive de SEDOS

Dear Friends,

the SEDOS Secretariat would like to inform you that, the November/December Bulletin will be published as a double issue.

We hope you will continue to appreciate our work. Please, excuse the sudden changes.

Thank you,

SEDOS Staff

Michel Gourgues, o.p.

Le Pater, ou le souci prioritaire de la mission

Professeur d'exégèse du Nouveau Testament à la Faculté de théologie du Collège universitaire dominicain à Ottawa, Michel Gourgues vient de publier Le Pater, parole sur Dieu, parole sur nous (collection "Connaître la Bible" n. 26, Bruxelles, Lumen Vitae*, 2002).*

Les évangiles nous ont conservé deux versions du *Pater* : une longue chez Matthieu (6,9-15) ; une brève, avec une ou deux demandes en moins, chez Luc (11,2-4).

Les deux toutefois s'entendent sur l'objet et la formulation de la toute première demande : "Que ton nom soit sanctifié". Si peu semblable à notre langage habituel, cette formule, on le pressent, plonge ses racines dans l'Ancien Testament. Des milliers de disciples de Jésus qui la reprennent chaque jour, s'en trouve-t-il beaucoup à en percevoir la portée missionnaire ?

"Tu es saint : fais-toi connaître"

Pour la Bible, on le sait, il y a équivalence entre le nom et la personne. Ainsi, "le Nom" peut tout aussi bien désigner Dieu lui-même. Au lieu de "Béni sois-tu", tel psaume, à l'occasion, proclamera "Béni soit ton nom". À "Béni soit Yahvé notre Dieu", tel cantique préférera "Béni soit son nom de gloire et de sainteté".

Pour la Bible également, Dieu est le Saint. Cette conviction court d'un bout à l'autre du Premier Testament : "Vous serez saints, parce que moi, je suis saint" (*Lv* 11,45) ; "Saint, saint, saint est Yahvé Sabaoth" (*Is* 6,3).

Mais alors, si le Nom désigne Dieu et si Dieu est saint, comment peut-on prier pour que soit sanctifié le nom de Dieu ? Dieu ou son nom ne sauraient être sanctifié au sens d'être rendu saint. Comment les humains pourraient-ils sanctifier Dieu ? N'est-ce pas le contraire que proclame sans cesse l'Écriture ? "C'est moi, Yahvé, qui vous rend saints", lit-on par exemple en *Lv* 20,8. Et encore, un peu plus loin : "Car je suis saint, moi Yahvé, qui vous sanctifie" (*Lv* 21,8).

Si le nom de Dieu est saint, le sanctifier ne peut alors consister qu'à le manifester, le reconnaître ou le faire reconnaître comme saint. C'est bien cette signification qu'exprime par exemple tel passage d'Ézéchiel : "Les nations *sauront que je suis Yahvé* quand *je me sanctifierai* sous leurs yeux" (36,24). Pour Dieu, se sanctifier ou sanctifier son nom, c'est se faire reconnaître pour ce qu'il est. D'où la traduction faite en français par la Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible de la première demande du *Pater* : "Fais-toi reconnaître comme Dieu", ou encore, dans la nouvelle traduction de la Bible en français parue l'an dernier : "Tu es saint : fais toi connaître".

Donc, on ne saurait sanctifier Dieu ou son nom en le rendant saint mais en le faisant apparaître ou en le manifestant comme saint. Tantôt, la sanctification de Dieu ou de son nom est vue comme étant la mission ou la responsabilité des humains, en l'occurrence du peuple des croyants : "Je serai sanctifié par vous au milieu des nations" (*Éz* 20,41). C'est dans cette ligne que l'entendait aussi la troisième bénédiction du *Shemoneh Esreh*, que Jésus a dû faire sienne lorsqu'il participait à la prière de la synagogue : "Nous sanctifierons ton nom dans le monde, comme on le sanctifie dans les hauteurs célestes". Tantôt, la sanctification est plutôt vue comme relevant de l'initiative et de l'action de Dieu lui-même, comme c'était le cas par exemple dans le texte d'*Éz* 36 cité plus haut : "Et je sanctifierai mon nom…".

Ce Dieu dont l'initiative devance la nôtre

Ainsi donc, le nom de Dieu peut être sanctifié, c'est-à-dire que Dieu peut se faire connaître ou reconnaître, soit à travers une certaine qualité de vie et d'engagement des croyants, soit à travers ses propres interventions. Qu'en est-il dans la demande du *Pater* ? Cela n'est pas précisé. Et la tournure au passif, "que ton nom soit sanctifié", laisse le champ ouvert, en ce sens qu'on peut aussi bien sous-entendre à la suite "par toi-même" ou "par nous-mêmes", ou les deux à la fois.

Cependant, la première interprétation est sans doute

à préférer, si l'on considère que l'ensemble des demandes qui vont suivre — sauf la troisième en *Mt*, "que ta volonté soit faite" — en appellent toutes à l'initiative et à l'action de Dieu ("que vienne ton Règne", "donne-nous", "remets-nous", "délivre-nous"). Il doit donc en être ici comme au début du *Qaddish*, une autre prière ancienne de la synagogue, où la sanctification du Nom paraît relever de Dieu lui-même, de la même façon que l'établissement de son Règne : "Que soit magnifié et sanctifié son grand Nom (…) et qu'il établisse son règne".

Précède-nous sur le chemin de la mission

"Fais-toi reconnaître pour ce que tu es".

Voilà donc, aux yeux de Jésus, ce qu'il faut demander à Dieu en priorité. Le croyant a déjà reconnu Dieu, à qui il s'adresse comme à son Père. Mais cette relation à Dieu dans laquelle il est entré, il ne saurait l'accaparer pour lui-même. Les disciples de Jésus prient pour que le Dieu qu'eux-mêmes ont déjà reconnu se fasse aussi reconnaître par les autres. Ainsi, dès sa première demande, le *Pater*, d'emblée, élargit les perspectives et, pourrait-on dire, acquiert une portée missionnaire.

Cet élargissement des perspectives, affirmé dans les deux versions du *Pater*, est sans doute plus manifeste encore dans celle de Matthieu. Dieu, disait l'adresse, n'est pas seulement "mon Père", il est "notre Père" : le croyant singulier ne peut donc monopoliser Dieu. "Fais-toi reconnaître", enchaîne la première demande : les croyants dans leur ensemble ne peuvent donc pas davantage monopoliser Dieu. Selon une formule suggestive du trito-Isaïe prélevée dans un autre contexte, "j'en rassemblerai encore d'autres avec ceux qui sont déjà rassemblés" (56,8).

Pour les disciples de Jésus, pour Matthieu et Luc au moment où ils rédigeaient leur évangile après avoir découvert la pleine signification de l'Événement Jésus, la première demande du *Pater* possédait sans doute une portée missionnaire universelle : "que ton nom soit sanctifié *par tous*". "Allez enseigner toutes les nations" (*Mt* 28,19) ; "vous serez mes témoins jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre" (*Ac* 1,8) : pour les évangélistes et pour leurs communautés, la première demande du *Pater* revenait à demander à Dieu de les précéder sur le chemin de la mission.

À cette connotation missionnaire de la première demande, faut-il en joindre une autre ? Celle-là se situerait davantage dans la ligne de la transcendance. En ce sens que la sainteté, dont il est question dans cette demande, est à proprement parler l'apanage de Dieu, ce qui le "distingue" ou le "sépare" — selon le sens littéral de l'hébreu *qadash* — des humains, ce qui contribue à faire de lui le Tout-Autre, différent et transcendant par rapport à ces derniers. Et ainsi, la version de Luc assume une dimension qui, dans celle de Matthieu, s'est déjà exprimée à travers la qualification "qui es aux cieux".

Le Dieu Père est aussi le Dieu saint, proche et transcendant à la fois, celui dont les premières communautés ont saisi très tôt qu'il "veut que tous soient sauvés et parviennent à la connaissance de la vérité" (*1Tm* 2,4).

Réf. : Texte de l'auteur. Septembre 2002.

****

Justin Vettukallel

The Church's Mission in a Changing World

Introduction

The world to which we are sent on mission is experiencing the emergence of a new order seemingly identical with economic order imposed by the rich and the powerful on the poor. The information media on the other hand are creating a dream world that alienates masses of people. Religion is relegated to the private sphere and faith hovers only over the periphery of life, while the tension created by religious fundamentalism makes religion almost unwanted in society and to be perceived by many as a reason for scandal. It is at such a crucial juncture in the history of the world and religions that Christian mission seeks to rediscover its significance and new modes of praxis for being authentic and effective today.

This paper attempts to go deep into these realities and identifies civil society as the proper locus of Christian mission. Our attempt must be to enhance the significance of Christian mission in the present-day world, fashioning our approaches in such a way as to equip the Church to face the new world better. As our approaches to mission in society rely on our conception of mission and society, we begin by establishing the intrinsic relation between mission and the world.

1. Church and World: emerging missionary paradigms

In the emerging Catholic ecclesiology, the Church is seen essentially as missionary (*AG,* nn. 2, 9). Therefore, mission is not secondary to its being; the Church exists in being sent and for the sake of its mission.[1] If mission can be defined as "God's turning to the world",[2] the Church becomes missionary by making God present to the world. Hence to examine the mission of the Church today we need to identify two main factors, i.e. the purpose and ways of God's mission. From the Scriptures we know that God turned to the world to make a people of his own, a kingdom that solely worships him (Gn 22:18; Dt 5:6) and to give them a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8). True to this cosmic historic plan of liberation of the Father, the mission of the Church too is one of libera-

tion of man and world, both spiritual and physical (*RM,* n. 14). As we read in the Letter to the Hebrews, the ways employed by God were many and varied throughout the salvation history (Hb 1:1). It reminds us of the dictum '*Ecclesia semper reformanda*', that urges us to fashion our ways and methods according to time and place. Therefore, as necessitated by the very nature of this original mission, here we examine in brief the missionary approaches of the past to keep the Church in the proper focus and to fashion our methods according to the demands of the times.

1.1. Church in the World: Evolving Shifts in Approaches

As obvious from the Gospels, Jesus' mission envisaged a wholistic liberation, in his preaching and actions (e.g. the Nazraeth manifesto, healing miracles, exorcisms, etc.). In the apostolic period the material development of the people was also taken care of (e.g. the appointment of seven deacons [Acts 6: 1-3] and the collection made by Paul for the Jerusalem church [1Cor 16:1-3]). But this wholistic vision of integral liberation of the early Church gets diminished during the time of monasticism. As many opine, the world outside the Church was then perceived as a hostile power.[3] Reading the theological treatises from those centuries one gets the impression that there was only the Church and no world. Christian ministry and life were defined exclusively in terms of preaching, public worship, the pastorate and charity. Those outside the Church were only prospects to be won over.[4] Mission was a process of producing Churches and once these had been produced, all energy was spent on maintenance. Hence we seldom find in the missionary teachings of the pre-Vatican period any social teachings, or in the social teachings[5] any missionary flavour. To put it differently, the Church was a handicapped missionary in the world.

The real breakthrough in respect of the relationship between the Church and the world came with Vatican II. Although the theological foundations are laid in *Lumen Gentium,* the full extent of the shift becomes apparent in *Gaudium et Spes.* In its opening sen-

tence it recognizes an intimate link between the Church and the world of humanity. "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (*GS*, n. 1). Subsequent dogmatic developments[6] reveal this inescapable connection between the Church and the world.

The Church on earth, as the seed and the beginning of the kingdom (*LG,* n. 5) is the sign and instrument of the reign of God (*EN*, n. 59). This happens only when the Church displays to humanity a glimmer of God's imminent reign — a kingdom of reconciliation, peace, and new life. This concept calls for a radical change in the hitherto restricted ecclesial existence as 'Church-people' to 'kingdom people'. As Howard Snyder puts it very clearly,

> Church people think about how to get people into the Church ... kingdom people think about how to get Church into the world.... Church people worry that the world might change the Church.... Kingdom people work to see the Church change the world.[7]

Snyder calls for a radical change in the mode of being of the Church. Since the liberation theologies of 1970s until today, the liberation activities of the Church are more pastoral than missionary, i.e. orthodoxy doing orthopraxis among the Christians. Here orthodoxy has to manifest in orthopraxis to everyone, Christians and non-Christians alike, disclosing the real nature of the Church's mission, i.e. 'God's turning towards the world'. Here the universality of mission, "Go then to all nations" finds its concrete manifestation. A vivid exposition of this mission of the Church in the world will be attempted in the following pages.

1.2. Mission as Response to Human Predicament

It is beyond all doubt that God's act of sending his Son, Jesus, and Jesus' mission had the human person as the sole goal.[8] Hence the authentic mission of the Church necessitates a wholistic vision of the human person. Here we define the person as "a multi-dimensional phenomenon — spiritual, material, social, psychological and intellectual being".[9] Hence we can no longer understand a human-being as an individual existence or consciousness, for existence is common to all beings and the degree of consciousness varies among the vegetation; nor can we emphasize the human person as only a spiritual being as the Church traditionally understood in the light of dualism. A wholistic vision is seen in M. Heidegger who defines the human person as "a being-in-the-world, being-

with-the-beings and being-toward-Being".[10] As a 'being-in-the-world' dialoguing with the world is indispensable; as a 'being-with-other-beings' one dialogues with the fellow men and as a 'being-toward-Being', one dialogues with God. These three we call the predicates of a human person which indeed are the three predicaments to be encountered courageously for the actualization of one's self.

Jesus' mission too was in response to these three predicaments. He did not confine himself to preaching the Good News but extended his ministry in actualizing the kingdom of God. He fed the hungry (Mk 6:30-44; Mt 8:1-10) and led people to reconciliation with man and God (Lk 19:1-9). His avenues of ministry were not only the temple and synagogues, but the sea-shores, streets, market-places, villages, fields, hill-tops and plains; he went wherever people were struggling to support themselves. He translated the great mysteries of the kingdom in the human milieu.[11] This collective human-milieu constitutes society. As a human being and as the one sent to the people, civil society became the context, avenue and object of Jesus' mission. As the one being with them, he intended to reduce the human predicament, lessening their burdens in civil society.

If Jesus' mission was centered around the civil society to ease the human predicament, the task of the present-day Church too is to focus on society where we live. In this respect, mission as a response to the human predicament demands an understanding of civil society.

2. Civil society: the avenue of missionary encounter

Civil society is the proper space wherein the people of different religions, social strata and economic strengths come together and meet. The pulse of the human predicament is there with its utmost intensity. It is all the more valid today as the world is fast growing into a global village. Therefore, mission in civil society symbolizes mission in the world in all its complexity and transparency. In this mutual encounter between the world and the mission, the realities in society shape the mission of the Church and the mission of the Church simultaneously fashions a new mode of social existence. Obviously, therefore, an understanding of civil society is imperative for the mission, and such an understanding will in effect enhance the significance of mission in civil society. Hence we begin by analyzing society.

2.1. An Understanding of Civil Society

The concept of civil society comprises everything

that contributes to the existence and nature of society. Hence understanding civil society means understanding the mind of society. The interactions, opinions, shared interests, beliefs, history, etc., form the mind of society. This mind is manifested in the public expressions of religion, politics, culture and norms of socialization.

2.1.1. Pluralism: The Very Nature of Society

Any free society will have pluralism as its very nature. Society is a mosaic of different individuals characterized by different aptitudes, world visions, hereditary natures and beliefs. These multitudes of natures find their expression in gender, caste, politics and economic and intellectual standards. This nature of pluralism in itself is not dangerous to social existence, but is dangerous when nature is threatened and one group is marginalized by the domination of the other due to its claims of absolutism. Only the relativistic concept of reality *(anekantavada)* can allow pluralities to subsist in a society. At the same time these pluralities shall not go to the extreme of ethnocentrism,[12] that is not open to the objective truths. Hence, for peace and equity in society respect for plurality as well as the fostering of unity that surpasses all diversity are indispensable.

2.1.2. Economic Injustice and Poverty

There are rich and poor people in any society. Although the biblical history of civilization etiologically justifies the cause of economic disparity as designed by God, (Gn 16:12; 27:10), secular history approves it thanks to the domination of the mighty over the weak. It clearly portrays the migrations and innovations of the mighty over the weak as well as the accidental natural calamities that made the people poor. If poverty is rampant everywhere even today, it is due to the unequal distribution of the means of production, the arrogance of the mighty, natural calamities, unjust social systems and economic policies as well as the careless handling of wealth by the poor. Hence the poor are not born poor, instead they are made so by society. Unfortunately religions[13] also have justified this unjust economic order.

The poor become poorer even in this age of fast democratization due to the unjust economic policies of the governments. Studies[14] show that this is the result of the liberalization polices of the governments. While the nation grows as a world economic power the domestication of the economy is taken little care of. Globalization has become a license to exploit the poor. If the poor hardly get their daily crumbs and the rich continue consuming the huge chunk, then we must say that it is the so-called democratic societies that breed the rich and the poor alike.

2.1.3. Political Instability and Corruption

Democracy has proved to be the best system of governing society. In a pluralistic society a greater number of political parties ensures better participation of all people in the different social strata. However, we know that today the ideals the political parties stand for, are easily forsaken for the sake of power and money, in gibly forming and breaking coalitions. Today religions and religious fundamentalism have also entered into politics and secular parties even join hands with them to secure power.

Corruption has become the distinguishing mark of bureaucrats. The amount one receives as a bribe is directly proportionate to the height of the office one holds. This phenomenon of corruption in society is so pervasive and widespread that the system simply abhors probity.

2.1.4. Religious Fundamentalism and Secularization

If fundamentalism means believing more and more in less and less, secularization is believing less and less in more and more.[15] The fundamentalists, as is very obvious today, withdraw into a private and very limited parameter of orthodoxy over against the secularist concepts. Religious fundamentalism that claims absolutism over other religions is not just a threat to other beliefs but also to national integrity and human rights.

Secularization has brought the gradual disintegration of all the mythical and religious legitimations of society.[16] In many parts of the globe this process has been taking place at an alarming speed. This is a major threat to the very plausibility of religious experience. As a result the very credibility of religious beliefs and the transcendental dimension of life are in danger.

2.1.5. Cultural Homogenisation and Moral Degradation

The revolution in information technology is another characteristic of modern society. This march of information media criss-crossing the continents, hardly leaving any possibility for official control, is influencing every aspect of human life. It is remarkable when the world is turning into a global village, that ethnicity is given up for a superior global culture dictated by the media. Hence the traditional values and indigenous cultures are losing out and a homogenous culture is on the rise, as a new value system projected by the media spreads. The sense of sin and

sacredness is on the wane…. The consumerist culture is pervasive and we find the break-up of human relationships and the increase of crime.

2.1.6. Deterioration of Eco-system

The concern for economic and technological progress is not accompanied by a concern for the balance of the eco-system. The rapid industrialization and introduction of the modern agricultural process, as seen in irrigation based on big dams, and the use of pesticides and fertilizers, contribute to disturb the environment. De-forestation and progressive automation not only damage the environment but also give rise to ethical issues as the non-renewable sources of energy are recklessly used. The leaders and the legislators are totally unconcerned about the situation and it seems that the sole responsibility for maintaining the eco-system rests with a few environmentalists.

2.1.7. Society towards Development

The dynamism of a society is measured in terms of development. Often this development is understood in terms of material progress adding new amenities for life. The reins of this development are in the hands of the *élite* class. This development is related to the education of the people. The illiterate lower classes see their low social status in terms of sheer fatalism.

But education has changed the lives of the people today. There is a growing awareness of human rights. We see tribal consciousness, Dalit consciousness and feminist consciousness gaining more and more momentum. We also find the mushrooming of NGOs for safe-guarding the rights of the subalterns. It shows that today society is aware of its responsibility of human promotion although it is more easily said than done. Besides we also find a few people longing for a genuine God experience while on the other hand we see people rushing for popular devotions like pilgrimages and other observances through which their religious faith hardly affects their lives.

As we have come to the close of our analysis of present-day society we can conclude that civil society is in tension. While we see on the one hand oppression, corruption, injustice and degradation of religious and moral values, on the other hand we find the awakening consciousness of oppression and the urge for development, liberation and authentic God experience. Here comes the significant role of Christian mission. We shall elaborate it in the following pages.

2.2. Significance of Christian Mission and Civil Society

We have already seen that mission is the Church (God) turning towards society. Having analyzed society, we have now to ascertain the significance of mission for civil society and also the significance of civil society for Christian mission. In the latter part we shall look for the proper theological disposition that will fashion our approach.

2.2.1. Christian Mission Is the Need of the Time

Such a statement is perhaps indigestible to the hostile fundamentalist groups and the atheists. However, the analysis of civil society obviously shows that society longs for liberation. The tragic situations in our society crave for divine intervention, for we know that human intervention has often failed and will fail again. Therefore, if Creation is God's plan and God's promise is in terms of land, freedom, justice, abundance and a new type of economic system (Is 65: 17-25), this plan of God for his creation comes to fulfillment in the redemptive work of Jesus (Jn 3:17; 10:10). If this is yet to be carried out through the mission of the Church, then Christian mission is the need of the time. It is the need of the time not just because the majority of people still belong to other faith traditions, but because the world is permeated with oppression, injustice, poverty, violence and loss of hope. Mission is the need of the time not because the Church is the only agent of liberation, but because she is commissioned precisely for this task and that is her gift and contribution to the world.

2.2.2. Civil Society: The Focus and Task of the Church

In the above enumeration it is implicit[17] that mission is the need of civil society and it is the very focus and task of the mission as well. It can even be said that civil society is not just significant to the Church but its liberation is the sole scope of the Church (cf. Rom 8:19-23). To achieve this we need to have a proper theological disposition as our postulate that will give focus to the fulfilment of our task.

2.2.2.1 Jesus the Liberator, the Prophet and the Teacher

Jesus is the missionary *par excellence* for any missionary, so his missiology and methods ought to be our models forever. He was born into a civil society where religious fundamentalism, political instability and injustice existed in all spheres. The Gospels portray him not at all as a religious leader but as an integral liberator, prophet and teacher. He did not lead people nor

his disciples[18] to sacrifice in the temple nor to worship in the synagogue. Instead, as mentioned earlier, Jesus met the people in the streets, villages and seashores and led them to meadows, valleys and hill-tops. As a spiritual reformer he urged them to pray in spirit (Jn 4:23-24). He did not stop with preaching liberation (Lk 4:18-20) but helped the people in their dire needs (cf. Jn 2:1-12). He was moved by compassion (Lk 7:13) and did not allow people to continue to live in their deformities[19] and extended his works of charity beyond Judaism.[20] As a prophet he denounced the hypocrisies and injustices of the *élite* class and the exploitation attached to the temple and religion and predicted the impending disaster. He taught his people prayers, morals and the great mysteries of the kingdom in understandable parables. Thus, Jesus' mission had in view the integral liberation of the entire human predicament that prevailed in the society of his time and we have no alternative if we are truly continuing his mission.

2.2.2.2 The Universality of God's Kingdom

This is yet another postulate that adds significance to the mission in civil society. God's turning towards the world was to establish his kingdom. This kingdom of God was a great gathering up of people from all over, a great universal assembly. Isaiah says, "And nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Is 19:21-22). We find this echoed in Jesus' own preaching and action (Acts 10). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, we find how Jesus recognizes and appreciates the goodness in other religions (Lk 10:25-37). This is the perfect example shown by Jesus about our attitude towards other religions. Further the Church herself is a group of people sent into the world to be the symbol and servant of the kingdom. It is the leaven that is placed in this world (Lk 13:20-21) or the city built on the hill (Mt 5:14) to facilitate the transformation of everything into the kingdom. As St Paul puts it: "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10) so that God will completely rule over all (1 Cor 15:28).

Therefore we need to understand that the mission of the Church can exclude none for it is like a tree on which come and rest all kinds of birds (Lk 13:19) and like the universal banquet in which all sorts of people partake (Lk 13:29). This is one aspect of the universality of the Church's mission. Further in this cosmic project of God "all stem from the end stock" and "all share a common destiny" (cf. Acts 17:26-31; *NA*, n. 1) and his saving designs are extended to all (cf. Rom 2:6-7). Hence the Church has to join hands with everything on earth that brings people closer to the kingdom. This in-spires the Church to make her mission more broad based and give up her egoistic claims of exclusivism.

2.2.2.3 Inseparability of Evangelization and Development

This is not totally a new understanding of mission instead it was very much part of the early Church as becomes evident in Paul collecting money for the poor Churches and the appointment of the deacons to look after the material needs. However, it was forgotten in the course of time. The Synod of Bishops in 1974, and the subsequent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975, formally declared socio-economic liberation as an indispensable dimension of evangelization. This is further emphasized in the later mission Encyclicals too.[21]

As we read from the post-synodal document of 1971, *Justice in the World*, "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of this world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel" (no. 19). Also we read in *Populorum Progressio*, "material growth is essential for a person to develop as a human" (no. 19). In other words, evangelization includes promotion of justice and peace, running welfare institutions, working for the poor and needy, etc. According to this perspective, the primary task of mission today is to apply the good news to concrete life situations and find solutions to the basic human problems. Therefore every missionary is called upon to respond effectively to the needs of civil society by active involvement, for the sake of the Gospel and society, for evangelization without development is fruitless, while development without evangelization is rootless.

Having seen the nature and the significance of civil society with a proper theological disposition we are now prepared to fashion our possible approaches to the mission in civil society.

3. Approaches to doing mission in civil society

If civil society is the avenue proper to Christian mission, and integral development of the human person is our missionary task, then we should fashion our approach accordingly. Here our approach must be ecclesial as mission is the mission of Christ entrusted to the Church and befitting to today's society.

3.1. Openness and Transparency

Civil society is the public platform of the people where hidden agendas will be regarded with suspicion. It has to be disclosed to the public that the Church has

no hidden agenda, nor is it a pseudo-religious community converting everyone forcefully. This can be made possible only through greater involvement and interest in the civil activities by the clergy and the religious. There should be public relations leading to a good rapport with the civil and administrative system. This will ensure public support and legal security while these methods in themselves are very much missionary. One can perhaps say that this must be the basic approach to our mission in civil society.

3.2. Dialogue of Life and Action

In civil society dialogue or the dialogue of life[22] receives multiple meanings. We know that true Christ experience is the basis for genuine Christian witness of life and this witness of life is the core of any dimension of mission (*EN*, nn. 16, 41). Dialogue of life is the witness of life *par excellence* when led to dialogue of action whereby missionaries live in an open and neighbourly spirit with followers of other religions sharing their joys and sorrows, problems, and pre-occupations and striving for integral development and liberation of the people in mutual collaboration. This dialogue of life and action takes place in markets and at street-corners and among the cyclone and earthquake victims. Inter-religious dialogue, intellectual dialogue, proclamation and conversion all are implied in this approach. At the same time such an approach ensures religious harmony and integral evangelization both physical and spiritual and eventually the Church will take deep roots in society.

3.3. Prophetic Approach in Society

The prophetic role of the Church had often been a laughing stock for society in its pronouncement about secular matters, for our prophecies sometimes failed to read the real writing on the wall.[23] A true prophet is one who listens to God and speaks to people. A missionary prophet is one who listens to God and to society and speaks to society. A good listener perceives the signs of the times and of history and points out the right path, questioning the unjust social, religious and economic system. Our writings and speeches should animate and inspire everyone to be aware of one's social responsibilities and rights. The homilies should condemn unjust social orders, console the oppressed and animate the down-trodden to work for liberation. Our classrooms should also be the platforms for debate on equality, fraternity and justice. The Church's spokespersons should condemn not only the atrocities against missionaries but against any one and should also comment on economic policies and political developments.

3.4. Incarnation Model of Inculturation

Effective involvement in civil society demands a missionary to be at one with society. Hence there is no substitute for inculturation. Often this inculturation is practised as adaptation and accomodation. But true inculturation is ex-culturation and we call it incarnation[24] as Jesus did, the true ontological involvement of the evangelizer in the people's context where participation not accomodation takes place. Such an inculturation demands a radical detachment and personal commitment. The merit of this model is that incarnation touches the entire human predicament instead of option for the poor, sympathy and almsgiving, here we need to participate in people's struggle. In short, this model keeps evangelization integral and the Church indigenous.

3.5. Empowerment of the Subalterns

Dalits, tribals and women are still voiceless in our society. They should be told of Jesus' universal banquet to which all are invited (Lk 13:24). What is required of us also is their empowerment in the earthly kingdom. To do this we must delve deep into their lives to find the sources of their oppression. Conscientization should follow the analysis of these retrieved inner stories, which must provide them with stimulus to become conscious of their rights and dignity (tribal consciousness, Dalit consciousness, etc.) and also for action for social change. We need to provide guidance and legal support for their movements.

3.6. Enhancing the Role of the Laity

Evangelization is the task of all People of God (*AG*, n. 35). As the lay faithful are to live in the world, engaging in every kind of work and business on earth, they are to sanctify the world from within like leaven (*LG*, n. 31). Therefore they are the best agents to establish the kingdom in civil society. First of all, they must be exemplary witnesses in their family life. They must be catalysts of love, truth and justice in their spheres of life as employees, bureaucrats, doctors, nurses, political leaders, activists, etc. The Church engages in nation-building through them purifying and sanctifying whatever is erroneous and unfit. Today, while the clergy and the religious are branded as traitors of culture and accused that their every action is meant to convert people to Christanity, the authentic life of lay missionaries should enliven and enlarge the scope of mission.

3.7. Utilization of the Media

If information media fashions the society of today, the Church must utilize this possibility for forming authentic civil societies. Understanding the language,

technology and psychology of the audio-visual culture, the Church must take steps to establish practical ways of net-working on regional, national and international levels. Here the Church must use the media for spiritual enlightenment, moral awakening and for arousing social consciousness, whereby she can be like the city built on a mountain showing forth the people the signs of the times and the paths towards their goals.

3.8. Wholistic Spirituality

Besides religious spirituality, we need to propogate a wholistic spirituality in which the sorrows and grievances, the anxieties and aspirations of the people and the environment are the themes for our prayer and reflection. Such spirituality will be one of contemplation and concrete action.[25] It is a spirituality that looks to God as the Creator and protector of the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of creation. It is the spirituality that calls one to share the poverty and the sufferings of the People of God. It is a spirituality that equips one to change one's adamant attitude, to be broad, bold and receptive in one's approache to mission in a changing world.

4. Towards a new heaven and a new earth

Finally we affirm that Christian mission in the world should be a mission that gives hope to all, especially to the victims of oppression. 'The heaven and the earth', pointing to the reconciliation of the two irreconcilable realities is the apocalyptic hope of John and his community (Rev 21:1). It adds greater strength to the mission in civil society. Here we understand better that the kingdom, the Hebrew people hoped for (Lev 26:3-13), the kingdom Jesus preached (Mk 1:14; Lk 4:14-16) and lived (Mk 1:29-34) and the kingdom the early Christians believed in (Rev 21:3-4) are the perfect blend of spiritual and material bliss. The Hebrews experienced the same, during the united monarchy, Jesus announced the nearness of this kingdom ('at hand' — Mk 1:15) and made its material manifestations during his life; and the early Church tried to experience the same in its daily life (Acts 2:44-47). Therefore, the eschatological hope we believe in requires a foretaste in the present. That is to say our mission to establish a new heaven and a new earth necessitates an incessant struggle here on earth; a struggle for a better society signifies a struggle for the kingdom, the irreplaceable task of the Church on earth here and now.

Conclusion

As we go out into the world on mission what we need to remember is that the mission we carry out is the mission Jesus entrusted us with. It is needless here to say again that the focus of Jesus' mission was civil society. By the very fact of our identity as missionaries we need to be faithful to the trails Jesus traversed. While we involve in mission in the troubled society of today, with all its social problems, economic anomalies and religious pluralities, our sole task is to cause the coming of the utopia of the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated centuries ago, and the world craves for.

To conclude, here we propose that mission in the third millenium presses for a '*re-presentation*' of Jesus the missionary. In him we have the fundamental approach of incarnation that made him not phenomenologically but ontologically one with society and he took on the likeness of a servant. Our inculturation shall not be of sheer peripherals but existential that sociologically makes us one with the people, sharing their joy and struggling for their cause. We need to appropriate the wholistic vision of Jesus that comprised the whole of humanity beyond the racial, social, and economic disparities and his integral approach that sought both spiritual and physical liberation. Like Jesus who recognized the goodness of the Samaritan, we need to recognize and appreciate the goodness in other religions rather than working for tolerance and religious harmony but developing a dialogue of action for human promotion. As Jesus was a doer as well as a preacher, we need to depart from our armchair theologies and translate our theology into action explaining and proving the good news we preach. As Jesus employed the most appealing story-telling form for communication, it is high time that we opt for the best media for our missionary communication. Finally as Jesus never failed to do the will of the Father, amidst the confusion and polemics of today, we shall never be unfaithful but more strongly committed.

In the present market culture of civil society, only quality products will survive. While the world looks for authentic human persons, mission in the world above all demands an authentic Christian witness which alone can ensure a place for the Church in the market culture. The only formula to increase our quality is to Christify the Church. Therefore, if we are looking for a brighter future for mission in civil society, let us dare to resolve to return to Jesus, the missionary *par excellence*.

Notes and references

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV,* T &T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1956, p. 725.

2. As cited in David J.Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* Orbis, New York, 1991, p. 376.

3. Henrikns Berkholf, *Christian Faith,* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 411.

4. Howard Synder, *Liberating the Church,* Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1983, p. 137.

5. Even today the Church's social teachings are more pastoral than missionary. In the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* of Pope John Paul II (1988), one can hardly find any statements concerning social work among other religions, although it is acclaimed as a great social teaching after *Rerum Novarum.*

6. A close look at the subsequent major missionary documents will make this statement clearer. *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* nn. 33-39 very explicitly establishes the relation between the Church and the world. In *Redemptoris Missio* chapter 2 is specially dedicated to this concept, while in *Ecclesia in Asia* chapters 2 and 6 deal with the matters concerned with the same. However, reading between the lines one may wonder if these documents really reflect the original spirit of *Gaudium et Spes).*

7. Snyder, *Liberating the Church*, p. 11.

8. The angels announce to the shepherds "a Saviour is born for you, the good news that will bring joy for all people" (Lk 2:10-11). What would have meant joy and salvation for the shepherds? Shepherds stand for the lowly, for them salvation is restoration to wholeness of life. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to St Luke*, Catholic University of America, New York, 1985, p. 49.

9. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Concept of Man,* Indological Book House, New Delhi, 1988, p. 113. This I feel is the best wholistic understanding of man in which all the classical definitions are implicit.

10. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* John Macquireie and Edward Robinson (trans), Basil and Blackwell, Oxford, 1982, p. 63.

11. One can hardly observe any parable that does not contain the language and mind of the ordinary Palestinian, for the parables are taken from the context of Palestine society.

12. Ethnocentrism is the point of view that one's own culture is to be preferred to all other cultures. Cf. S. M. Michael, "Beyond Cultural Ethnocentrism and Relativism", *Indian Missiological Review*, Vol. 20, n. 4, 1999, 13-19, p. 16.

13. For e.g. the *Varnasrama Dharma* and the law of *Karma* in Hinduism justify the low castes to be always low in all spheres of life and believe it to be their fate. Jews considered the Edomites as their slaves because they were the descendents of Esau who failed to receive the blessing from Jacob.

14. United Nations' Human Development Report of 1999 shows that 20% of the Northern minority has 82.5% of world trade, commercial lending and resources. For an exposition of the same see Thomas Kochery, "Globalization: A License to Exploit the Poor", *Indian Currents,* July 1999, pp. 12-16.

15. Desmond O'Donnel, "Evangelisation: The Challenges of Modernity", in *Trends in Mission,* William Jeckinson and Helen O' Sullivan (eds), Orbis, New York, 1993, pp. 118-134, 121.

16. O'Donnel, "Evangelisation: The Challenges of Modernity", p. 121.

17. While mission is the obligation of the Church, the creation has the right to receive the benefits this mission offers. These two complementary dimensions of mission are very obvious in the whole of salvation history.

18. Although Jesus himself frequented the synagogue, we hardly find him exhorting the people to do so.

19. This is very explicit from the summary statement of Mark (Mk 6:56).

20. Jesus went beyond Jordan (Perea) where the population was mostly Gentile (Mt 19:1).

21. See footnote No.6.

22. For the dogmatic foundation of dialogue of life see *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 42.

23. While reading some of the documents some feel that the magisterium knows nothing about the present day situation. For e.g. note some of the comments by the Asian Theologians after the issue of CDF document *Dominus Iesus.* Furthermore, concerning matters other than morals the Church is often late to pronounce its comments.

24. For a detailed enumeration of this model of inculturation see Anto Karokarm, "Mission: An Alternative Model", *Third Millenium,* Vol 3 (1), 2000, 29-44, 42. The merit of this model is that it is not for mere accomodation but for existential oneness in the given context.

25. It is in contemplation, not in revolutionary dialectic, that believers find strength for their work of liberation. Cf. Segundo Galileo, *Following Jesus,* Orbis, Maryknoll, 1981, p. 1.

****

P.A. Kalilombe, MAfr.

A Call to Self-Reliance of the Church in Africa

Rt. Revd. Dr Patrick A. Kalilombe, M. Afr., is from Malawi and holds a doctorate in theology. He is currently a lecturer at the University of Malawi. His address is: Bishop's House, 15 Malemia Road, P. O. Box 11909, Zomba, Malawi.

Introduction

The self-reliance of the local Church in Africa remains a crucial subject matter. In AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa)[1] countries for example, the discussion on the issue of self-reliance has not been exhausted in over thirty years,[2] long after *Vatican II*, when most African countries were becoming independent, self-governing nations, up to the present. The Church, at that time, was quite optimistic about the prospects of speedy development and hoped for self-dependence as a self-ministering, self-supporting and self-propagating Church. There were encouraging signs of the handover of responsibility from the missionaries to local leadership.

This article is a reflection on how far the AMECEA countries have gone on the road to self-reliance after more than thirty years of struggle.

A Church still dependent

Regarding self-support, the late Adrian Hastings said:

A Church that depends for its existence and essential services upon the continuous charity of other churches is not a healthy, properly established Church. Basic economic self-reliance is as much a part of the establishment of the Church, which is the specific purpose of missionary work, as is the indigenisation of its hierarchy.[3]

We are in the second year of the new millennium yet, we do not seem to have progressed towards self-reliance and still depend on external help in many ways. While there might be a few cases in Eastern Africa where the Churches depend primarily on their own communities for existence and fulfilment of mission, most Churches in the AMECEA region continue to expect help from outside, even for the very basics of their existence. Why is this so? The reason is obvious: our countries have become desperately poor and hence, dependent.

Why and how Africa became desperately poor

Soon after Independence, our nations entered a period of confusion, which still lingers on. There have been constant internal conflicts between regions or ethnic groups, resulting in many refugees or asylum seekers, loss of infrastructure, material and human resources which eventually resulted in the loss of talents and skills on which development could have been based. Diseases and plagues, especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic have inflicted and affected the most productive and developmental age-groups. In the fateful thirty years, between the 1960s and 1990s, government and administration deteriorated in many African countries as military or despotic rulers took over. Most of them were not only ill-equipped for national development, but were often instrumental in entrenching systems of inefficiency, corruption, nepotism, misuse or outright embezzlement of public resources, terrorism and disregard of human rights. These vices still bedevil our nations.

For some time in the 1990s, there was hope that genuine democracy was possible, and real development would gradually emanate. Unfortunately, this was a false and premature optimism, for democracy is still as illusive as ever and poverty is on the increase. In the meantime, external assistance has been flowing in: development loans, grants, project funds, technical advice, and even seemingly free donations, all given in the name of the "poor people" of Africa, with the assumed intention of improving their lot. Nevertheless, experience has proved that these donations only escalate the situation of poverty. External funding has turned out to be an "albatross hung around the neck" of our nations. It has created the heavy burden of debts which our countries are struggling to pay. There seems to be no other solution than to continue begging in order to survive.

On the other hand, there are individuals and groups who are rich and prosperous, as well as areas and zones of impressive development. At a glance, one may be

tempted to conclude that we are progressing: business is booming; industries are springing up all over the place; the Gross National Product (GNP) is growing. This kind of prosperity is true only for a relatively small proportion of people while the majority are living in abject poverty.

Our economies function within the system of globalization. In reality, it is a sophisticated version of neo-colonialism since it enriches the "mighty" — the First World and some individuals and groups among us — at the expense of the weaker, who are the vast majority of the citizens. This system juxtaposes two classes: the powerful and advantaged and the poor and exploited. The latter may be simple and uneducated, but they are not naïve. They perceive the true nature of the situation, knowing that they are not genuine shareholders of the global benefits. They also feel out of place since they do not posses power, opportunities, knowledge and skills like the upper class. As a result, their share in the benefits of the global community is exploitation.

So, even when the poor are pressed into, or get involved in programmes for progress and development, they know that they are the losers. As the Chinyanja song says: "Those who will enjoy what is in the pot are just watching smugly, we who are doing the cooking are wasting our time". Just as they served the interests of foreigners during colonial days, so also today, they feel that what they are asked to do even in their employment or profession is for the benefit of someone else out there — the government, the employer — rather than for their own.

Today we find ourselves in a different situation. Our nations have had ample time to experience the harsh realities of post-colonial independence. They now understand better what neo-colonialism means. As part of the Third World, we are the dependent and dominated periphery, struggling under an entrenched system that creates and maintains poverty and powerlessness, a feeling experienced not just at the national and government level, but also at the level of individuals and communities, especially by the "ordinary people". Indeed, what is striking in Africa today, is the feeling of crisis, confusion and helplessness.

How globalization impoverishes Africa

The majority of ordinary Africans find themselves between two options: either to seek refuge in the primitive way of life or to try their luck within the prevailing globalization. In both options, they end up as victims of exploitation.

When they resort to the former option, it is not because they want to move back into primitivity, rather because contemporary life is strange and threatening,

yet they have to adjust despite the challenges they face. Eventually, they find out that this does not work because in the past, communities and extended families were small unlike today. They relied on solidarity and mutual support, sharing the available resources and cooperating in various endeavours. Everyone was considered equal except for special members like chiefs and other leaders.

However, this is not the case everywhere. Today, personal ambition and competition is the hidden motive. The outcome is visible tribalism, bribery, nepotism and corruption, which hinder genuine development. People from different life-styles find themselves, by force of circumstances, involved at the global level.

Sinful poverty

In an attempt to try their luck within the prevailing system of globalization, they forcefully try to obtain a share in the global benefits using unjustifiable means that are morally questionable such as dishonesty, stealing and extortion, cheating, violence and destructiveness. Although they may feel justified, the outcome is not for the betterment of their life. Dishonesty does not pay, it only turns people into unproductive parasites.

At times, they try to depend on the good will of the rich and the powerful through mendacity, parasitism, or other servile-client relationships. However, this too is self-defeating, a sign that they have developed and internalized a negative or defeatist idea of life and a poor self-image. They no longer believe that they can achieve anything through honesty. Negative experience has created in them the conviction that those who exploit them do so through these same dishonest ways. Therefore, they too conform to a system which unfortunately continues to victimize them.

The poverty experienced in Africa is not just any kind of poverty; it is a *sinful* one. It is better known as "anthropological poverty" since it attacks a people's dignity as authentic human beings. It is a product of injustice, oppression and exploitation. Thus, it is sinful not only because it is a product, but also because it pushes towards sin by dehumanizing the victims, making them so destitute that they lose their moral values and their sense of self-respect.

Struggle against poverty and powerlessness

In spite of so much aid being pumped into the continent through government and non-governmental organizations, Africa is becoming poorer and poorer. Certainly, this does not mean that Africa is poor. Our

poverty is not in the pockets but in our heads. Even if one puts millions of dollars into the pockets of our people, it would make very little difference. The solution is not more foreign aid but, a change of attitude geared towards the development of solidarity, cooperation, creativity and resourcefulness. All these imply conversion: turning away from the path of death to pursue with confidence the way that leads to life. They entail developing a spirit of honesty, hard work and learning how to maximize our resources. This programme should be undertaken by those who try to mobilize the people at the grassroots to help them fight against poverty and powerlessness.

The African Synod and self-reliance

When AMECEA first thought of self-reliance, Eastern Africa, as indeed the rest of the continent, was in the early stages of the post-colonial era. This thought was inspired by *Vatican II,* which was held when the problems of Africa had not figured prominently. However, in the past few decades, important developments have taken place side by side with the deterioration of conditions in Africa. As far as the Church is concerned, the most significant event was the African Synod in 1994, which was a welcome occasion for the Church in Africa to examine itself and to reaffirm its mission in the new millennium. Self-reliance should now be seen in the light of the African Synod on a continent which in the following words of the Synod Fathers, is full of problems:

"In almost all our nations, there is abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of the available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. The results stare us in the face: misery, war, despair. In a world controlled by the rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected".[4]

The Church's project for self-reliance should, therefore, be guided by the experiences of Africa as a whole, in the area of poverty and powerlessness. After all, the actors in the Church's context are at the same time actors on the wider level, and the problems to be tackled are of the same nature.

Self-reliance and the Church's evangelizing mission

Although the African Synod did not discuss self-reliance as one of its main topics, it included it among its recommendations as follows:

"Precisely in this context, the Synod Fathers em-

phasized how necessary it is for each Christian community to be organized so that as far as possible it can provide for its own needs…. Consequently, I [it is the Holy Father speaking] earnestly invite the Episcopal Conferences, Dioceses and all the Christian communities of the Continent's Churches, insofar as it is within their competence, to see to it that this self-sufficiency becomes increasingly evident".[5]

The central aim of the African Synod is seen in its official title: "The Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000". It sought to equip the Church in Africa for its mission of bringing the Good News to the peoples of Africa. The Church is being sent to proclaim the joy and hope of the Risen Christ who, with the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord, comes "to bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk 4:18).

When the Church, planted in the midst of a poor and hopelessly dependent continent, demonstrates the possibility of "providing for its own needs", it is proclaiming to contemporary Africa something that really is "Good News". The Church proves there is a possibility that things can get better in Africa, and at the same time demonstrates the conditions and the means by which this is possible. In this way, self-reliance becomes part of the Church's mission of evangelizing Africa, and indeed the whole world.

Appropriate understanding of the 'Church'

Self-reliance is possible only if the "ordinary people" are convinced that they are both the agents and the ultimate beneficiaries of their efforts in improving their situation. If they know that self-reliance is for their benefit, they will commit themselves to this task. In this case, the "Church" is the people, not just their leaders or an impersonal system with which the ordinary faithful would not identify.

When in the 1970s AMECEA started enhancing self-reliance, the model of Church which was thought most appropriate was the one propounded by *Vatican II*: The Church as Body of Christ and People of God. With the model of the Family, it was possible to visualize the development of a local Church that would be self-ministering, self-supporting and self-propagating, based on Small Christian Communities.[6]

The African Synod moved further by proposing the model of Church as God's Family as follows:

The Synod Fathers acknowledged it [the Family model] as an expression of the Church's nature par-

ticularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust … to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the particular Churches, without undue ethnic considerations.[7]

There is no doubt that this new model addresses more effectively the problems that have emerged in Africa during the past years, especially ethnic and group conflicts. The Synod Fathers earnestly hoped that theologians in Africa "will work out the theology of the Church as *Family* with all the riches contained in this concept, showing its complementarity with other images of the Church".[8]

Nevertheless, the model of family remains a comparison. While the image can be useful in emphasizing values such as care, solidarity, warmth, acceptance, reconciliation and communion, self-reliance, however, will depend on a deeper understanding of family.

In contemporary Africa, the "family" is facing problems due to the impact of modern life.[9] These manifest themselves in the relations within the family: between parents and their children, elders and younger ones, those "responsible" and those "to be taken care of". In most cases, parents and elders are considered oppressively dominating. They insist on being obeyed without question and on the understanding that they alone know what is best for their children. Thus, children are alienated because they feel that they are not expected to think and decide for themselves. They are hardly consulted even about what concerns them. They are not part of the decision-making process in the affairs of the family.[10] If the family is proposed, presumably in its ideal state as the model for the Church, a fundamental problem may arise: What if the Church gives very little scope for the laity? In such a case, it would be impossible to develop a self-reliant Church.

Need for careful planning

Self-reliance cannot be achieved through improvising. It has to be carefully planned for. We can learn from professional planners the use of the SWOT method which consists in lining up the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in order to consider them. By adopting this method, the Church would, at different levels, analyze the situation, identify the available resources and obstacles, and use them in developing self-reliance. At the same time, the Church will try to discover the various opportunities for realizing this project by utilizing them.

At the end of the African Synod, the Bishops resolved to implement the Synod's deliberations in their Churches. There was a plan of holding local diocesan synods. It would be useful to find out whether and in what manner the Episcopal Conferences of the AMECEA region implemented this recommendation. It is believed that the topic of self-reliance was included in the plan and that the local synods involved the laity.

Towards a self-reliant Church

The first task towards self-reliance in the Church in Africa would be to assess our strengths and realize the resources at our disposal. But, the difficulty is usually attributed to the fact that Africa is a poor continent, yet Africa is not poor. It has natural resources in abundance. Actually, most of the aid poured into our coffers has come from our own lands; the product of our labour, what we have failed to exploit and manage efficiently. Most African countries have been impoverished, in spite of receiving huge amounts of external aid. The problem lies in the misuse of this aid by the leaders who sometimes embezzle the funds to alleviate their own poverty rather than that of the most needy.

Some Church organizations own plenty of land with natural resources, which past generations of missionaries managed efficiently in order to cater for the needs of the local Church. They also have members who have the knowledge and skills required for exploiting these resources; these members may be in government or private employment. The same can be applied to other aspects of self-reliance (self-ministering and self-propagating). The Churches can identify helpful resources that are at their disposal, such as schools and institutions, trained personnel and the readiness of its members to serve.

In planning for self-reliance, available resources should be the first and the main ingredients rather than hoped-for funding and external aid. After all, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. If future resources have to be included, their eventual availability should be reasonably guaranteed. In any case, it is imprudent to initiate programmes that depend on some vaguely hoped-for help from elsewhere for their maintenance and development.

Ecclesiastical leaders have to involve the laity by providing adequate information regarding the sources of the funding for the church's projects. Sometimes, Christians tolerate or encourage grandiose projects whose funding is uncertain, because they have been led to believe that the Church has inexhaustible resources. If they were honestly briefed on the situation, they would be the first to accept any required trimming of the budget and would be more willing to commit themselves to local contributions.

External funding: A double-edged sword

External aid is always a double-edged sword: it can help the needy out of their predicament only to entrap them in their poverty and powerlessness perpetually. This is clear in the context of the present system of globalization. Donors may be tempted to use their donation as a means of controlling the recipients. Usually, there are conditions attached to the aid; first, the donors designate the projects or programmes they are prepared to fund, they also retain the right to monitor their use, so that they can stop assisting at any time. This empowers the donors to direct and control the projects. If they wanted the beneficiaries to be self-sufficient, they would encourage programmes that entrench dependence.

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa,* the Holy Father John Paul II reminded us about the importance of assistance we are entitled to expect from sister churches in the following words:

I call on sister Churches all over the world to be more generous to the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, so that, through their structures of assistance, they will be able to offer to poorer Dioceses economic assistance dedicated to projects that will generate resources, with a view to increasing the financial self-reliance of the Churches.[11]

The Pope further cautioned recipient Churches not to naïvely accept assistance without studying the strings attached to it. Of course, desperate paupers do not "look a gift horse in the mouth". Still, our churches must learn to be sufficient and independent even if they are poor. Otherwise, they will never succeed in reaching authentic self-reliance in spite of being recipients of so much external aid. This point should be noted in the projects of self-reliance.

Starting with the basics

While utilizing the resources, priority should go to programmes and projects that lay the foundations for a sustained income generation, and not those that answer basic needs. Even when the aid is used for emergencies like natural disasters, famine and conflicts, it is important to distinguish between the two aims: meeting the immediate needs, and addressing the problems, which may be at the root of these immediate needs. The Holy Father insisted on the second aim, and advised Churches to consider it when utilizing assistance received. We should ask ourselves: How do we make use of the help we receive in such a way that we can address the fundamental needs of our Church?

For those who start from a situation of poverty and powerlessness, there are two steps in planning for self-reliance. The first step addresses the basic needs, while the second moves forward towards sustainable growth and development. Both steps must take into account the available resources, although the first step is strategically crucial since you cannot hope to be self-reliant unless you have first laid the foundation by satisfying the basic needs. It is clear that the poverty of our people has become chronic and almost intractable because we still lack the basic needs. The majority of the people spend most of their time and effort searching for and cultivating food in order to survive. Until this basic requirement is achieved, it is useless to hope that genuine development in other areas will be actualized since all the efforts are assimilated at the basic level. In planning for self-reliance within the Church, we have to identify the basic needs for the survival of the Church and then use the resources at our disposal to meet those needs first, before we spend them on other projects.

Conclusion

The project of self-reliance cannot be accomplished by mere wishful thinking. It goes with authentic zeal, commitment and sacrifice. Self-reliance should also be taken as part of the whole evangelizing mission of the Church. This implies proper formation of the agents of evangelization at all levels of the Church starting with the bishops themselves. As Archbishop Merdado Mazombwe of the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia, recommended during the Thirteenth Plenary Assembly of the AMECEA Bishops, there is need for "all parishes, dioceses, Episcopal Conferences and AMECEA Region to have a programme of ongoing formation to articulate the strategies to be taken by all the agents of evangelization, especially the bishops".[12]

Self-reliance in the Church in Africa can only be realized if people at the grassroots are fully involved and feel that it is their project. As the Chichewa proverb says; *Pakalowa njoka, thandizeni, pakalowa mbewa ndi kumba ndekha,* meaning, "when a snake enters a hole, you call people to come and help you to dig, but when a rat is in the hole, you say you will dig yourselves", in the same way, Church leaders may tend to need people at the grassroots when money is needed from them, but when it comes to major decisions about the same money, they are not needed. Such a spirit and attitude of Church leadership towards people cannot lead to self-reliance.

Notes

1. The AMECEA membership includes Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Sudan.

2. Cf. *AFER,* vol. 16 (1974): "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s", 18 (1976): "Building Small Christian Communities", 21(1979): "Building Small Christian Communities".

See also *Christ's Church in Lilongwe Today and Tomorrow: Our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Project,* Likuni Press and Publishing House, 1973.

3. Hastings, A., *Mission and Ministry,* London: Sheed and Ward, 1971, p.14.

4. *The Church in Africa,* Translation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa,* Balaka, Malawi: Montfort Missionaries, 1995, n. 40 (p. 32). [*Ecclesia in Africa*, pp. 42-43]

5. *The Church in Africa*, n. 104 (p. 77). [*Ecclesia in Africa*, pp. 107-108]

6. See my "The African Local Churches and the World-wide Roman Catholic Communion" in P. A. Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grawroots,* Kachere Book n. 7, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, pp. 98-104.

7. *The Church in Africa,* n. 63.

8. *Ibidem.* Theologians in Africa have already started to respond to this recommendation, cf. A. Shorter *et al.*, *Theology of the Church as Family of God,* Tangaza, Occasional Papers, n. 3, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, and A. E. Orobator, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context,* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000.

9. See the reflections of A. Shorter and Mary Getui in *Theology of the Church as Family of God.*

10. See what John Mary Waliggo says in his contribution, "The Synod of Hope at a Time of Crisis in Africa", in AF & JN, *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 208.

11. *The Church in Africa,* n. 104.

12. Mazombwe, M., "The on-going Formation Of Bishops As Agents of Evangelization for the Church as Family of God", in *African Ecclesial Review (AFER),* Vol. 41 Nos. 4, 5 and 6.

****

Crossing Borders:
A Spirituality for Mission in Our Times

by Peter C. Phan
The Warren-Blanding Professor of Religion and Culture
at the Catholic University of America
and President of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Tuesday, 3 December 2002
at 9:00 hrs

The Brothers of the Christian Schools,
Via Aurelia, 476
Rome

The Lecture will be in English.
Simultaneous translations in French, Spanish and Italian.

Entrance fee: € 4,00

****

Michael Amaladoss, SJ

Les Instituts missionnaires

Jésuite indien, Michael Amaladoss est professeur de théologie et réside à Madras. Il enseigne également au centre Sèvres à Paris. Connu par ses nombreuses publications surtout dans le domaine du dialogue interreligieux, il est membre du Conseil de rédaction de Spiritus.

Les Instituts missionnaires sont-ils en crise ? Je le crois. Il y a beaucoup de raisons pour cela. En cette ère post-coloniale, il ne sont plus aussi bienvenus qu'autrefois dans les pays asiatiques. Dans le monde ecclésial d'après Vatican II, les Églises locales affirment leur propre responsabilité dans l'espace qui est le leur, même si c'est de manière assez faible. Les objectifs et les méthodes de la mission ont subi des changements radicaux. Dans les pays chrétiens du premier monde, les vocations ont rapidement décliné dans ces instituts. L'idéologie à la base de la mission à l'extérieur à évolué : de mission "ad gentes", elle est devenue "mission ad extra", "mission internationale". En ce qui regarde le personnel, ce sont aujourd'hui les Églises du Tiers Monde qui semblent en être la source. Par contre dans le domaine des ressources matérielles les Églises d'Occident viennent toujours en tête. Comment les Instituts missionnaires abordent-ils cette situation ? Quelles leçons pouvons-nous tirer des expériences actuelles ?

Différentes sortes d'instituts

Quelle que soit la théologie actuelle de la mission, il est clair que lorsque nous parlons des Instituts missionnaires leur but était et reste la mission *ad gentes*. Il y a cependant deux sortes d'Instituts. Certains d'entre eux ont un objectif très large et la Mission ne constitue qu'un élément de leur apostolat très diversifié. Prenons par exemple la Société de Jésus. Elle est prête à s'engager dans toutes sortes d'œuvres partout dans le monde. Mais il y a toujours eu certains Jésuites qui, dans la foulée de St François Xavier, ont été missionnaires au sens traditionnel. Chaque province envoie certains de ses membres à l'extérieur, dans un "pays de mission". Une autre sorte d'instituts n'a que la mission comme objectif. Ils rassemblent et forment des missionnaires pour les envoyer à l'extérieur. Dans ces deux cas, les expériences sont différentes. Parmi les instituts missionnaires, certains sont internationaux. Ils recrutent leurs membres dans divers pays. C'est le cas par exemple des missionnaires du Verbe divin.

D'autres sont, ou du moins étaient, limités à un seul pays : c'est toujours la manière de faire des missionnaires de Maryknoll.

Une nouvelle théologie de la mission

Une nouvelle théologie a vu le jour qui voit la mission comme un dialogue en triptyque entre la Bonne Nouvelle d'une part et d'autre part les pauvres, les cultures et les religions. On y invite toujours les gens à une conversion du cœur. Mais la conversion au christianisme comme tel ne constitue plus le seul objectif, ni même l'objectif principal de la mission, sans qu'elle en soit écartée pour autant. Beaucoup d'instituts missionnaires ont du mal à s'adapter à cette situation. C'est particulièrement le cas pour le second type d'instituts dont nous avons parlé. Ils essayent de faire évoluer leurs objectifs de différentes manières. Les "gentes" sont les gens des autres pays. Donc la mission *ad gentes* devient la mission *ad extra*. Il peut y avoir beaucoup de non-croyants dans leur propre pays. Ils doivent aller en dehors de leurs propres pays pour se sentir missionnaires. Et comme la conversion au christianisme reste leur principal objectif, ils cherchent des régions dans lesquelles de tels mouvements sont encore possibles. C'est la raison de leur intérêt croissant pour l'Afrique si on la compare à l'Asie. Il est plus difficile d'entrer en Asie et il est plus difficile d'y convertir des gens. Même en Asie d'ailleurs, ils se concentrent dans des tribus où les gens continuent à se convertir au christianisme. Ils ne s'occupent pas des dynamiques sociologiques et culturelles qui opèrent dans de telles conversions. C'est le nombre qui compte pour eux. Leur théorie de base, c'est qu'un groupe sensible à la parole constitue un signe spécial de l'Esprit. On se demande parfois, s'il y a place pour un vrai discernement en la matière. Certaines conversions simplement sociologiques ou politiques peuvent se produire dans l'histoire d'un peuple. Dieu se manifeste certainement de manière différente et dans des circonstances aussi différentes. Mais un zèle de mauvais aloi peut nous aveugler et marquer les mouvements réels de l'histoire.

À Manille en 1979, un congrès missionnaire international a très fortement affirmé que chaque Église locale est responsable de la Mission dans son territoire propre et aussi co-responsable pour la mission universelle. L'Église, c'est un fait, est présente partout d'une manière ou d'une autre ; c'est donc elle qui doit assumer les responsabilités de la mission. Cela signifie que les instituts missionnaires sont invités à collaborer avec l'Église locale partout où ils sont implantés. On devrait même dire qu'ils ne devraient jamais travailler quelque part sans y avoir été invités d'une manière ou d'une autre par l'Église locale. Ce n'est pas leur habitude de jouer un rôle secondaire de cette sorte. Même lorsque l'Église locale est bien en place, les instituts missionnaires peuvent être tentés de jouer les patrons, surtout s'ils détiennent le pouvoir financier.

Des problèmes de personnel

Ce problème peut être résolu de différentes manières. Dans les instituts missionnaires internationaux, la diminution du nombre de vocations dans un pays peut être compensée par une augmentation ailleurs. Les problèmes peuvent surgir dans la manière de gérer tout cela. J'y reviendrai. Les instituts missionnaires, basés autrefois dans un pays déterminé (exemple l'Irlande) ou dans une région (l'Europe) recrutent maintenant des membres dans les pays d'Asie, d'Afrique ou d'Amérique Latine. Certains de ces instituts peuvent conserver leur objectif originel. Plusieurs d'entre eux par exemple limitent leur zone de travail à l'Afrique. Cela ne pose pas de problème tant qu'ils gardent bien vivantes à leur esprit les dimensions interculturelles de la mission. L'Église et les instituts missionnaires ne sont pas comme des multinationales qui transcendent les frontières nationales et culturelles à la poursuite de nouveaux marchés et de nouveaux profits. Les institutions peuvent délocaliser leurs industries partout où il y a de la main-d'œuvre à bon marché. Les instituts missionnaires ne peuvent pas adopter une telle politique. Il leur faut être beaucoup plus sensibles aux dimensions culturelles de la mission.

Mission et cultures

Les missionnaires qui partent vers un peuple donné pour y proclamer l'Évangile essayent de s'inculturer dans cette mentalité. Les gens qui accueillent cette bonne nouvelle le font à travers leur propre culture. C'est ainsi qu'ils inculturent l'Évangile chez eux. Cette culture locale a, dès lors, une importance primordiale dans le processus d'évangélisation. Les missionnaires essayent de s'acculturer eux-mêmes et de traduire l'Évangile dans le dialecte local. Cet effort et la réponse qu'y apporte la population constituent des processus interculturels. L'Évangile n'arrive pas sous une forme pure et abstraite. Il a déjà été inculturé bien des fois dans les différentes cultures par lesquelles est passée sa tradition : juive, grecque, latine et toutes celles dont dépendent les missionnaires. La rencontre entre l'Évangile et la culture devient donc aussi une rencontre interculturelle. Même si les missionnaires prétendent qu'il existe une culture catholique romaine universelle avec ses racines gréco-latines, en pratique, il reste toujours la médiation culturelle des pays d'où sont issus les missionnaires. Cela transpire à travers leurs attitudes, leur manière de vivre, les saints et les dévotions populaires qu'ils promeuvent, etc... De telles rencontres peuvent produire des enrichissements et des défis mutuels pour autant que les gens soient capables d'y puiser force et croissance sans se déraciner de leur propre culture. Dans la perspective de la catholicité de l'Église, on peut considérer les missionnaires eux-mêmes comme des médiateurs entre deux cultures : celle dont ils sont issus et celle dans laquelle ils travaillent. Chaque culture fait ressortir et éclaire différents aspects de l'Évangile : c'est la raison pour laquelle une rencontre de cultures peut être enrichissante et du point de vue culturel et du point de vue évangélique. Dans quelle mesure les instituts missionnaires sont-ils conscients de la complexité de ce processus ? Dans quelle mesure y sont-ils sensibles ? Différentes situations sont possibles. Considérons en quelques-unes.

Des scénarios

Des missionnaires, disons des Français, arrivent en Afrique avec leur propre culture. Dans l'abstrait, idéalement parlant, le besoin des gens de l'endroit, c'est de ne rencontrer que l'Évangile. En fait, il y a aussi interaction avec la culture de ces missionnaires. De nos jours, une vraie inculturation trouve beaucoup de difficultés sur son chemin. L'autorité centrale de l'Église, en effet, insiste très fort sur le caractère normatif de la médiation culturelle judéo-gréco-romaine de l'Évangile. Pourtant les gens réussissent à inculturer la foi de manière originale dans leur religiosité populaire. Mais ils sont aussi influencés par la culture des missionnaires.

Dans un second scénario, les vocations diminuent en France et l'institut missionnaire, internationalité oblige, envoie des missionnaires de différents pays. Ils voient en cela la mission internationale. À leur contact, les gens peuvent s'adapter aux différentes cultures de leurs missionnaires. C'est dans la communauté des missionnaires qu'apparaîtra la tension. Dans la foulée de l'universalité de l'Évangile, ils peuvent se prévaloir de la culture judéo-gréco-romaine et de la "culture" de leur institut pour prétendre à une certaine universalité. Manifestement, cette prétention est fausse. Il n'y a tout simplement pas de culture universelle. Nous acceptons que l'Évangile a d'abord été exprimé dans les cultures juive et gréco-romaine. Nous reconnaissons qu'il nous faut revenir à ces premières expressions pour

approfondir le sens de la Bonne Nouvelle. Il reste que cette dernière doit se libérer par l'interprétation et se réinculturer dans la civilisation locale. L'ancienne culture ne peut avoir de valeur normative. Les vrais instituts internationaux ne devraient pas prétendre jouir d'une culture universelle ou internationale qui leur soit propre. Ils ont à s'inculturer selon les situation rencontrées. Si ce n'est pas le cas, le groupe culturel majoritaire de l'institut aura une position dominante, que ce soit en vertu d'une culture particulière ou d'une origine commune. Dans notre exemple, les missionnaires français ont été présents de nombreuses années dans le pays, ce sont les autres qui arrivent qui devront s'adapter à eux. Les Français peuvent prétendre être mieux ou plus développés. Finalement, ce sont les ressources financières qui, permettant à la communauté de survivre, pourraient décider quelle culture est supposée dominer et se dire universelle.

Un troisième scénario est possible. Un institut missionnaire européen recrute des vocations en Asie et les envoie en Afrique. Parfois, ces candidats peuvent aussi recevoir leur formation en Europe. On peut même se faire l'illusion qu'en les formant à Rome, ils vont recevoir une culture universelle. Ces nouvelles recrues sont des gens sans racines. Ils ne sont enracinés ni dans leur culture, ni dans aucune culture européenne. Ils n'ont rien qui, culturellement parlant, soit digne d'être communiqué. Ils sont a-culturels. Ils prétendent témoigner d'un Évangile supposé universel parce que libéré de toute culture.

En pratique, ils seront des médiateurs de seconde classe de la culture de leur institut.

Une vue globale

Le multiculturalisme est un problème. La pluralité des cultures est la bienvenue ; elle peut être enrichissante. La question est que la plupart du temps, la rencontre des cultures ne se fait pas sur un pied d'égalité. Il y en a toujours un qui cherche à dominer les autres. Les raisons peuvent en être culturelles, financières ou politiques. Dans le binôme Évangile-culture, l'interculturalité est bien assez difficile sans qu'il faille encore la compliquer davantage par la présence d'un groupe de missionnaires multiculturels. Dans l'idéal, ce qui devrait les rassembler, c'est la culture de l'endroit où ils travaillent. Mais cela n'arrive pas souvent ! Cette dernière est souvent méprisée par des gens qui prétendent venir d'une culture supérieure. Or, elle est suffisamment développée pour qu'il ne soit pas si aisé d'en faire la sienne propre ! Dans cette situation le groupe multiculturel de missionnaires tend à graviter autour d'un groupe dominant. Celui-ci trouve cela normal et attend des autres qu'ils fassent l'effort de s'adapter. Cette attitude de domination est souvent le propre des cultures à traditions coloniales, de celles qui ont d'importantes ressources financières ou de puissants moyens médiatiques. On pourrait éviter beaucoup de ces tensions si, en un endroit donné, tous les missionnaires venaient d'une seule culture. Je ne crois pas que des Communautés missionnaires multiculturelles soient nécessaires pour relever le caractère international de la mission. Cela pourrait être bon si toutes les cultures étaient ressenties comme d'égale valeur. Lorsque ce n'est pas le cas surgissent beaucoup de tensions ; le pire, c'est que ces dernières ne sont pas reconnues comme culturelles, mais sont facilement attribuées à des caractères ou des comportements personnels.

Parfois, au nom de l'internationalité de la mission, des gens originaires des pays pauvres d'Asie ou d'Afrique sont "importés" en Europe. Il semble que parfois, en certains pays, il s'agisse d'une recherche de main-d'œuvre à bon marché. Dans d'autres, cela crée des situations culturelles difficiles. Ces personnes sont rarement respectées dans leur culture et leur identité. On les retrouve dans des ministères institutionnels ou dans la pastorale des migrants. Les conditions culturelles font qu'ils n'ont pas la moindre chance d'exercer un vrai ministère pastoral. Autrefois, en Inde par exemple, les missionnaires européens pouvaient travailler avec des interprètes locaux et des catéchistes. À l'époque coloniale, célébrant la liturgie en latin, ils pouvaient s'en sortir avec quelques phrases prononcées dans la langue locale. Les missionnaires asiatiques en Europe pourraient difficilement survivre dans ces conditions. Ils ne sont pas vraiment préparés pour un authentique dialogue interculturel. Ils ne se sentent pas particulièrement bienvenus non plus et cela crée facilement des frustrations.

Un point de vue indien

Ces dernières années, des instituts missionnaires nationaux ou internationaux sont venus en Inde pour recruter. Certaines de ces recrues sont formées en Inde et envoyées dans d'autres pays. D'autres sont formées en Europe. D'autres encore reçoivent leur formation, au moins en partie, dans les pays où elles sont appelées à travailler comme missionnaires. C'est un heureux pas en avant que des Indiens partent en mission. Dans l'idéal, ils devraient pouvoir témoigner de l'Évangile, tel qu'il a été inculturé en Inde. De cette manière, ils pourront partager non seulement l'Évangile mais aussi la richesse que leur culture a découverte et développée en lui. Je n'aimerais pas voir en eux des gens qui n'auraient de racines ni dans leur pays, ni en Europe en se prétendant, faussement, internationaux et universels.

Même quand les missionnaires sont formés en Inde, les ressources financières viennent souvent d'Europe ou d'Amérique. Malheureusement, ceux qui contrôlent les fonds contrôlent aussi les stratégies et cela nous

conduit facilement à une dépendance par rapport au modèle missionnaire européen.

Ces missionnaires ne représentent donc pas vraiment l'Église indienne en mission. Ils sont comme des salariés d'une compagnie multinationale.

L'Inde envoie des missionnaires. Mais nous ne voyons pas un vrai sens de la mission enraciné dans les communautés chrétiennes indiennes. Les chrétiens des Indes ne font aucun sacrifice pour aider leurs fils et leurs filles en mission. Il n'existe pas de large conscience missionnaire comme dimension de leur vie chrétienne. L'esprit missionnaire ne touche que ceux et celles qui partent en mission, pas les autres. Quand les membres d'une congrégation religieuse locale se consacrent à la mission, ils donnent l'impression de partir plus par obéissance que par zèle missionnaire. L'Église des Indes n'a pas une vraie conscience missionnaire ; ce n'est pas la communauté chrétienne indienne qui porte les missionnaires indiens.

Je crois que l'idéal, c'est la fondation d'instituts missionnaires indiens. Ceux-ci peuvent découvrir de nouveaux chemins de la mission issus d'une théologie et d'une spiritualité de la mission ainsi que d'une pratique pastorale venant de l'Inde. Une Église indienne pauvre témoignant de sa pauvreté sans essayer d'imiter ses prédécesseurs coloniaux et sans recourir trop facilement à leurs finances pourrait avoir un autre type d'impact sur l'effort missionnaire. Les instituts missionnaires européens pourraient paisiblement accepter qu'ils sont en train de mourir, permettre à d'autres instituts de naître autre part, de grandir et de se développer de façon indépendante. Un partage d'expériences est toujours le bienvenu mais que soient respectées les libertés.

Conclusion

Chaque institut missionnaire prétend avoir un charisme special. Même si nous acceptons cela, nous pouvons considérer qu'aucun charisme ne doit nécessairement être universel et éternel. Il faudrait réfléchir davantage sur les conditions culturelles, politiques et financières de la mission. L'identité et l'individualité des Églises locales qui commencent à envoyer des missionnaires ont droit à plus de reconnaissance et de respect. Il faut les aider à devenir plus conscientes de leur être missionnaire comme émergeant de leur situation culturelle, spirituelle, théologique. Les anciens instituts missionnaires pourraient les aider et faciliter ce développement sans vouloir dominer, ni s'imposer. L'Église est missionnaire par nature. Chaque Église locale doit l'être et faire naître en elle ses propres instituts missionnaires.

Réf. *: Spiritus*, n. 167, juin 2002.

****

Books Received at SEDOS

• Dennis, Mary (art by John August Swanson), *Saint Francis*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2002.

• Kroeger, James, H./Phan, Peter C., *The Future of the Asian Churches (The Asian Synod and* Ecclesia in Asia), Claretian Publications, Quezon City, Philippines, 2002.

• Luneau, René, *Comprendre l'Afrique (Évangile, modernité, mangeur d'âmes)*, Éditions KARTHALA, Paris, 2002.

• Rwiza, Richard N., *Formation of Christian Conscience (In Modern Africa)*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2002.

****

Fr L. Stanislaus, SVD

Gospel and Culture Encounter in the Life of People

Introduction

Culture is a design for living, inherited and transmitted by a group. One enters into culture by participating in the life of the community in all its activities, and understanding reality as the community understands it. By entering totally into the culture, one becomes part of the community. Real transformation of community takes place when Gospel values permeate these realities and the culture of the local community becomes more authentic, vibrant and proactive.

The *Conclusions of Research Seminar* (2000) held at Ishvani Kendra, Pune, stated:

Crucial to the concept (inculturation) is entering into the very struggles of the marginalized peoples. The Christian community needs to identify itself with the struggling sections of a community and share the suffering of the people. A community that reaches out to the wounded people after the example of Jesus who shared the concerns of the excluded categories of his time will become a truly evangelising community (no. 30).

Apart from many other challenges to inculturation, since the proper locus of the praxis for inculturation is the local Church, solidarity with people of a region is considered vital for inculturation of the local Church. No area of life can be excluded from inculturation, though spirituality, worship, theology and catechesis merit special attention. Other areas of community also need special attention in establishing the Kingdom of God. The process of inculturation cannot neglect to denounce the structures that have caused discrimination among people in the name of caste or class identity. Like Jesus, we have to identify ourselves with the weak and the oppressed, entering into themr life situations.

The Church can be authentically called the People of God and the Church of the people when the Church identifies with people in their life journey carrying along the Gospel. The Church becomes alive when Gospel and Culture encounter each other. In this process there is no domination, or appropriation of the other. This encounter takes place in mutual respect. In this process of the encounter, culture is certainly challenged by the Gospel values of justice, fellowship and freedom.

1. Identification with People

The Church of the people becomes effective and relevant when the Church identifies with the people concerned. Thus entering into the life situations of people and being shaped by their cultural patterns, the Church receives life. Identification with people calls for a change in life-style and challenges the possessions and power of the Church. Such identity with the people reflects their suffering and pain, sorrows and sadness, victories and joyful celebrations of the community. This call demands an option for the poor, an option for their culture, and an option for the little traditions.

1.1. An Option for the Poor

The option for the poor is not merely a strategic option, but it is the very option that God has made all through the story of the Bible. The choice before the Asian local Churches then is either to opt to be with God and manifest the divine power among the Asian poor, or to be on the side of the mighty of the world — the upper castes, classes, etc. — and enjoy the privilege and influence deriving therefrom. The poor are turning towards the Church for the life-giving hope of the Gospel to revolutionize the existing social order in favour of the powerless.

In today's context, the poor are the victims of the organized greed of the rich, dominant caste, power hungry politicians, and male chauvinism. Since they are the preferred partners of God's covenant, when they discharge their responsibility as a liberative force, it signifies the sacramental presence of God in history.

Inculturation is a process by which the Church joins the *paschal journey of* poor people and acquires the faith, hope and love by which simple folk anticipate and await freedom. "Inculturation which consists of accompa-

nying the victims of organized greed in their paschal journey, affirms the perennial human value of a hope-filled perseverance in the slow, painful but transformative struggle as taught and encouraged in all religions" (Peris, 1995: 82). A Church that struggles with poor people and challenges the oppressive structures of society is truly inculturated.

For Christian communities, moving to the margins would mean to listen to God, who speaks through the struggles and experiences of suppressed identities and oppressed groups. Christians are called to be at the margins with God and the oppressed. They need support and care in order to preserve their human dignity and their cultural and religious heritage (*EA*, n. 34).

1.2. An Option for Culture

The Gospels present clearly the predilection of Jesus for the least, the small and lowly — the little mustard seed (Mt 13:31-32), the poor widow putting two copper coins in the temple treasury (Lk 21:1-4), the lost sheep (Lk 15:4-7), the children and babes in contrast to the big and powerful (Mt 11:25-30). His love and compassion for the suffering and the outcasts knows no bounds. His proclamation of the poor as blessed (Lk 6:20), and the statement that the Kingdom of God is promised to the least (Mt 25:40), are trendsetters of his action in society.

The accompaniment of the *paschal journey* of the poor demands that on embarking on the project of inculturation the Church espouse the perspectives of the culture of the deprived and marginalized. The Church can espouse those perspectives only if it opts for the culture in order not only to understand them, but also to change and transform them. For this process, a dialogue with the poor is an essential condition.

The Gospel community has to pay special attention to the realm of culture. Its religious challenge is addressed primarily and immediately to culture. Until and unless culture is taken seriously no transformation will ever take place. To be the Church is to be with the people like Jesus himself, manifesting the human face of the Divine. This requires that the Church be truly incarnate, and rooted among the people, enfleshing itself with the broken and tortured 'flesh' of the oppressed and suffering millions. The liberating mission of the Church implies a deep immersion into the culture of the people. Jesus' death on the cross was God's plunging into the brokenness of humanity to heal it from within.

The Gospel community is a community on mis-

sion and it should always be ready to challenge not only the culture of the marginalized, but also the culture of the *élite*. The option for the poor does not negate the rich; it indicates the process of transformation. From the option for the culture of the neglected, the Church should move on to other types of cultures.

Cultures have to be analysed and their good elements should be retained and energized and the bad elements rooted out. Through good elements, messages of the Gospel have to spread through authentic living in the community, and the inhuman structures, practices, customs and attitudes must be challenged. This challenge to transform cultures demands a love of the cultures and being immersed in them.

1.3. Identification with Little Traditions

Culture is not only a question of customs, manners or traditions; it is also a question of the identity of a people, affirmation of their legitimate selfhood deserving attention and respect. Culture also means power. To negate culture is to deny power and a legitimate place for people in society. Recognizing the power of weak persons in society and their aspirations, questions and anxieties and little traditions would make inculturation into an authentic process of liberation in which people become empowered by discovering their identity. Jesus went deeper into the agonies of people of the little traditions, but rose up empowered and transformed.

In the name of inculturation, whose culture, symbols, signs, etc., are we adopting? Are they of the poor and the oppressed, or are they of the dominant class? Referring to the general pattern of the praxis of the Asian Churches which gravitate heavily towards the dominant, powerful and influential classes and castes, like adapting to the Brahmanical culture as the reference of inculturation in India, Wilfred asks, "What is inculturation if it does not insert itself into the culture and cultural expressions which flow from the struggles and experiences of the poor, their language, world of meanings and symbols? Can a local Church that identifies itself with the culture of its oppressors be a Church from which the poor can expect support for their liberation?" (Felix Wilfred, 1991:114)

The challenge of opting for the poor is the process of identification with the socio-political realities of the poor and distancing itself from the dominant cultures' socio-political realities. The neglected and forgotten minor traditions with their rich symbols, myths and festivals embody the aspirations of the poor and

oppressed for liberation. Turning to these traditions is also to protest against dominant religious traditions instrumentalized by Brahmins to maintain hegemony over the Dalits. The religious traditions of the poor and the oppressed today present themselves as a tremendous force for social transformation (Felix Wilfred, tions, customs, way of life, and patterns of thought.

What we witness in India is the search for identity and self-assertion of the various minor traditions that feel threatened by other more advanced little traditions or by great traditions. When this search turns into a struggle, it takes on communal overtones. One solution is the conscious development of identity of the little traditions and at the same time recognizing the identity of other more advanced little traditions and great traditions (Amaladoss, 1992:72).

The mission of the Church is related to the identity of the Church. If the Church is negatively oriented to the cultures, religions and autonomy of the peoples, then its identity is questioned and thus the local Church may not be fully rooted in the soil of the country. This type of a mission is easily susceptible to being accused of an anti-national activity, especially in the post-colonial era when nationalism is emerging as a defining element of an authentic Indian identity. (One should not fall into the trap of the fundamentalist's definition of nationalism). The Christian faith can be positively and intrinsically related to all genuine concrete expressions of various cultures, religions and aspirations of our people. "Here, evangelisation should follow a reverse order, that is, an evangeliser should first of all be evangelised by the cultures, religions and peoples to whom he is sent; he should be converted by them, i.e. be enriched by God's presence and grace present in them and become part of them before he starts evangelising others" (CCBI Seminar, 1999:131).

Opting for the little traditions does not mean negating the great traditions. It implies acknowledging the 'little people', recognizing the values among the 'small people', asserting the identity of neglected and marginalized persons in society. Inculturation also takes into consideration the great traditions and permeates them with the Gospel. An orientation towards transformation in society is sought to build a just society.

In the process of transformation both dominant and popular cultures will undergo a transformation and a human community will emerge that resembles the divine and is truly the image of God. This community will be based on Gospel values. The Gospel, which evangelises it, will also have undergone a change by allowing it to be interpreted through the culture of that com-

munity. Thus it will be a Christian community in its uniqueness (Puthanangady, 1993:310).

2. Insertion into the Mainstream of National Life: Social and Political Spheres

The primary task of the Church is to preach the Good News and to build communities. Mission is to spread the message of Jesus in communities. It calls for establishing relationship among people and to build just communities. When we build communities, we want to give an experience of freedom, fellowship and justice. This community has socio-economic and political dimensions. At the social level, if the Church has to transmit the message of the Gospels, then it has to encounter the unjust society. The caste structure cannot be ignored with its present hierarchy. The Church confronts this and makes its presence felt in challenging this unjust structure.

In a similar way, the Church permeates society at the economic and political levels. Relevance of the Church leads, to the extent it interacts with these dimensions, towards actualisation of the Kingdom of God. Hence the Church has to enter into the mainstream of society and become salt, light and leaven in evolving a community, which is just and free.

Irarrazaval argues that there are many keys to inculturation and some of these are: "socio-political; ecological; gender and generational; emotional and sexual; racial-indigenous, Black, and *mestizo;* economic; and ethical. These are various ways of understanding and building an everyday reality. Each of these keys can be complementary to the others, and they make us more alert to a complex universe" (Irarrazaval, 2000:117). In *Populorum Progressio* the objective of which is *integral development of a human being and of all human kind,* Paul VI says:

. . . development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man... We do not believe in separating the economic from the human, or development from the civilizations in which it exists. What we hold important is man (and woman), each man (and woman) and each group of men (and women) … (n. 14).

In *Ecclesia in Asia,* the Church reiterates:

"If in recent times the Church's Magisterium has insisted more and more upon the need to promote the authentic and integral development of the human person, this is in response to the real situation of the world's peoples, as well as to an increased

consciousness that not just the actions of individuals but also structures of social, political and economic life are often inimical to human well-being! (*EA*, n. 32).

For the integral development of society, justice should be fundamental. Freedom and fellowship should cement the integrity of society. The Church, when it acts on the basis of justice, permeates society with effective strength for building a just community, and that is its mission. That is why *Justice in the World* states, "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel…" (*JW*, n. 6). Again *Justice in the World* stated, "In the face of the present-day situation of the world marked as it is by the grave sin of injustice, we recognize both our responsibility and our inability to overcome it by our own strength. Such a situation urges us to listen with a humble and open heart to the Word of God, as he shows us new paths of action in the cause of justice in the world" (*JW*, n. 29).

Similarly in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* Pope John Paul II spoke against a form of super development in which culture is invented by certain forms of modern imperialism, which is part of the "structures of sin" characterized by an "all-consuming desire for profit and on the other, thirst for power". The idols of our time are "money, ideology, class and technology" (*SRS*, n. 37). Action on behalf of justice should be against "cultural imperialism". Entering the mainstream of society will not be easy for the Church. Fundamentalist forces that operate more stubbornly than earlier times oppose the Gospel, influencing society in opposing transformation of that society.

Hindutva is a socio-political movement that defends caste hegemony and opposes the struggle of the poor for freedom, dignity and equality. It advocates theocracy as its political power basis. It is in alliance with rightist movements of capitalism against leftist forces trying to reshape economic structures by empowering the poor. "The upper caste-class social *élite* of contemporary India and the religious fundamentalists have common economic interests, common social ambitions and enjoy the support of the administration. They share the same objective of suppression of any dissenting voice in society, especially from the poor" (Velamkunnel, 2001:462). *Hindutva* forces use violence, monopolise culture, manipulate Educational Organizations, and spread false propaganda of minorities to convince the masses. In India, *hindutva* forces negate the permeation of Gospel values in society, so that *hindutva* forces can maintain their economic and political hegemony over other peoples.

The Church responds to atrocities on missionaries by an increasing fidelity to the Gospel. The Church is truthful to itself in its loyalty to the commitments of Jesus of Nazareth. It is faithful to its avowed stand on behalf of poor persons when it becomes more and more open to sensitive humanists working alongside the institutional Church. Missionaries continuously opt for the poor. Social activists call for radical societal re-construction, which involves a structural change in favour of the poor. Increasing self-assertion of the oppressed, as well as women's liberation movements are a response to *hindutva*.

2.1. Participation in Civil Society

The Christians communities' increasing commitment to the liberation of the weaker sections in society has gained a sharper focus. This commitment to the downtrodden urgently calls for a constructive strategy in civil society. *Hindutva* forces or fundamentalist forces in Asia raise the question of missionaries' commitment to the poor, saying that their ultimate purpose is for conversion and numerical expansion. This question must be addressed concretely by the Christian community. "The very cause of the poor for whom the Christian religious personnel want to involve themselves will be seriously compromised by failing to come out in the open and participate in the public sphere and in the ambit of the broader civil society" (Felix Wilfred, 2001:107). If Christianity does not participate in civil society, *hindutva* or other fundamental forces may monopolize the political and religious field. The Christian community should not shy away from these arenas; they must become part of civil society that makes the Christian community active citizens in shaping the nation. Thus serving the poor is not just extending help, but the poor become part of the Church and they have a voice in civil society.

2.2. Participation in Politics

Vatican II teaches that Christians "must be good citizens and grow in patriotism that is really fruitful. By word and deed, we must proclaim Christ to citizens all around us. The *raison d'être* of the Christian community is to do constructive works based on this principle" (cf. *AG*, n. 15). To be a goof citizen does not mean to be a mere passive member in society. The Gospe message invigorates the faithful to become involved in politics. *Octogesima Adveniens* says, "To take politics seriously at its different levels… is to affirm the duty of man/woman of every man/woman, to recognize the concrete reality and the value of the freedom of choice that is offered to him/her to seek to bring about both the good of the city and of the na-

tion and of mankind" (*OA*, n. 46). In the transformation of society and active political participation, Christians "should try to make their choices consistent with the Gospel and, in the framework of a legitimate plurality, to give both personal and collective witness to the seriousness of their faith by effective and disinterested service of men" (*OA*, n. 46).

The *Conclusions of the Research Seminar* (2000) states:

Christian involvement in politics has to be holistic in nature. Since there are larger life-based issues which demand Christian engagement in every area of human life, it has to be both prophetic and messianic. As prophetic (Is 61:1-3; Lk 4:18-19) the Christians' political involvement must be aimed at the protection of the poor and the weak, the oppressed and the marginalized and against the agents of exploitation in our democratic system. As messianic, it must also be a reminder to the oppressors that the true sovereign is God, and under God the State is a servant of the people in protecting their rights and their human dignity. Justice and truth must be the only guiding principles of Christian political action for attaining its messianic goals (Is 11:4-5) (no. 37).

Participating in politics demands exercising *God's ways* in society, and it is a most revolutionary kind of politics. It calls for confrontation with 'truth' controlled by rulers, leaders, technocrats and politicians of the nations (Song, 1979:241).

2.3. Guidelines to Organize People

Organizing people is an art. Organizing people for a just society is a mission of the Church. The following are some of the guidelines for organizing people:

i) **Go to the people:** Make regular visits to the communities at least once a month. Meeting and talking to the people is the first step. Just being with them gives a proper environment to come closer to them.

ii) **Listen to the people:** Each community has a history, story, and myth. By listening to these one comes to know the people and also their perspectives. Listening to their goals, aspirations and anxieties are also important to know them deeply.

iii) **Begin where they are:** People already have organizational set-ups and are aware of the strength and weakness of their communities. People may also have different programmes and projects for their communities. Taking into account these overall activities, one can identify with these programmes or plan something relevant to build a community where justice is the core aspect.

iv) **Build relationships among the people:** Or-

ganising communities becomes a process of rebuilding relationships where it matters most. Respect given to each one despite socio-cultural and economic differences, appreciation for the little steps taken in a shared journey, and courage to face new demands because of hegemony of dominant cultures are some areas in which relationships can be built.

v) **Harnessing Christ among the people:** As people gather and celebrate life, Christ must become the centre of their community. His message should be shared, lived and exchanged. Celebration and relationship become meaningful when permeated by Gospel values. Divine power is experienced in their interactions and exchanges. Joy and peace overflow in the community respecting and honouring everyone's right with a sense of justice.

2.4. Church and People's Movements

People's movements emerge from *loksakti* (the power of the people). Grassroots activists play a role in helping people to overcome divisive forces among them, and help them to organize themselves to play a greater role in shaping society. Nothing can have greater liberative potential than when the downtrodden stand together against exploitation. This was clearly proved by Gandhi's effort to unite the peasants of Champaran.

People's movements have a multi-class membership and they are basically non-political, i.e., not organized in terms of party politics, but political in nature showing a concern in organization and distribution of power. These movements are interested in people's total development. Summarizing Melucci's ideas about these movements, Sebastian says:

Melucci interprets every social movement primarily as a sign, message, and media. They are neither preoccupied with the production and distribution of material goods and resources nor are they political actors to capturing the corridors of political power.... They are 'networks of meanings' and they produce 'alternative frameworks of meanings' and challenge the logic of dominant codes on the cultural ground (Sebastian, 2001:427).

God's action is discerned in people's own history and struggles. Discovery of God in one's own personal or social history is not the end, but only the beginning of the process to understand the depth of people. The Filipino people have discerned God's hand in their revolution that overthrew a dictator and a convict (Marcos and Estrada).

These people's movements deconstruct oppressive and enslaving cultural discourses that justify and mys-

tify unjust socio-economic relations. They also construct new ones, which can provide a perspective for the establishment of an egalitarian society. Thus, the task of people's movements can be regarded as part of the process of inculturation of the Gospel, since Gospel values are already promoted in particular cultures.

The Church should join with people's movements and in the process the Church itself should become a people's movement, a movement that would promote Gospel values within society accepting all the aspirations of people. This calls for radical incarnation of the Gospel values in the Church's own internal forums, structures and institutions.

For any real change in these areas, we have to obtain the full cooperation of people. Movements must not be violent. Revolutionary ideas, framework and methodology are important for change, but violent actions "do not transform economic, political, social people involved, though charismatic leaders, movements by small enlightened groups, and limited conflicts that challenge accepted structures will have their place in the overall project" (Amaladoss, 1998: 71). Following are three models of what happens to cultures when they are being pressured to change, especially by means of various types of social movements (Arbuckle, 1990:62-77).

i) *Culture change reaction model*

Stage 1: Cultural consensus
People generally accept the cultural *status quo*.

Stage 2: Initial unease/stress
A social movement threatens cultural consensus. Immediate reactions to the threat may be somewhat mixed: some may experience a touch of euphoria, for the social movement involves them in an exciting new venture, a break from routine. Others may experience stress or unease and the feeling of endangering their own cultural security.

Stage 3: Political reaction
The pressures from the social movement for change can no longer be ignored. The reaction is to accept its demands at the political level.

Stage 4: Chaos
People find themselves confused, in malaise, in chaos; they discover that their cultural identity is no longer intact or they lose their Christian identity. In the midst of the chaos, however, some people struggle to cope with the stressful situation by denying that the chaos exists or cultural identity is not necessary.

Stage 5: Prophetic reaction
Individuals with creative talents choose one of several ways to lead people out of their cultural confusion of chaos to a renewed sense of meaning. Some of the reactions are: fundamentalist reaction, conservative reaction, Millenarian reaction, New-conservative reaction and radical reaction. Social movements tend to be prophetic reaction.

Stage 6: Integration
A new or restored meaning system is achieved, and there is a consensus among the majority that change is acceptable.

ii) *Culture revitalization model*
Culture has both sacred and profane times. Profane time refers to the daily round of eating, sleeping, doing business, giving birth, and dying. In sacred times cultures ritually relive the times of their own origins through rituals, sacrifices and prayers; and people return to the times of chaos out of which some heroes originally created order. The escape into this sacred time gives a sense of immortality, the rescue from the world of meaninglessness and confusion in society.

iii) *Culture change as a journey model*
Victor Turner points out a *liminal* cultural experience. Without liminal experiences, persons and cultures can lose their creativity; they become suffocated with the sheer weight of their customs. Here three stages can be discerned: *segregation, liminality and re-aggregation. A* change in the culture can take place in this process or journey when the community realizes its potential to remodel itself by giving Gospel meaning to *segregation, liminality and re-aggregation.*

2.5. Dialogue with Other Religions

In human sciences there is a vital relationship between religion and culture. When dialogue with other religions is encouraged on the basis of the positive religious values in them, then inculturation will imply that a deeper mutual penetration and mutual acceptance or even endorsement is necessary. The process of interaction between Christianity and other religions is found to be healthy and desirable. The objective is not only to promote dialogue among religions but also especially to give a new expression of Christianity in and through the religio-cultural genius of the people.

John Paul II, speaking to leaders of other religions in Chennai, in 1986, said: "As followers of different religions we should join together in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social

welfare and civic order". What is emerging in recent times is the encounter between various religions and ideologies taking place in Asia today. "The spiritual core of religions and the humanist heart of ideologies seem to have now shifted to the periphery raising a lot of hope. A re-alignment of forces is beginning to take place: it is the alignment of all those who have the poor as their central concern in today's Asia" (Felix Wilfred, 1991:117).

Every step of the Church in its paschal journey with the poor compels it to creatively appropriate the cultural resources of people, which include the liberative message of other religions. Hence an option for the poor shall become a joint option and this should give the Church courage to venture on a joint liberative action. While understanding concerns and questions of justice that affect Tribals and Aboriginals, the *Ecclesia in Asia* said, "This implies an attitude of deep respect for their traditional religion and its values; it implies as well the need to help them to help themselves, so that they can work to improve their situation and become the evangelisers of their own culture and society" (*EA*, n. 34).

An active and relevant Church is thus the salt that enables the Gospel to permeate the collective consciousness of every religious tradition and be a lamp on the lampstand that illumines those religious traditions. Today, "inculturation is dialogue and dialogue also is a process of inculturation in so far as the dialoguing partners are internally entering into the world of the other. Such a process is necessary for genuine inculturation. But then such a step is viewed with suspicion" (John, 1993:278).

3. Being a Counter-Cultural Community

A counter-cultural vision proposes an alternate world-view and system of values. This can be done effectively, not by talking about them, but by living them. The Church could promote the nuclei of counter-cultural communities that give active witness to the values of the Kingdom of God.

To be counter-cultural is to challenge people in the name of a vision of what they ought to become, by embodying that vision. In this sense it will always be critical of the present. It is to be prophetic. The counter-cultural communities should be both 'models of' and 'models for' the communities of the Reign of God. The option for the power of truth and love is more than a strategic option. It is the only authentic way for a counter-cultural community.

The prophetic mission of the Church in this con-

text could be, re-reading the Bible in terms of local, cultural paradigms giving more importance to form and content so that the message of Christ could be translated directly in local idioms and root-paradigms. The message of the Gospel is to be presented more in terms of a servant community of creation rather than in traditional anthropocentric rationalities and hermeneutics.

Building the local Church at all levels, promoting autonomy and reinterpreting tradition are to become attuned with the culture of the place rather than borrowing elements from other cultures. In this context, inculturation calls for the interpretation of the Gospels in the light of the social, economic and religious context of Asia. Evangelisation in Asia calls for "affecting and upsetting through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interests, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (*EN*, n. 19). Counter-cultural communities can be lived by affirming life and also affirming community life.

3.1. Affirm Life

To affirm life is to affirm a life worthy of human persons, who are not machines, but spirits-in-bodies and bodies in spirit. To live humanly means also a life that is not dominated by the urge to consume. To affirm the spirit in the human is also to affirm the divine presence in the human, the transcendent, which is immanent. "One would then reject the materialism and secularism of modernity and seek to humanize science and technology so that they become instruments in human hands to promote life rather than turn the humans themselves into machines" (Amaladoss, 1999:228).

3.2. Affirm Community

Experience of community is lived at various levels — family, group, nation and world. To affirm community is to respect and accept other persons with all their differences of caste or creed, sex or ethnicity, culture or social status. "To affirm community is to affrm peace. Real peace in the community will come only with justice. Otherwise violence in its various forms will continue to plague us. Inequality in whatever form can be maintained only through violence, whether open or hidden" (Amaladoss, 1999:229).

Building counter-cultural communities is not opposing other cultures or their genuine life situations. The Church can spell out concrete ways in which peo-

ple can build the new global community based on justice, freedom and fellowship. This demands from us an openness to relate and to network, to dialogue and to collaborate. While rooted in the economic and political reality of life, we may need to concentrate on the personal, cultural and religious dimensions of the people's movements.

The Church needs to be self-critical so as to avoid encouraging and legitimating factors of globalisation and to support alternative movements. The Church itself must avoid giving the image of being a globalising agent in its own internal life and structures. The eschatological vision of the Kingdom is a global community of freedom, solidarity and justice, and to this vision, we are called to commit ourselves in transforming the local community and at the same influencing other communities.

Building the Kingdom demands us to work against Satan and Mammon (profit-oriented market, hegemonization of universal culture, dominance of political powers over small nations) rather than against other religions and cultures. It calls for promoting and networking with the prophetic movements in every religion. For building a just society, "the ethical and moral aspects of globalisation need to be more directly addressed by the leaders of nations and by organisations concerned with human promotion" (*EA*, n. 39).

When there is Gospel and culture encounter, we need to attend to the transformative dimension of the culture. If the society is unjust with caste discrimination, oppression of women, child marriage, etc., the Gospel would demand a serious and sustained effort at promoting equality and freedom.

4. Liberation and Inculturation

Liberation is a living experience that is both comprehensive and creative. It has to do with the small and large achievements of communities becoming more human (in stereological terms, persons and communities finding salvation from evil and sin). The second dimension of inculturation is that each community and people, with its cultural paths, internalises the message and puts it into practice. This inculturation also confronts local customs that cause self-destruction and also opposes the culture of the market that snuffs individuals.

In the process of inculturation, liberation and culture are inter-related. Inculturation of Gospel values in each and every situation inescapably involves the imperative of liberation. Inculturation must be placed in the context of liberation of the oppressed and human development. Inculturation denotes dialogue, conversion, discernment and commitment to the liberation among people. In the interaction of the people, a counter-culture evolves to form a just society. Counter-culture is related to the different dimensions of society. At a deeper level it would mean supporting their cause and standing with them in their struggle against all forms of discrimination and atrocity.

Genuine inculturation indicates the link between Faith and the struggle for justice. "An understanding of Faith, active and revolutionary, is essential if the Christian communities mean to help the country march to liberation. When the authentic human values of truth and service, love and compassion are being thrown to the winds, a cultural revolution constantly engendered by the Faith may well be the enduring response inculturation offers to the human situation. In a context soaked in social sin Faith ought to be a subversive force, precisely because it is a re-creative force" (Varaprasadam, 1986:59). In the experience of the people's spirituality and praxis, we see new signs of hope emerging. It emerges from the poor communities, from peoples who suffer and endure, from women with their creative and transforming perspective, and from the energies of young people who are exploring uncharted paths (Irarrazaval, 2000:92).

In the context of globalisation, and due to the overarching role of technoculture over other cultures which falsely claims to be the sole agent of progress. "Inculturation in this context has to assume a more critical and liberative function. Such a critique implies a positive search for genuine alternative models of progress, bringing "modernity" into dialogue and development, though often one-sided and running parallel, points outwards to a genuine integration of inculturated liberation. The compartmentalization of inculturation and liberation is untenable, especially in the Asian context" (Pattery, 1993:345).

Conclusion

John Paul II envisages in *Ecclesia in Asia,* "a wider inculturation of the Gospel at every level of society in Asia" (*EA*, n. 22). This means that it is not limited to one or other sphere, but must embrace the whole of life. Since the inculturation of the Gospel involves the entire People of God, the role of the laity is very important. They are called categorically to transform society in collaboration with the responsible persons in the Church. They live the values of the Gospel in the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the secular world. "A wider inculturation of the Gospel at every level of society in Asia will depend greatly on the appropriate formation which the local Churches succeed in giving to the laity" (*EA,* n. 22).

A Christian is an interrelated person. His faith is lived in interpersonal relationships and in a community. An inculturated Christian community is fully integrated in the life of the local human community and this will give rise to a new way of being Church in Asia:

It will be a community in relationship with people of other faiths: it will be a community that is fully evangelised so that it acts as leaven in society; it will be a community that identifies itself with the poor and the marginalized; it will be a community in communion with the rest of the ecclesial community, offering its original contribution to the universal salvific mission of Christ (Statement of FABC, 2000:254).

The inculturation of a community is a process by which the People of God realistically live their faith in their everyday lives. They know and celebrate freedom in Christ in the midst of darkness and light. Filled with the Spirit, the inculturated Church continues the journey fulfilling the vision of Jesus in the world.

****

References

• **Amaladoss, M.:**
1992 "Liberation as an Interreligious Project", *Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Human Liberation,* F. Wilfred, ed., New York: Orbis, 100-115.

1993 "The Religious and Mission" in *Vidyajyothi,* 57, 705-18.

1998 *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be One?* New Delhi: ISPCK.

1999 "Towards Global Community", *in Globalisation and its Victims as Seen by the Victims, Idem,* ed., New Delhi: ISPCK, pp. 217-232.

• **Arbuckle, G. A.:**
1990 *Earthling the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker,* New York: Orbis.

• **CCBI Seminar:**
2000 "The Challenges to Christian Mission Today" Ishvani Kendra, Pune: 4-6 December 1999 in *Ishvani Documentation and Mission Digest,* 18, no.1, 128-135.

• **Conclusions of the Research Seminar:**
2000 "A Vision of Mission for the New Millennium" Ishvani Kendra, Pune: 9-12 March 2000 in *A Vision of Mission in the New Millennium,* T. Malipurathu and L. Stanislaus, ed., Mumbai: St. Pauls, 199-211.

• **Irarrazaval, D.:**
2000 *Inculturation: New Dawn of the Church in Latin America,* New York: Orbis.

• **John, T.K.:**
1993 "Issues in Inculturation", *East Asian Pastoral Review,* 30, no. 3/4, 260-82.

• **Pattery, G.:**
1993 "Inculturation And/Or Liberation" *EastAsian Pastoral Review,* 30, no. 3/4, 317-345.

****

Coming Events

Dear Members and Friends of SEDOS,

I regret that after only two years as Executive Director of SEDOS, I shall have to leave Rome, because the Superiors of the Dominican Canadian Province have requested me to take on two new posts in my Province. On 15 August 2002, I was officially appointed Rector of Saint Jude Sanctuary in Montreal and also the local Superior. My departure is scheduled for 2 October.

I have been happy to serve SEDOS during these two years. The opportunity to see all those missionaries working very hard throughout the world, and in different ways, to proclaim Jesus Christ and his message, deepened my admiration for the work of so many sons and daughters of the Church who consecrate their life to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

With the help of the Executive, and the staff of SEDOS, I have tried to organise the transition. I hope that all will go smoothly. Please look me up if you come to Montreal!

My best regards!

Yours sincerely,

Bernard East, o.p.
Executive Director of SEDOS

Next SEDOS Conference
See page 266

Working Groups

Tuesday, 29 October, **Bible and Mission Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**
Wednesday, 30 October, **China Group** 15:00 hrs at **SEDOS**
Monday, 18 November, **Debt Group** 15:30 hrs at **SEDOS**