

“Mission And Money Perspective From Religious Life”



**- ARICCIA 2006 -
SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR**

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Summary of the Annual SEDOS Seminar 2006

Greetings to all our readers!

We have concluded our Annual SEDOS Seminar at Ariccia, where over one hundred religious men and women of different nationalities and from different Institutes for five days shared their insights, reflections and experiences on the use and meaning of money in our mission, past and present. Naturally, we did not expect to find a solution nor to come up with a formula to solve all the problems that the use and possession of wealth causes in our society. We just endeavoured to deepen the understanding of the abundance of blessings God puts in our hands to be administered in order to build His Kingdom.

As Bernardo Vallejo, OP, writes, *‘Jesus of Nazareth does not deny the value of material possessions, but He goes on to reorient its meaning from the perspective of the Kingdom that is inaugurated with his preaching. First, before all things, is the Kingdom of God and its justice, which has as a reference point the dignity of all human beings who were created in the image and likeness of God. “Jesus replied: “They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat”’* (Mt 14:16).

The Son of God came *not to give but to share*. He came to share with us His divinity and to share in our humanity. This is the basis of solidarity to build the Kingdom of God. It is at this level of sharing that we can find justice and love as the children of God enjoying His Creation as a big family.

To give implies to possess; to have what others do not have; to be above, richer and more powerful than others, to be able to control them and to impose our will and to make them feel dependent, grateful and, thus, humiliated. When we give we are free to give or to hold, to give much or to give little, to give more to this one or to that one. Those who please us and obey us and follow the path we set will receive more. Those who annoy us or we feel them to be ‘disobedient’ shall get little or nothing. Thus it is easy for money and authority to become a tool for ‘power and control’ that enslaves people and creates suffering. A tool of division and injustice that creates classes and sows the seeds of violence and hatred. Even within Religious Life this power and control is strongly felt, although oftentimes disguised under the ‘vow of obedience and poverty’. Administrators and not ‘owners and masters’; faithful servants striving, as good fathers and mothers, to sow the seeds of peace, unity and love among the children of God.

The forum is open to everyone. All the participants in the SEDOS Seminar hope that different groups will take up these insights and continue to study and discuss this topic. The participants at the SEDOS Seminar are presenting to all brothers and sisters the challenge to continue the reflection on the understanding and the use of the wealth that God has put into our hands with His Creation. It is a challenge to our mission as we present our Religious lifestyle to the World as an alternative model of social community fostering peace and love among its members.

*Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director*

- Opening Session -

“You Cannot Serve God and Money” (cf. Mt 6:24)

Some Biblical and Theological Considerations

Concerning Mission and Money

- John Fuellenbach, SVD (Rome) -

Introduction

As the title of this talk indicates, I would like to present to you some biblical and theological considerations concerning our topic for this week: *Mission and Money*. The presentation aims at reminding us for whom we walk and in whose service we stand before dealing directly with the topic. We might be justified in calling it a kind of spirituality concerning matters of money and mission. The context in which I would like to present my talk is the *Person of Jesus* and his central message: the *Kingdom of God* (God’s dream for creation). It was the overall frame that he himself chose and in which he enshrined his whole message. Therefore, it rightly serves as the background from which we can approach our topic as religious men and women, that is, as *disciples of Jesus*. After all, our mission as Christians and as religious must be seen as the continuation of Jesus’ own mission, entrusted to us by the Risen Christ when he said to his Apostles: “*As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you*”. And to enable us to do this impossible task Jesus added: “*Receive the Holy Spirit*” (Jn 20:21). Equipped with the power of the Risen Christ we can do it.

Jesus expressed the exigency of this mission in the words: *I must preach the Kingdom of God to all villages and towns because for this very reason I was sent*” (Lk 4:43). And for that very reason he called disciples to expand his own ministry and to carry it to the ends of the earth (Mt 28:19). Therefore, *to be called* by him means, besides *being with him*, *to be sent out* by him in a world-embracing mission (Mk 3:13-15).

Discipleship — the continuation of Jesus’ mission — is our basic vocation, clearly stated once again during the Second Vatican Council in the Document on Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 2) where we read: *the fundamental norm and the supreme law of all religious communities is to follow the Lord as he presents himself in the Gospels*. At the risk of belabouring the obvious, I will say it again: it is important to keep in mind — particularly in our present time and situation — that the return to the Jesus who walked this earth and to his message of the Kingdom of God remains the only valid starting point to regain or reaffirm our basic vocation. This holds true for us religious as well, since it is discipleship that unites us all — no matter to which congregation or movement we belong. From the three basic characteristic elements of religious life: **1) to follow the Lord; 2) in the setting of group-charism; 3) and to do this today** in our age and our concrete situation. Number one is and remains the most essential of all.

Discipleship alone bestows on us our true *identity* and constitutes the essence of our mission. Therefore, all our deliberations this week about “Mission and Money” must be done in the light of our basic call. If we do so, we will not approach the topic from a purely human viewpoint — as necessary as that may be — but rather from our commitment to the Lord who told those who dared to follow him: *You cannot serve God and money*.

Let me single out three fundamental non-negotiable presuppositions which determine the essence of discipleship. They are:

- First, the *fundamental achievement* of Jesus concerning the true image of God, of myself and of my neighbour;

- Second, the *principle motive for action* in my life: *Justice and compassion*;
- Third, the *fundamental virtue of all virtues* which Jesus demanded from anyone who seriously wanted to follow him: *the Spirit of poverty*.

I. Jesus changed the three basic human relationships: to God, to oneself and to one's neighbour

1. *A Change in the traditional image of God.* This has been called the “fundamental achievement” of Jesus. He revealed the true nature of God, and he wanted to convert all people to this God whom he experienced **1)** as incomprehensible, unconditional love, **2)** as all-forgiving and **3)** as compassionately present to us in a love that suffers rather than condemns.

This shift in the God-image has been seen as the “most revolutionary change in the whole history of religions” (Eugen Biser). The Pope in his first Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, returned to this image without any reservations or qualifying statements. God's love is even greater than his justice:

“God's passionate love for his people — for humanity — is at the same time a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice” (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 10).

2. *A Change in the person's self-understanding.* In the light of an infinitely loving God, Jesus clarifies the person's relationship to him/herself. The ultimate truth about me is: I am infinitely loved, always forgiven and constantly embraced by God's boundless compassion. My identity as a human person, my dignity, my security, my peace and joy, all are based on this fact. Rather than being a sinner in the first place, I am infinitely loved and precious in the eyes of God. No one has ever encouraged people to be themselves in such a way, nor has anyone ever given them credit for just being human or entrusted them with divine life.

3. *A Change in the image of “neighbour”.* The neighbour should never be seen as an enemy but always as my brother and my sister, loved beyond measure, just as I am loved. Jesus corrected all personal relationships. He removed the ambivalence that had shaped them since time immemorial. No matter how “evil” and inhumane my neighbour may be, he/she remains a person infinitely loved, he/she remains my brother or sister.

Like this, Jesus radically changed the concept of *solidarity*, which was such an important value in his time. Jesus' view of solidarity goes beyond family, clan and nation. It includes all human beings. For him the ‘basis’ for love has to be altered, it is not blood relationship or belonging to a group or nation that determines my measure of love and concern. I must love the person beside me ‘first’ on the basis that he/she is a human being, to whom I owe my solidarity. Solidarity with humankind is the basic attitude that Jesus demands. It must take precedence over every kind of love and every kind of kinship. The ultimate test for such an attitude is the solidarity one shows with the “nobodies” of this world, the ‘discarded people’, the ones we call marginalized today.

This radical change from a narrow understanding of solidarity to a *basic human solidarity* that includes everyone and excludes no one, is presented most pointedly in Mt 12:47-50:

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, waiting to speak to him. Someone told him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you”. But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”. And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother”.

This scene is regarded as a pivotal point in Matthew's Gospel, *the symbolic middle of the Gospel*. “Jesus turns the whole bloodline family system upside down, even at the risk of slighting his mother. For Jesus blood is not the determining factor that makes family; it is trust, union and commitment.

This was extremely daring and even scandalous in a culture where kinship took precedence over everything else. But Jesus takes the risk of opposing conventional wisdom by redefining the family in terms of a universal family of love. With this he broke the addiction to false patriotism, loyalty and nationalism that has brought so much hatred and war into this world” (Rohr, *Jesus’ Plan*, pp. 23-24).

This attitude of Jesus will remain the decisive test for a true disciple. Particularly in our day where nationalism, racism, sexism and ethnic preferences are high on the value scale. A clear look at Jesus presents us with the Christian alternative: solidarity with all human beings as Jesus’ first demand. The question is: can we witness to the Gospel in this situation by deliberately embracing *internationality* and *inter-cultural diversity* as a primary value? Difficult as it may be to live in international, inter-cultural communities, the witness value of this process of mutual enrichment, of dialogue and sharing of gifts outweighs the conflicts and misunderstandings that so easily arise.

This witness may be the one most needed for demonstrating that it is not possible to call oneself a Christian without it.

Who is my neighbour?

An old Rabbi once asked his disciples how they could tell when the night ended and the day was on its way back. “Could it be”, asked one student, “when you see an animal in the distance and know whether it’s a sheep or a dog?”.

“No”, replied the Rabbi.

“Could it be”, another asked, “when you look at a tree in the distance and can tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree?”.

“No”, said the Rabbi.

“Well then, when is it?” his pupils demanded.

“It is when you can look any man or woman in the face and see that he is your brother or she is your sister. Because if you cannot do this, then no matter what time it is, it is still night”.

II. Jesus’ concern for Justice and Compassion

The change in Jesus’ God-image, which we called his *fundamental achievement*, gave us our *final identity*, security and the *right understanding* of who we are and who our neighbour is. In this connection scholars talk about the *identity instilling power* of discipleship.

The second presupposition or consideration with regards to our deliberations on “Mission and Money” is *Jesus’ ultimate motive or principle of action: justice and compassion*, which he demanded from those who would follow him and which he expressed with the words: “*Be merciful, just as your Father in heaven is merciful*” (Lk 6:36). This answers the question of what we should do or more precisely what the *ultimate motive for action* in our lives should be.

In short, we can say: *compassion/mercy* (suffering love) is the key for the correct understanding of Jesus’ whole ministry and life. Jesus chose compassion as his *lifestyle* and the *principal motive for action*. Only in this way can we explain his compassionate solidarity with the poor and marginalised people of his time. His whole *preaching* was motivated by compassion and the heart of his message was the unconditional compassion of God. All his *actions* were motivated by compassion, and so his *death* is the supreme act of compassion for suffering humanity. Lastly, we could say, even Jesus’ *intercessory prayers* were ultimately motivated by compassion: *Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:34). In order to understand the concept of *compassion* as Jesus’ principle of action one has to see it in connection with justice as it is understood in the Bible. Important, however, is the following observation concerning the twin concept of justice and compassion in Holy Scripture: they are inseparable, one flows into the other. Justice follows compassion as Jesus clearly demonstrated in his life and behaviour. Before he heals he first reaches out in compassion to the person before him.

Justice and the Kingdom of God

Jesus never defined the Kingdom of God. He described the Kingdom in parables, in similes

(see Mt 13; Mk 4) and in concepts like life, glory, joy and light. The Kingdom of God is always a multifaceted reality. The only definition of the Kingdom ever attempted in the entire New Testament is found where we least expect it, in Saint Paul. It is actually not a definition but rather a description of the basic values around which the Kingdom of God evolves:

After all, the Kingdom of God is not a matter of whether you get what you like to eat or drink, but the Kingdom of God is a matter of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 14:17).

Albert Schweitzer called Paul's definition "a Creed for all times". The Kingdom, defined in this brief formula, is therefore nothing other than justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Today, these three characteristics are considered the *fundamental values of the Kingdom*. Particularly in the writings of John Paul II we find these values of the Kingdom proclaimed as present anywhere among people of good will. Justice is the key concept among the three values from which the other two flow. As a biblical concept justice is best translated as *right relations* or even better as *life-giving relationships*. These essential relations extend in four directions: *to God, to oneself, to one's neighbour both as individual and as part of society, and to creation as a whole*. To be just means to live in life-giving relationships with one's fellow human beings, oneself, with nature and ultimately with God. Human identity and authenticity are only achieved when these relationships are "right".

Salvation then means entering into relationships that are God-willed for the fulfilment and happiness of my being. Eternal life means living in a relationship with God, oneself, one's neighbour and nature that is life-giving and life-receiving. God is a "lover of life" (Wis 11:23ff.) which means, that wherever God enters into a relationship with human beings, there life is fully given. Those whom God has thus *enlivened* he expects in turn to enter into life-giving relationships with their fellow human beings and with all of creation as well. Therefore it is correct to say:

In biblical faith, exercising Justice is the primary expectation of God. Everything else by way of ethical norm and covenantal requirement derives from this, for God is indeed one "who loves" (Ps 99:4). Here, Israel is commanded to attend to the very thing God most values, namely Justice (Brueggemann, *To Act Justly*).

The different words for justice in the Bible have their distinctive nuances, but the important point is that they all have to do with social relationships and share a core meaning, which is well expressed by their being constantly put together in various constellations. The core meaning which all these words for Justice share, is the defence of the weak, the vindication of the victim and the liberation of the oppressed. In conclusion, the God of the Bible is a God who is preoccupied with social relationships and the way they are institutionalized in Israel.

The connection between knowing Yahweh and practicing Justice is expressed in Jeremiah's famous text 22:16, which equates knowledge of Yahweh with doing justice:

"Your Father defended the cause of the poor and the needy ... all went well for him: Isn't it knowing me, to act like this?", says the Lord".

In summary, we may say that, according to the Prophets, knowledge of Yahweh depends on the practice of Justice. God cannot be deceived by sacrifice and worship. Justice towards one's neighbour is the primary human responsibility and, therefore, of utmost importance, even before the duty of worship. It is all too easy at times to substitute some pious prayer or alms for actions of justice. No prayer, no piety, no sacrifice will be pleasing to God if we use them to escape our primary duty of entering into life-giving relationships with God, with ourselves, with our fellow human beings and with creation. It is in turning in justice to our fellow humans that we will see God face to face.

Mother Theresa expressed this truth as her basic spirituality when she told her sisters: "When I adore the Eucharistic Lord I see the poor and when I serve the poor I see the Lord Jesus". What she meant was: You cannot discover God if you are not willing to serve your fellow human beings selflessly, nor can you turn in compassionate love to your neighbour without being deeply

united with God. An old Rabbi put it this way:

A student came to the Master and remarked, "In the past there were people who had seen God face to face. Why do we no longer have such people among us?" And the Rabbi replied, "Because nobody wants to bend that low" (Hoffsümmer).

Jesus and Justice

In the New Testament the concept of Justice is linked to the Kingdom theme insofar as it refers to life-giving relationships. The whole ministry of Jesus is geared towards re-establishing those relationships on which the Covenant was built. His image of God as compassionate and concerned with justice, his constant critique of his opponents for having ostracized whole groups and his untiring effort to bring those who had been marginalized back into the Covenant community, indicate how Jesus understood his mission in terms of justice, in terms of re-establishing relationships which would give life to those whose life had been "diminished" because of injustice. He came to heal broken relationships which had led to marginalization, exclusion and a diminishment of life — and we are called to do the same.

If one reads the Gospels carefully, it is easy to discover that Jesus was ultimately rejected and put to death because of the way he interpreted the Torah in terms of justice and compassion. His healing on the Sabbath, his eating with unclean hands, his table fellowship with outcasts and sinners had only one aim: to create a new community in which life-giving relationships would guarantee the fullness of life to everyone and put an end to all discrimination. Jesus held on to the Prophet's warning: "Justice it is and not your sacrifices which I desire".

Compassion

In the Hebrew language the word which expresses best God's sentiments towards his creature is "*rahamin*" generally translated as *compassion*. The word is taken from the word "womb of a woman." Thus the word "compassionate" bears the connotation of "wombishness", loving the way a mother loves the child of her womb, nourishing, giving life. It is a very feminine and motherly term and denotes the ability to suffer with, to enter deeply into a situation, to be filled with empathy, as if one is experiencing the situation personally and not as an observer. Perhaps the most moving expression of God's feeling of deep love and compassion towards his people is expressed in the well-known text of the prophet Isaiah:

Can a woman forget her baby and not love the child she bore? Even if a mother should forget her child, I will never forget you. I have written your name on the palms of my hands (Is 49:14-16).

Such compassion does not remain passive or on the level of feelings. It calls for a physical response in the sense that compassion for another is felt in the centre of one's body. It is a love which calls for concrete action. It is a feeling often expected of Yahweh who has mother-love (Is 49:15; Jer 31:20) or father-love (Ps 103 [102]:13; Is 63:15-16) for Israel. It is this "womb-love" of Yahweh which makes God forgive his wayward children. One could also say compassion is qualified love, it is *suffering love*. When Jesus encountered a suffering person his first reaction was "and he was moved with compassion", a phrase we find nine times said of Jesus. But then Jesus goes further: he heals the person or better he restores the person back into life-giving relationships, he restores justice to this person. One cannot think of one without the other. Compassion leads to justice and justice includes compassion.

Jesus is the incarnation of this God, the God-with-us, our Emmanuel. We cannot understand Jesus unless we see him as the compassion of God. The compassion of God manifested in Jesus is not a bending towards the underprivileged from a privileged position; it is not reaching down from on high to those who have failed to make it in life. On the contrary, it is a moving directly to those people and places where suffering is visible and tangible and to build a home there forever. The key to approach the mystery of God can only be found in compassion. In the words of Albert Nolan:

If we wish to treat Jesus as our God, we would have to conclude that our God does not want to be served by us, but wants to serve us; God does not want to be given the highest possible rank and status in our society, but wants to take the lowest place and to be without any rank and status; God does not want to be feared and obeyed, but wants to be recognised in the suffering of the poor and the weak; God is not supremely indifferent and detached, but is irrevocably committed to the liberation of humankind, for God has chosen to be identified with all people in a spirit of solidarity and compassion. If this is not a true picture of God, then Jesus is not divine. If this is a true picture of God, God is more truly human, more thoroughly humane than any human being. God is a supremely human God” (*Jesus before Christianity*).

III. The Spirit of Poverty: The fundamental virtue of all virtues

Our third presupposition, in talking about *mission and money*, is the disciple’s fundamental option for the Spirit of Poverty, which we might call *the virtue of all virtues* for a disciple of Jesus. This will give us an answer to the basic question of where we can find our ultimate security — if it is not money — as Jesus insisted.

In all discussions and talks about religious life — be it in retreats or workshops — in which the question of vowed life was treated and often heatedly discussed, I have come to realize that it is the vow of poverty that seems to be the most difficult, the older the person becomes. It is the attitude of letting go: one’s physical strength, one’s memory, one’s pet ideas, one’s often fiercely defended opinions and often one’s non-negotiable principles — they all seem threatened and questioned. We feel as if we were losing the secure ground under our feet.

One of the subconscious reasons for this fear is certainly the question of security. The more dependent one becomes, the more the question of security moves into the foreground and money becomes important. The question that subsequently surfaces is: where do we find our basic security? But this is precisely what our being a Christian is all about. Where do I find my ultimate security? As religious and therefore as disciples of Jesus this question needs constant attention, particularly in the present moment when the means of securing our lifestyle and our needs — legitimate as they may be — are causing anxiety and headaches for many. Turning to the Scriptures may not provide the money we need to sustain our livelihood but it reminds us of the basic attitude which a disciple should have concerning his life of following the Lord.

The basic attitude of a disciple of Jesus is best expressed in the phrase that Jesus himself coined: *Poverty of Spirit*. This dimension of poverty is new in Jesus’ teaching and reveals clearly what he himself understood as being human in the eyes of God. Without this attitude discipleship is not possible and the vow of poverty in religious life has no foundation. *Poverty of Spirit* is the fundamental virtue of discipleship. It can be defined as:

Accepting
The givenness of life and the gratuitousness of creation,
 ... And acknowledging
Our poverty before God and rejoice in it.

The first Beatitude in Matthew 5:3 comes closest to what Jesus meant by the spirit of poverty: *blessed are the poor because the Kingdom of God is theirs*. Normally this sentence is wrongly translated: It does not say *it will be theirs (in the future)*, but *it is theirs now, here in the present time*. It is the present not the future that will make them blessed. The poor participate already now in the Kingdom of God. Poverty is not to be understood as a lack, as something negative. The poor in the mind of Jesus possess all they need. Neither misery nor affluence correspond to the Kingdom of God. For Jesus only the *Poverty of the Spirit* discloses the full possibility of life. The one who is poor in spirit, that means, who understands him/herself as held in existence out of love, will take only what is needed and considers it a love gift from God. Otherwise he/she would fall once again into the temptation of securing him/herself against God through what has been accumulated. This is the real meaning of Jesus’ statement: “You cannot serve God and mammon” because you can find your security only in God’s love, not in what you try to achieve for yourself.

What does the Bible say about poverty?

It is not easy to summarize what the Bible says about poverty and the poor. There are stages in the history of God's Covenant with his people which reveal different views. But one thing is certain: riches and possessions are blessings from God and not to be despised. Secondly, Jesus did not develop an ideology of poverty. Therefore, we can briefly summarize the three most important aspects:

The poor are God's privileged people

God is on their side and determined to restore their rights. God is not neutral; God is partial; God is on the side of the poor and oppressed. *"I have heard the cry of my people and I am determined to set them free from their slave-masters"* (Ex 3:7-12; see also Ps 72 [71]:12-14). Jesus took the same position (Lk 4:18f), because poverty is seen as a lack or a diminishment of life. Since God is "the lover of life" (Wis 11:24-26; Jn 10:10) he — by his very nature — is right there where life is diminished through oppression, injustice and suffering.

Mistrust concerning riches and possessions

The Old Testament is ambiguous about riches and possessions: poverty was seen as a punishment and riches were seen as a blessing (Gn 13:14-17; Dt 7:8-10; Ex 23:23-26). Poverty was regarded as a breeding ground for vice, the fruit of laziness and a punishment for unfaithfulness (Prv 10:4).

In the Law, poverty was regarded as scandalous and as something that should not exist at all in Israel. Poverty — as the fruit of injustice — was directly against the Covenant made with God. No one should ever be the victim of another's gain. The dignity of the individual as a member of the Covenant forbade him to exploit or oppress anyone. The social laws were all based on the Covenant (Ex 20-23). The admonition in Deuteronomy 15:4, *"Let there be no poor among you then"*, has to be understood in this context.

The history of Israel, however, proved that riches easily become a source of *greed, injustice and unbelief*. They create a false security found in possessions rather than in confidence in God alone. In the New Testament the issue is even clearer: the Kingdom of God is the only security there is, and we cannot serve two masters (Mt 6:24). Possessions are seen to be so fascinating and attractive that we easily take them as our ultimate security. Jesus looks at riches and possessions precisely from this perspective in the story of the young rich man in Mark 10:17-31. Changing the ground of one's ultimate security is regarded by Jesus as the fundamental conversion the young man had to make. It was surrendering what he had regarded as his security that would have given him salvation. He was not asked to throw away what he possessed but to give it to the poor, or to share it with the poor as the Early Christians came to understand Jesus' demand.

Possessions are for sharing

The riches and possessions one may own are not meant to be kept egoistically and used for one's own comfort; they are meant to be shared. They are in themselves good and not to be despised, but they exist to be shared with one's fellow human beings. This was the basic view of the early Church (Acts 4:32-35). The fundamental premise for such a view is our shared life in Christ. We are a new creation, a new existence, a new being in Christ.

"As a result, there are no Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, strangers, barbarians, slaves, or free men, but Christ is all, Christ is in all" (Col 3:11).

"So there is no longer any difference between Jew and Greek, or between slave and freedman, or between man and woman: but you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal 3:28).

The immediate effect of this shared life is that everyone, including the wealthy, now depend on the community for their well-being. The sharing of material goods becomes the expression of mutual interdependence and sharing at the deeper level of "life in Christ", which is the basis for

an authentic Christian existence. However, these texts have been given different interpretations even in our time. They clearly declare that all privileges and advantages of social positions and opportunities are made null and void because of our unity in Christ.

Jesus' own life-style

Jesus does not show us in the first instance what it means to be God's Son, but he demonstrates, first of all, what it means to be truly human — to have no power, no support, no security except “the enthusiasm and commitment of one's own heart” (J.B. Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*). Jesus clung to nothing. “*He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself*” (Phil 2:6). The person of Jesus is a living and vivid demonstration of this virtue of all virtues. His security, the rock he stood on, was the knowledge that he was the beloved Son of the Father. This knowledge gave him the strength to risk being one of us. “*Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor*” (II Cor 8:9).

Jesus, however, added a dimension to poverty which might be called the *poverty of spirit*. It means nothing can save us except total reliance on God's infinite love, which is now entering the world through Jesus. The things of this world cannot save, and those who rely on their riches and possessions will perish (Mk 10:23-27). The “poor in spirit” are those who have found their security in the knowledge that God loves them and will save them not because of what they have but because of God's love. One cannot receive the Kingdom of God and remain in it unless one lives this virtue. The abundant riches of nature, that God gives us, are gifts of love, not meant to be accumulated or considered a personal or communal possession to be exploited. This has been the constant temptation from time immemorial, but today this temptation seems to become almost irresistible. As Sandra M. Schneiders sees it:

We live in a culture of achievement and production which believes that people should and do get what they deserve. As Christians we know that this is not so. The infinite bounty of God begins with the gift of life itself and continues with everything that sustains it. Our activity is not so much an earning our way as a co-operating with the Creator God in transforming history into God's Reign of Justice and love.... The capacity for enjoyment, for the sharing of simple pleasures, for delight in uncontrived beauty, has to be developed in our artificial and over-stimulated environment. But these are essentially contemplative attitudes that conduce to recollection of spirit and prayer and that bathe our surroundings in evangelical poverty.

However, as we said, Jesus did not develop an ideology of poverty because he was too much of a Jew. He could enjoy the things of this world without getting caught up in them. He was a free man, though he lived as a poor man. He expected those who would follow him to consider what would be in store for them. To one who wanted to join him Jesus said:

The foxes have holes and birds have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lie down and rest (Lk 9:58).

The Kingdom asks for a radical decision to leave all security behind and to put one's whole trust in the unconditional love of God. Riches carry the constant danger of making us rely on what we possess and look for salvation from that source alone. Here again the most disastrous effect of original sin is clearly revealed — our desire to possess, to dominate, to make ourselves secure. In short, to have something to offer, rather than accepting God's love and to admit joyfully that I live only because of God's love. Is not ultimately the desire to have, to accumulate, to hoard, the real cause of the massive poverty and oppression that we see around us today? A return to the virtue of all virtues, the Spirit of poverty, as Jesus lived it and demanded it from all those who would follow him, can provide us with the serenity and calmness it needs to discuss matters of money and possession. It calls for a measure of Gospel-like objectivity, which means: the things of this world are meant to create communities of fraternal solidarity, first in own religious community and then among all human beings. In short, it is the Spirit of poverty that can give us the right perspective to approach the topic under deliberation: mission and money.

Poverty, by stripping us of all the false façades that we use to buttress an insecure sense of self, enables us to be simply who we are and to receive God's gratuitous love as an unearned gift.

Paradoxically, this child-like simplicity takes a lifetime to achieve. As human beings, we are so radically beset by self-doubt about our essential goodness and value that we are constantly fortifying a weak self-worth by identifying with “other things”. These things are of infinite variety. They can be our looks, talents, degrees, possessions, reputation, career, performance and even our health. We glory in these things that seem to bolster our worth. As Christians we must detach ourselves from these things that conceal the real self. This letting-go process allows us to enjoy a peaceful kind of freedom in our relationship with the material world. We can be at peace in having or not having (Wilkie Au, *By Way of the Heart*).

Conclusion

To summarize it once again: as a background for our deliberation I chose these three biblical truths:

1. The first defines our understanding of and relationship with God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Because of this, we know who we are, who our neighbour is and ultimately who God is. Jesus’ God-image furnishes us with a true *identity and self-understanding*.
2. The second concerns the *principal motivation* of all our actions. We know *how to act* and what should motivate our actions and behaviour, namely, compassion and justice.
3. The third presents us with the fundamental virtue of all virtues: the *Spirit of Poverty*. Through this we know where our *last security* can be found and that riches and possessions are meant for sharing and building up communities of fraternal solidarity.

They are the starting point from which we arrive at ourself-understanding, our principle of action and our basic attitude towards life. Since all three characterized the life, action and the behaviour of Jesus himself, it is obvious that they demand the same from everyone who wants to be his Disciple.

The basic question of our life is ultimately the question of *security*. A Buddhist monk told me once: “What you Christians mean by original sin is ultimately the inborn tendency in every human being to accumulate and to possess, to secure and to dominate, to rule and to have power over others”. We lost our security, the foundation to stand on. It is no surprise that, in the last analysis, to believe means to “be secure” to “know where one’s security can be found”.

All three characteristics are about relationships which are concerned with how we live together and share what we have, and how we behave towards each other. They determine everything we have and how far we are willing to make available what we have to our fellow human beings and particularly to those with whom we live as brothers and sisters in our congregations. Particularly religious communities whose members have taken a vow *to follow the Lord more freely and to imitate him more exactly* (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 44), will have to show what they profess. They will do so by being living witnesses **1)** to God’s infinite love and **2)** to his compassion by being communities of fraternal solidarity and **3)** to the security they have found in God’s love by living in the gladness of today because they know life is a gift to be accepted with gratitude and joy.

When looking at our Founders or Foundresses we might see how concerned they were about building their newly founded communities on precisely these three pillars. They were driven by the love of God. Their principle of action was compassionate love, and their security they found in God. Money matters they left up to God — and God provided, often with astonishing abundance. Every congregation has its own story to tell about this phenomenon.

Our deliberations and discussions during this week will be about money and how far we are able and willing to share our resources within our multinational and multi-cultural communities and even beyond. This we do as disciples of Jesus who have committed themselves in a radical way to the life-style of Jesus. Sure, we have to live fellowship with Jesus in our own time and situation

which may radically differ from those in which Jesus lived. How to adapt the demands of Jesus to our time and situation may be the real challenge for us. It asks for the skill to read the signs of the times through which the Holy Spirit shows us the direction in which we have to move. Yet the way we should walk must always take its orientation from the way Jesus himself indicated to his disciples. He, after all, remains *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn 14:6). Looking at the Church of today J.B. Metz expressed this problem once in this way:

The Church ... cannot solve the crisis of its historical identity and its societal legitimation in a purely interpretative or hermeneutical manner, but only by practical identification. The problem of its identity is fundamentally a theory-praxis problem. That praxis whose intelligible and identity-securing power cannot be replaced by interpretation is called *discipleship*. The Church's crisis is due to a deficit in Discipleship and to difficulties in adapting to Jesus (*"For a Renewed Church ..."*, p. 139).

Since this is the Church's problem it is ours as well. In the measure we will solve *our adapting to Jesus* today, we will help the Church to adapt herself equally.

I wanted to make you once again conscious of who we are before God: infinitely loved and brothers and sisters before all cultural and national distinctions; secondly, I wanted to remind you that our ultimate motivation for action must remain justice and compassion and thirdly to encourage us to consider God's love as our final and lasting security. The temptation to secure our lives is omnipresent — also for religious — and we should not forget that in the history of Religious Congregations money and riches have played a devastating role and often meant the end of a number of them. Since money is always a sensitive subject and touches our very existence, it is all the more necessary to be reminded of the true source of our security. Then this might help us know how to use these means in solidarity — first with the members in our own community and then with the broader community, in which we want to be disciples of Jesus and witness to his way of life not in his time but in ours.

Jesus expressed this axiom in the words: *I did not come to be served but to serve and to give my life for the many* (Mk 10:45). It was not competition and success that he asked for, but compassion and justice. This means: in serving others in solidarity and love we make his Kingdom already tangible and present in this world. It will tangibly show itself in a solidary community of brothers and sisters because that is what the Kingdom is all about.

Albert Schweitzer was once asked what advice he could give to those who, as Christians, look for a motto in life. His answer was:

You ask me to give you a motto. Here it is: *SERVICE*. Let this word accompany you throughout your life. Let it be before you as you seek your way and your duty in the world. May it be called to your minds if ever you are tempted to forget it or set it aside. It will not always be a comfortable companion but it will always be a faithful one. And it will be able to lead you to happiness, no matter what the experience of your lives is.

To serve others means ultimately to serve God, but to serve money can easily lead to serve oneself and to neglect the others. In serving others we will find our security in God. In serving money we will find neither God nor our brothers and sisters.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other (Mt 6:24).

- Mission and Money -

“A Mission for Money”

An interpretation of the prohibition of money by Francis of Assisi seen against the economic-social background of his time

- Stimuli for Today -

Fr Helmut Rakowski, OFM Cap

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to address you in this way, quite apart from whether all of those present are or are not members of a religious community. “Brother” and “Sister” these are the honorary titles given to the “citizens of the Kingdom of God” and Jesus himself said that there is only one Master, only one Father, and that “you are all my brothers” (Mt 23,8).

This vision has also to do with what I want to say to you today and with what in the last twelve years has determined the way in which we Capuchins try to behave regarding money. Our last Plenary Council spoke of “redeemed relationships” which must be formed in our world. Money and the economy in our times have become in a special way an expression and a cause of unredeemed relationships.

Love, great love for persons

1. When I began to write this intervention I was in Porto Alegre, the city in the south of Brazil remembered for the World Social Forum and its criticism of globalisation and neoliberalism. One morning I visited “the rubbish men”, who in the projects of the Capuchins recycle rubbish and thus each day earn at least 10 Reals (about 4 US\$). On the afternoon of the same day I read on internet the news of the publication of the recent Forbes List of Billionaires: “The rich have become even richer” – this was the substance of the news – “The number of billionaires in the world has risen by 102, to reach the record number of 793, above all as a result of the rise in the price of shares”.¹

2. As a Capucin, and thus as a member of the First Order of Saint Francis, I am not actually qualified to speak of economics or, more precisely, of money. But all of you know the joke of the three things that not even the Holy Spirit knows: 1. What do the Jesuits really think? 2. How many women’s congregations are there in the Catholic Church? And 3. Where do the Franciscans get their money from?

3. From an autobiographic point of view, in my life as a Capuchin I have made an important change in my position regarding money and the mission. In 1991 I went into the mountains of Southern Mexico as a “missionary” to live among the natives. Behind me I had exactly two years of pastoral experience in Germany. I met up with my Capuchin brothers, who had dedicated themselves to the “option for the poor”. The Bishop of Oaxaca at that time, Don Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño, in answer to the question of what was needed for our service among the Mixtecs said: “[Have] love, a great love for these people”. Of course our projects were very strongly focused on the aspect of the formation of awareness and the so-called “grass root-level”. When we wrote home or went there on holiday, our message was always the same: “We do not want your money. What the people of the mountains of Mexico need is your justice”.

4. Meanwhile as from October 2003 I am Secretary General for missionary animation of the Order of the Capuchins and bear the fine title of “Promoter of solidarity”. In this capacity I have

to procure over 6 million U.S. dollars a year, to fund our missionary presence and also formation in the Order. Yes, today I say: “We need money”. However I do not wish to consider the topic of justice in parallel, that is independent of money, but together with it.

5. For a Franciscan this constitutes a direct challenge, because it is well known that Francis of Assisi vehemently refused the use of money: “I firmly order all the brothers in no way to receive money directly or through any intermediary”.²

6. In the course of my visit to Brazil in March 2006 I had a meeting with some aspirants to the Capuchin Order. In the course of our dialogue one of these, alluding to Rome and to the Vatican, asked me: “How can the Gospel be preached from pulpits of gold?”. In saying this he was not making a very deep analysis of the Church. However I believe that the question of money and mission, money and the Gospel message, represents a challenge for us all. This is closely connected to the credibility of our message. Not only is the Franciscan Family obliged to poverty, all religious take this vow and even the Church with its clerics is called to a simple lifestyle (see *CIC* §282; §285,4; §286; John Paul II “*Pastores Dabo Vobis*”, n. 175 sgg). We are challenged by the fact that while we dispose of millions in various places we even have some influence on the economy. And it is interesting to note how, in connection with this question at times we twist and turn and try not to answer it. For the present meeting too at the beginning we did not wish to choose the forthright title: “Mission and money”, and still in other languages it is entitled “Economics for the mission”.

7. I remember a Jesuit Procurator of the missions. Referring to I Cor 13, he said: “If I had everything (justice, commitment, etc.), but had no money, it would all be like a gong booming or a cymbal clashing”. And I am convinced that without money there can be no mission. But we must — at the same time — do our best so that our money (or economics) should have a mission.

Wherever they are ... the brothers should be familiar with one another

8. And now I would like to present the path that we Capuchins together with our Minister General John Corriveau, have covered in the last twelve years (from 1994 to 2006). For us this has constituted an important step towards the future. Even if I am referring to Franciscan sources and to the documents of the Capuchin Order, I think that in them we find general stimuli for the two challenges that undoubtedly all of us have regarding our mission:

a) How do we finance our presence which is growing strongly outside of Northern Europe and North America?

b) What kind of presence do our sisters and brothers want in these places and can afford in the future?

9. On 2 February 1996 the Minister General, John Corriveau, published his Circular Letter, no. 9.³

Eighteen months had elapsed since the election of the new General Government. The General Definitors (that is, General Councillors) during this time had visited all the regions entrusted to them. The Minister General himself during the same period had met the brothers from 80 of the 150 different circumscriptions of the Order. The Letter summarises the deliberations taken by the General Council and is in the nature of a declaration of the programme of government, in which important “problems and challenges”⁴ are recalled, including among others the question of the “*community and institutional* expression of our evangelical ideal of poverty”.⁵

10. This question’s background consists of the statistical growth of the Order and of the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In 1950 still, 91% of the autonomous circumscriptions of the Order were concentrated in Western Europe and in North America. In the 1970’s there was an increase in vocations especially in Asia-Oceania and in Latin America. At that time Africa played no important role, while in Western Europe and in North America the first symptoms of a crisis of vocations appeared. In 1997 already 30% of the Brothers lived in Asia-Oceania, Africa and Latin America. If at that time we had considered the number of Brothers in Eastern Europe separately, it would already have been clear that before the end of the millennium 50% of the brothers belonged to regions of the Order outside of Western Europe and North America.⁶

11. “Past structures of financial solidarity were built upon concepts of juridic dependence. Provinces were financially responsible for custodies or missions entrusted to their care. An increasingly large portion of our international brotherhood is in need of financial assistance. At the same time, these circumscriptions no longer retain juridic or even traditional ties with regions of the Order which have the capacity to assist them. How can new structures of international solidarity be created which do not denote dependence, and at the same time do not require an unacceptable level of financial centralization within the Order? How can we give international witness to the principle of the Rule: “*Wherever the brothers may be ... let them show that they are members of the same family*” (Rb VI,7:FF 91)?”⁷

12. In this same Circular Letter, no. 9, the Minister General announced the convening of a Plenary Council of the Order⁸ to be held in 1998 “to treat the question of evangelical poverty, especially in its communal and institutional dimensions”.⁹

Poverty as a road to fraternity

13. In his Circular Letter, no. 13, “Living poverty in fraternity – A reflection on the Sixth Plenary Council of the Order”, John Corriveau develops fundamental reflections for the preparation of this international meeting of the Order. In it he shows above all “how dependence leads to (and does not impede) social harmony”.¹⁰ In a personal conversation he indicated this view precisely as the key experience which had opened his eyes to a new interpretation of Franciscan poverty. The renunciation of money and of material goods does not signify insecurity. Indeed it increases security, because instead of basing ourselves on the wealth and the relatively small number of the rich, we base ourselves on the great mass of the poor. Olivi, the great supporter of radical poverty in the struggle of the Franciscans for poverty, said: “Nothing corrupts the truth and fidelity to friendship so much as the love of wealth”.¹¹ The Franciscan scholar, Kajetan Esser, OFM, certainly writes that poverty in the external life of the friars caused great insecurity. But he hastens to add: “Anyone so poor is completely abandoned to the goodness of God and of man”.¹² “The *vivere sine proprio* then forms interhuman relations of a quite special nature, that perhaps and only there can be achieved, where the person takes seriously the imitation of Christ, who said of himself: *Non veni ministrari sed ministrare* (Mt 20, 28). But once more it becomes clear that this *vivere sine proprio* as an essential element of *evangelical life* is the way of authentic *fraternitas*”.¹³ In the summary of his article at the end it is said: “Poverty was the way to fraternity”.¹⁴ The “Legend of the Three Companions” tells how the Bishop of Assisi spoke insistently to Francis. To him the poverty of the friars seemed uselessly hard. But Francis replied: “Lord, if we had goods, to protect them we would need weapons, for it is from property that questions and disputes arise, and thus in many ways both the love of God and the love of our fellow is prevented (blocked). For this reason we do not wish to possess any temporal goods in this world”.¹⁵

14. The Sixth Plenary Council of the Capuchin Order (VI CPO), held at Assisi from 7 September to 1 October 1998, brought 31 delegates from all five continents and the General Government of the Order together. The title of the meeting was: “Living Poverty in Fraternity”. Following the model of the Synods of Bishops, the participants did not draw up a Final Document, but proposed to the Order the so-called “Propositions”, that were thereafter approved by the General Government. The central declaration of the VI CPO lies perhaps precisely in Prop. 6, which, over and above an ascetic decision, conceives the Franciscan decision regarding poverty as a conscious option against concrete social and religious dimensions of the time.

15. “Francis judged that greed and avarice disrupt relationships with God, just as ambition and competition damage the sense of brotherhood among people. In order to live the Gospel ideal of love and brotherhood in its fulness, Francis and his first Companions adopted a form of life that involved courageous choices of poverty for those times. Among these were: the non-use of money, non-appropriation of goods and manual work as the ordinary means of support and help to others, and alms in case of manifest necessity” (VI CPO, Prop. 6).

The option against an exclusive society

16. The Sixth Plenary Council on “Poverty in Fraternity” rightly removed from us as Franciscans

the anxiety of money, but aroused in us the anxiety of the abuse of money. This seems to me a revolutionary change in the reception of the Franciscan concept of poverty, based on a new sociological interpretation of Francis's decision.

17. Francis himself saw the beginning of his conversion not in the option for poverty, but in the option for the poor or, rather in the option for the excluded. In his Testament he calls his meeting with the leper at the gates of Assisi the beginning of his new life "in penance".¹⁶ The German language allows us to have an inner vision of this event, because in German normally the sufferer from leprosy is called "Aussätziger" (that is to say "separate", or "excluded"). Accordingly his definition is made on the social consequences of the disease, and not on the basis of the medical diagnoses. Leprosy implied the consequence of exclusion from society. The infected person was, so to speak, placed outside of the gates and recalls the biblical story of poor Lazarus before the rich man's door. He was a "living dead man", for whom a requiem Mass was celebrated and whose inheritance was subdivided while he was still alive. So that the beginning of the Franciscan Movement for the son of the rich cloth merchant Bernardone consisted in overcoming this "exclusion". Francis, and later on his friars, opposed the "exclusive" society of Assisi and of their time. They crossed the frontiers going out towards others, towards the excluded and the disadvantaged and formed a new community, an alternative to the feudal and city structures of the Middle Ages, which was extended to fraternal relations with all creatures. That this was something more than an idyll, Zeffirelli style (in the film "Brother Sun, Sister Moon"), appears clear, if we take a look at the social relations existing in the Middle Ages.

18. Francis of Assisi's time was characterised by profound changes.¹⁷ While in vast parts of Europe feudal society was still flourishing, in the Italy of the 14th century the first signs of a pre-industrial society were developing. The population tripled. About five per cent of it lived in the city centres. Money increased powerfully in meaning and interpersonal relations became considerably more complex (for example, the progressive subdivision of work, cessation of a barter economy ...). If at the passing of the millennium the cities were rather an exception on the Po plains and along the coasts, towards the middle of the 14th century three million already lived in the cities. Half of these were distributed in the approximately 75 cities of about 20,000 inhabitants, and the rest were scattered in some hundreds of "townships" which at times did not have more than 3,000 inhabitants. The cities grew more rapidly than the overall population. Often 50% of the inhabitants consisted of peasants who migrated to the towns. The city as the marketplace marked the beginning of a market economy. Textile factories started a large production in Northern Italy, in Southern France and in The Netherlands. Clothes became the first successful export of Europe, while at the same time the trade in exotic cloths increased. Pietro Bernardone, Francis's father, was a rich cloth merchant.

Money makes the world go round

19. Money became the vital ganglion of this new society. It was easy to handle, it could be transported easily and made a concentration of many persons possible. Unlike natural products, it was durable and could be deposited and amassed without danger of deterioration. It could be exchanged at will and accordingly promoted the division of work. Between the 12th and the 13th centuries the first banks were founded. In the cities, against payment, it was possible to obtain education – and women. Prostitution is undoubtedly not an invention of the Italian city of the Middle Ages, but the anonymity of the city and of money facilitated it. "The monetary economy changed a person's relations with nature, with work, with time, with human society in general and also with the innermost human values and religious convictions".¹⁸

20. Relations were more and more determined by the possession of money. In the city a person without money found himself excluded from the necessities of life and was reduced to begging. Famines, such as that of 1190, not only decimated the population, but caused discord between the survivors, because the speculators grew shamelessly rich with their reserves of grain. The lack of sensitivity to other people's needs was transversal, cutting across all classes. One day Peter of Poitiers († 1205) in a sermon made the voice of the poor resound, begging his listeners to give them the food that they wasted at table. And the listeners were ecclesiastics!¹⁹ Lotario di Segni, who

later became Pope under the name of Innocent III († 1216), in his work *De contemptu mundi* describes a divided society: the poor railed against God, for not distributing his goods fairly, and against their fellows, who would not help them in their need. On the contrary, the rich, were taken up with amassing even more wealth and for ever fearing to lose it. “The evident disproportion in the enjoyment of life led to powerful social tensions”.²⁰ Money was destroying relationships with God and with men.

21. Seen against this background, Francis of Assisi’s four decisions were not an ascetic choice. Not to have money, not to have property, manual labour and, as a last choice for survival, asking for alms, were concrete economic and social options for the relations of men with their fellow men and with God, which were – and still are – very much endangered by the idols of money and property.

22. We are living in a world in which, armed with a credit card, it is extremely simple to follow the prohibition of Francis of “not touching money” in the literal sense, but in which at the same time it is impossible to escape economic implications. It often happens that we say to a beggar that we have not got a cent in our pockets – and we may even believe it. But then we fail to notice that the Bursar of the community pays the wages of our employees, pays the taxes of the house in which we live, fills the refrigerator with a regular supply of food, etc.

23. We Capuchins have wondered how we can remain faithful to the social option of Francis of Assisi, without in so doing simply and ingenuously copying the past. The image of the Capuchin ascetic is deeply fixed in the mind of European population: a long beard, a not too clean habit and barefoot in sandals are still for many friars the achievement of the Franciscan ideal of poverty. The fact that these very friars occupy posts and carry out services, in which they deal with money and are responsible for money, is often not taken much into account. Certain bursars, missions secretaries or even missionaries dispose of means which would do honour to a small (or even not so small) business.

24. At the same time there is also the other aspect, which I had the opportunity of seeing precisely in Africa. There the friars repeatedly said to me: “For us poverty is not a value. In our families we are poor. We don’t need to enter the Order for this”. In the light of this consideration, the solution is seen exclusively in the accumulation of money, which should bring about the change from “poor” to “rich”. Often in our missionary work and in using the money for the missions, we have followed precisely this principle. In this way we have made possible the change of field first to the members of our Congregations and to the hierarchy of the Church, and then also to other Christians and sometime also to the believers of other religions. Everyone knows the consequences and the problems, because only in very rare cases does all of this happen without greed, struggles and jealousy. Especially during political crises and periods of civil war, violence is unleashed against many structures, ecclesiastical institutes and residences of the religious. The constant need for “fresh money” also leads to a dangerous dependence. Then, how can we, according to the spirit of Francis, opt for relationships without ending up in a false ascetics and without struggling acritically in the present economic system for better positions for our people?

A different attitude towards money

25. We Capuchins have developed an attitude towards money and our life as dependents of the economy that is called a “fraternal economy”, a new form of relating to the world and, at the same time, a prophetic announcement. It is much more than a simple system of accountability or a fraternal sharing of the income of the house. Its five principles constitute a prophetic criticism of the current system that many of us have accepted as the only system possible, and these call us to build with the money we use redeemed relationships in a world of asymmetrical relations:

1. **Participation** assures that all those affected are involved in the important decisions that are made. It is an important value against manipulation and the concealing of information.
2. **Equity** does not propose that everyone has the same, but that everyone has the right to what is necessary for a dignified life. It is a form of recognizing personal and cultural differences. It rejects valuing people according to their possessions.
3. **Transparency** guarantees honesty, accountability and ethics in transactions. It is a

strong criticism of the corruption, dishonesty and manipulation at various levels of society.

4. **Solidarity** criticizes and counteracts the profit motive that concentrates wealth in the hands of the few and acts as the motor of the “market economy”. Solidarity bases itself on the experience of St Francis — that all we possess comes from God and that the only thing that is truly ours is our sin (Reg NB, XVII: 7 and 17).

5. **Austerity** is not just a personal choice of a simple lifestyle but it is also a communal choice against all that destroys relationships with God and with our brothers and sisters. It is a fundamental fraternal value that preserves the other values of Franciscan life. It is a manner of rejecting a system that functions by constantly creating desires to sell more. Without the “self-limitation” of austerity, solidarity becomes the object of abuse and destruction”.²¹

26. With these criteria of a fraternal economy perhaps we can succeed in creating a new mode of “inclusive relations” where we live and work. Jesus is consternated by the struggle of his disciples for dominion: “This is not to happen among you; no; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant” (cf. Mk 10:43). Consequently, it cannot be a case of simply changing the faces in the existing system and of putting the poor beside the rich, as they do the same things that were done to them to those who are on the other side. No, it is something new.

The wealth of the poor , are the poor

27. If we do not consider an austere life and ascesis as Francis’ first choice, but as the consequence of his basic decision for “redeemed relationships”, then (at least as Capuchin Franciscans) we do not timidly lower our eyes when we manage and use money. We want to build bridges with this money and, at the same time, we pay great attention that it does not create barriers. Then we hope that we have learnt that the antidote to poverty is not wealth: Wealth – which tends to accumulate – in fact is what marginalizes many poor people. Not everyone can permit themselves a lifestyle like that in Western Europe or in North America, because here we are exploiting to the extreme limits nature and people. The true wealth of the poor are the poor themselves. If the poor, instead of working against one another, were to collaborate, then we would have achieved a great deal. And if we could relate the rich with the poor and the poor with the poor and then everyone also with God, we should be making some progress, which makes men and nature live.

28. “Emmanuel Levinas says: “The material necessities of a brother are my spiritual needs”.²² This way of thinking does not mean that we win heaven with our works of charity. Rather it shows us that the meeting with the poor purifies our picture of God, while contemplation purifies our intentions and guides our Gospel way. Austerity together with the other values of the fraternal economy is the base on which to work for the globalisation of solidarity”.²³ Then in any case we will no longer measure our efficiency only by the sums of money that we distribute, but above all by our attitude towards money and by the consequences that its use has on relations between people.

New decisions regarding principles

29. The problem of the basic financing of our presence and missions in Africa and Asia as also in certain parts of Latin America and of Eastern Europe may in future be solved only if we create **an equilibrium of solidarity** within our own community. The structure of our Congregations should not merely mirror the division of the world into “first” and “third” worlds. Nor can we allow certain zones to be “overfunded” while others do not know how they will be able to fund their basic requirements. This requires on all sides energetic curtailment, and austerity of life, permitting the sharing of resources.

30. This also means **permitting different cultures to influence and give new form both to our lifestyle and to our way of working.**

- a) Why are our models and ways of being almost exclusively of Western type?
- b) Is it not possible for our communities to accept African family values that may find in Africa an easier fulfilment than those that we have today?
- c) Can we not assume Latin American cooperative structures for our social projects?

d) Perhaps it is possible to discover in Asian spirituality stimuli for our community organisation?

31. However I am also realistic and see the need for hospitals and for schools, even if in this we should be much more creative. It will be possible to carry through structures of this kind with our brothers and sisters who come from the poor regions of the world only if we are capable of **overcoming the “personal funding”**. Structures that survive on the personal ability of a Western missionary to find funds, are destined to come to an end. I know fellow friars who collect hundreds of thousands of Euro for hospitals: from former classmates, from church and political communities where they are known. And I can just imagine the native friar, who in ten years’ time knocks on the same doors with the same request. I fear that we can all imagine the answer he will receive.

32. I am also of the opinion that we — in case there is still time for this — invest **funds to ensure certain basic necessities**, like formation and health. These should be limited to serving specific purposes.

The future is based on the communion

33. But without the conversion described above in our life and in our work things cannot continue to go ahead. It seems that even with all the money in the world we will not be able to change anything for the better. The future is based on communion. Relations are more likely to weave a social network than money. While an exclusive society wants to ensure wealth by excluding, an inclusive society creates “wealth” by attracting persons to its own ambit. I trust that our sisters and our brothers in Africa, Asia and Latin America perceive all this. Their efficiency does not only depend on money. They have much, much more to offer. And that is precisely what the people need to have from them. And we in Europe and in North America will be content if in a few years’ time we can learn from them. Because sooner or later the Church here too must – and will be able – to manage on very modest means.

34. Everything has its time and its hour. Only Francis of Assisi himself could develop such a vision of society in the last 800 years. And he did this with the concepts of his time, which in the pauperist movement was characterised by the guiding idea: “naked, follow the naked Jesus”. For this we needed the Second Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Rome, 25 November 1985, which declared *communio* to be the guiding idea of Vatican Council II. The Ecclesiology of communion is not entirely unquestioned: “What some propagate as the ideal image of communication, appears to others like a pious mantle, which has to cover the structures of a distorted communication”.²⁴ However this gives us precisely the possibility to point out the network, founded on communication, and of the *communio* of the ancient Church as community of communities. Only such a perspective would make it possible to give a new interpretation to the renunciation of money by Francis of Assisi.

35. “It is through communion that the Church seeks to heal the division and violence inherent in the competitive nature of capitalism. The Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, states that “*the church is essentially a mystery of communion*” (n. 41) and “*fraternal life, understood as a life shared in love, [is an] eloquent sign of ecclesial communion*” (n. 42). The Exhortation touches the wounds of our common humanity that cry out for healing: the wound of unredeemed solitude, the cry for forgiveness and love, the need for each person’s secularized self to be affirmed by a love that is unconditional and faithful. And so, the Holy Father declared: “*If the Church is to reveal her true face to today’s world, she urgently needs such fraternal communities, which, by their very existence, contribute to the new evangelization, inasmuch as they disclose in a concrete way the fruitfulness of the ‘new commandment’*” (n. 45).”²⁵

Discovering once more the prophetic alternative

36. David Flood, OFM, describes²⁶ how the Franciscans developed by moving away from the original intention of the Founder. Assisi could not bear the potential critic. It constrained the minor friars to the pastoral structures and to the plausible structures of the period. The movement was clericalised and the Franciscans in time became “professionals of poverty”. “When, however, while remaining theoretically poor, the Franciscans ceased living in inner tension with the structures sanctioned by God, the weak and the poor could certainly expect greater charity, but certainly no change in their own situation”.²⁷

37. The prophetic aspect of the Franciscan option was lost. The austerity of life became a spiritual act and not a (necessary) consequence of an active decision in favour of justice and solidarity.

38. It cannot be denied that, at the time of the “Conquista”, of colonisation and imperialism very often individual missionaries were prophets. However in general the Church and also the Religious in the “Missions” were included in the framework of the dominant structures.

39. The European expansionist efforts from the outset were blessed and legitimated by the Church. Already in 1455 Pope Nicholas V blessed the episodes of Portugal on the African coasts with the Bull “*Romanus Pontifex*”. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI in five Bulls attributes to the Spanish Crown the free and absolute power over the new discoveries in America and transmits to it the right to the mission. In this way the missionary work is completely in the hands of the State, and “Conquista” and evangelisation merge in a single project.

40. The universal patronage of the Church in the New World was finally granted by the Pope to the Spanish Kings in 1508 with the Bull “*Universalis Ecclesiae*”. Consequently the Crown, by appointing the Bishops, obtained full influence over the Church and with this to a growing extent also over the pastoral.²⁸ At the same time it assumed the costs of Christianisation. Philip II in 1572 complained that the patronage cost him annually 100,000 gold ducats.²⁹ But in this way the Church not only was assured financially, but in the existing system it became also one of the biggest landowners in Latin America and disposed of ever growing wealth. With this the foundation was laid for a twofold alienation from its original commitment:

- a) The pastoral became an instrument of the State and completely failed as a critical instance.
- b) The clergy, because of its wealth and privileges, developed interests that were opposed to those of the ordinary population, especially of the *Indios* and of the half-castes.

41. In the Africa of colonialism of the XIX century there was no lack of Christian missionaries who showed themselves to be defenders of the local population. On this subject Wolfgang Reinhard notes: “But then they rarely doubted as to the justification of the colonial dominion on the basis of the cultural superiority of the Whites. Then Christianity was not announced as claiming to be compatible with all the cultures (...), but the affirmation of the European culture took place together with the christianisation. Mission and imperialism already quantitatively go hand in hand, since the XIX century is not only the culminating point of European expansion, but also the great century of the mission, which now, unlike the past, is sustained by mass religious movements, in a very similar way to how grand imperialism is sustained by mass political movements”.³⁰

42. After the decadence following the French Revolution not only did we experiment in a new impulsion of the mission the foundation of multiple missionary institutions. Even funding in part is changed with the foundation of works of missionary help by means of lay persons (for example Lyons, Aachen) or, as in Bavaria, through King Ludwig.³¹ The mission becomes truly a popular movement. But also the independence of the reigning houses that accompany it, does not lead to an independence of acting.

43. Bro. John Corriveau has presented an analysis of the development of the Capuchins in the second half of the XX century. We have already recalled earlier that the statistics in 1950 still showed an Order present principally in Western Europe. The ideal of poverty was oriented to the state of poor wage-earners. Friars lived on their own manual work (garden) and on the spontaneous offerings of the faithful (collection in church and begging for alms). The friars depended on the poor; something that led to a mutual solidarity.

44. The relative uniformity of the cultural zones and the firm point of reference regarding the definition of poverty permitted a fairly homogeneous lifestyle. The Constitutions of 1925 established down to the smallest details the size of the windows and of the cells, fixed the weight of the bells of the church and the material of the candlesticks (*cf.* Constitutions 1925: 102, 104, 106, etc.).

45. The missions were completely integrated into the Provinces. This permitted the missionaries to participate in the modest resources.

46. In the years following the Second World War a great development of economic wellbeing occurred. Western Europe especially benefited from this. So that the gap between the rich North and the poor South became wider and wider. In Western Europe for the first time in history in parts large groups of the population were able to benefit from social insurance by the State. Health, education and old age pensions became a common good. Above all the “poor wage-earners” and with them also the Capuchins profited from this development. For the first time the Constitutions of 1968 speak of stable revenues, such as salaries and pensions, and even of investments. Consequently the usual collection of the friars disappears, the dependence on the poor was lost and with it the mutual solidarity. We no longer share the destiny of the poor and no longer even help from a position of equality. Those who are excluded from the wellbeing become the object of assistance and helping them becomes part of the pastoral work. The Order, specially with the help of those who were first poor workers, becomes a benefactor of those who have failed in social development. Worthy of note is the increase in aid for the people of the South of the world, which is intensely promoted by the friars.

47. Up to the 1990’s the wellbeing, especially in the northern hemisphere, has continued to grow. During this same time our Order developed rapidly in Asia and Oceania, in Latin America and in Africa. The Minister General of the Capuchins has observed self-critically: “The constructions that have accompanied this development, have often led to a growing distance from the poor”.³²

48. The social achievements of the missionaries are immense. In many countries the system of formation and of health began with them (as in fact it did in Europe). Very often the religious sisters are in the front line in assistance to people in great poverty and profound human helplessness. With pride we say that with our works of help, we have built bridges between North and South, relations between poor and rich. But what is the situation of the poor with regard to the poor?

Waiting for Christ’s salvation

49. It is not sufficient that our money build hospitals and schools or monasteries. Often this actually creates dependence on foreigners and alienation from one’s own people. Our missionary stations are often like something from another world and our native sisters and brothers are frightened, at the idea of the financial responsibility that will be laid on them in the future.

The first problem is not the fact that we do not have money. It is the fact that we – still – have too much.

We do not need money for our mission. We need a mission for our money.

When we use the money in such a way that it does not destroy the relationship with God and with other men, then we await the salvation from Jesus Christ and not from our works. Then we give **ourselves** and not goods. Then we feel that what we have does not belong to us alone, but to everyone. Then we live responsibly: towards mankind and towards nature.

Do not anxiously hold back anything for yourselves

50. I am a dreamer and a realist. We will not change the world. But we will change ourselves. And this is precisely what, in the multiplication of the loaves in St John’s Gospel (6: 1-13) constituted the beginning. It would seem that there is not bread enough: in fact the question is: “Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?” This is also our problem. “Two hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a small piece each”. 200 denarii this is a lot of money, because we know that one denarius was a day’s wage. This calculating way of thinking of the adults was countered by the spontaneous gesture of a young boy. He offers the little he has: five loaves and two fish. He does not anxiously hold back anything for himself. With his gift he holds out his hand to his sisters and brothers. And with God’s blessing the miracle occurs: the others too no longer anxiously hide what they have. If everyone pulls out their provisions, then I too can do the same. And everyone eats until they are satisfied, but no more. Thus all have eaten their fill, and still twelve basketfuls are left. A prophetic sign!

51. Let us allow ourselves to be infected by the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Let us build communion in a world of inequality. Let us give – together with Saint Francis – a mission to money. And therefore we will have the money we need for carrying out our task.

Footnotes

¹ <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,405209,00.html> (10.03.2006)

² Rb IV, 1:FF 87; see also Rnb VIII, 3:FF 28.

³ AOFMCap 112 (1996) 14-21.

⁴ Circular Letter, no. 9, 1.1.

⁵ Circular Letter, no. 9, 4.1.

⁶ Cf. Circular Letter, no. 13, especially 6.1-8.1.

⁷ Circular Letter, no. 9, 4.3.

⁸ "It is up to the Plenary Council: to foster communication between the general definitory and the Conferences and between the Conferences themselves; to set up a reflection centre and examine the most important problems with a view to proposing their solution to the Order, offering aid with a constructive collaboration to the Minister General and to the definitors to bring about an adequate renewal of the Order; to take care of the increase of the Order and of formation of the Brothers" (Constitutions of the Lesser Capuchin Friars, no. 123,5). This is convened by the Minister General (*ibidem.*, no. 123,7).

⁹ Circular Letter, no. 9, 4.7.

¹⁰ David B. Couturier, OFM Cap. Formation for the fraternal economy in the Capuchin-Franciscan Order: A psychological Analysis, Dissertation. Printed as a manuscript 2005, 30. Among other things, Couturier offers a splendid view of the development of the idea of a "fraternal economy".

¹¹ Quoted in: David Burr, *Poverty as a Constituent Element in Olivi's Thought*, in David Floor (publ.), "Poverty in the Middle Ages", Franziskanische Forschungen 27, Werl 1975, 73.

¹² Kajetan Esser, Die Armutsauffassung des hl.

Franziskus, in David Floor (publ.), *Poverty in the Middle Ages*, Franziskanische Forschungen 27, Werl 1975, 62.

¹³ *Ibidem.*, p. 67.

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 70.

¹⁵ 3 Comp IX, 35:FF 1438.

¹⁶ "The Lord granted to me, brother Francis, to begin thus to do penance, since, I myself being in sin, it seemed to me too bitter to see the lepers; and the Lord himself led me among them and used mercy with them. And going away from them, what had seemed so bitter to me was changed to sweetness of soul and of body. And thereafter, I stayed on a little and went out of the world" (Test 1-4:FF 110).

¹⁷ For the following considerations I refer essentially to Lester K. Little, Evangelical poverty, the new money, economy and violence, in: David Flood (publ.), *Poverty in the Middle Ages*, Franziskanische Forschungen 27, Werl 1975, 11-26.

¹⁸ *Ibidem.*, p. 15.

¹⁹ David Flood, "Evangelical Poverty and the Poor", in: *Concilium* 22 (1986) 88.

²⁰ *Ibidem.*, p. 87.

²¹ This text is taken from the "Letter from Porto Alegre" (http://www.ofmcap.org/it/doc/porto_alegre_bn-it.indd.pdf), the message of the delegates to the International Meeting of the Order of Capuchins entitled "Fraternity — Economic Justice — Elimination of Poverty", which took place from 13 to 18 March 2006 at Porto Alegre, in Brazil. The basic ideas had been developed by John Corriveau in various of his circular letters.

²² Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 99.

²³ See "Letter from Porto Alegre".

²⁴ *Communio* – Ideal oder Zerrbild von Kommunikation? Quaestiones Disputatae 176, publ. by Bernd Jochen Hilberath, Freiburg, Basle, Vienna 1999, p. 10.

²⁵ John Carriveau, Circular Letter, no. 13, 5.1.

²⁶ David Floor, *Evangelical Poverty and the Poor*, in: *Concilium* 22 (1986) 87-96.

²⁷ *Ibidem.*, p. 96.

²⁸ The ecclesiastic decisions had in general to be submitted for examination to the Council of the Indies, See *ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁰ See Wolfgang Reinhard, *Kleine Geschichte des Kolonialismus*, Tuttgart 1996, p. 277

³¹ While in 1832 the physician Heinrich Hahn founded at Aquisgrana the “Franziskus-Xaverius-Verein”, King Ludwig I in 1838 founded in Bavaria the “Ludwig Missionsverein”.

³² John Corriveau, Circular Letter, no. 13. 8.4.2. The whole section concerning the interpretation of poverty of the Capuchins in relation to social developments in Europe following the Second World War is a synthesis of the fourth part of this Circular Letter, no. 13.



Photo: On the right, Fr Helmut Raskowski, OFM Cap

***- Mission to the Poor
in the Gospel -***

Mission dans l'Évangile

- Alessandro Guarda, MCCJ -

1. Le ministère de Jésus

Dans l'Évangile, on peut trouver un grand nombre d'éléments indiquant *la mission de Jésus*: par exemple

- les tentations,
- les béatitudes,
- le discours de la montagne, Matthieu chap. 5.

Comme il est difficile de résumer en quelques lignes la mission de Jésus, on peut s'en remettre au choix de Luc qui, dans son Évangile, Lc 4,16-19, nous montre que Jésus réalise les attentes prophétiques et qu'il s'identifie avec celui qu'Isaïe a annoncé. En suivant une certaine méthode, il entend avant tout mettre au premier plan "la mission".

La façon dont il la réalise ne sera indiquée que par la suite, car le ministère de Jésus a la priorité sur les moyens de réalisation de sa propre mission.

Lc 4, 16-19 – Au début de son ministère, dans la synagogue de Nazareth, Jésus proclame que l'Esprit l'a consacré pour apporter la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres, pour annoncer la délivrance aux captifs, le retour à la vue aux aveugles, la liberté aux opprimés.

Par cette proclamation, qui se situe au début de son Évangile, Luc reconnaît que les pauvres et les opprimés sont l'objectif du programme de Jésus. En fait, il restera ouvert à tous, en dépassant même les attentes de ceux qui s'attendaient peut-être à une fermeture à l'égard des étrangers ou des pécheurs publics; mais il gardera une attitude particulière envers la catégorie des pauvres, au point d'être appelé "bon maître".

Jn 10, 11 – "Je suis le bon pasteur; le bon pasteur donne sa vie pour les brebis".

Mt 11,29 – "Chargez-vous de mon joug et mettez-vous à mon école, car je suis doux et humble de coeur"

Lc 18,18 – "Bon maître, que me faut-il pour avoir en héritage la vie éternelle?"

Le secours à ces personnes éprouvées par la vie et par la société consiste dans l'aide physique à ceux qui, ayant eu la chance de le rencontrer, s'adressent à lui avec confiance, mais elle n'est pas systématique, au sens que Jésus n'ouvre pas un hôpital ou une institution de secours. Il est, et veut rester, un "maître", il veut indiquer à tous la voie juste et innovatrice pour transformer le monde.

Cette liberté intérieure doit s'étendre à la majorité de la société, à tous les hommes de l'univers, afin d'éliminer réellement la cause du mal: *Allez donc, de toutes les nations faites des disciples, les baptisant au nom du Père, du Fils et du Saint Esprit, et leur apprenant tout ce que je vous ai prescrit...* (Mt. 28,19).

Voici la véritable solution à la pauvreté dans le monde: que tous vivent concrètement, au quotidien, la solidarité, l'amour, la sensibilité envers l'autre.

Les bonnes intentions de Zachée nous font bien comprendre ce que Jésus prêchait concrètement aux gens: "Je vais donner la moitié de mes biens aux pauvres, et si j'ai extorqué quelque chose à quelqu'un, je lui rends le quadruple" (Lc 19,8).

La loi juive prévoyait un seul cas où le remboursement du quadruple était obligatoire: *Si quelqu'un vole un bœuf ou un agneau puis l'abat et le vend, il rendra cinq têtes de gros bétail pour le bœuf et quatre têtes de petit bétail pour l'agneau* (Ex 21,37; cf. 2S 12.6).

La loi romaine l'imposait dans tous les cas de *furta manifesta*.

Zachée étend cette obligation à tous les torts qu'il a pu lui-même causer.

La justice et la solidarité sont alors les axes principaux de l'enseignement de Jésus, tel que Zachée l'a saisi.

En faisant participer ses disciples à sa propre mission, Jésus leur attribue d'une part son pouvoir de dominer les esprits immondes et de guérir les malades, de l'autre, il veut fondamentalement qu'ils l'imitent.

Lc 14,27 – *Quiconque ne porte pas sa croix et ne vient pas derrière moi ne peut être mon disciple.*

Jn 12,26 – *Si quelqu'un me sert, qu'il me suive, et où je suis, là sera mon serviteur.*

Mt 10,7-8 – *Chemin faisant, proclamez que le Royaume des Cieux est proche. Guérissez les malades, ressuscitez les morts, purifiez les lépreux, expulsez les démons. Vous avez reçu gratuitement, donnez gratuitement.*

Il préfère agir en donnant l'exemple et en montrant une nouvelle attitude que beaucoup pourront suivre, plutôt qu'en réalisant un travail positif mais isolé. Au cours de sa journée, nous découvrons:

- la prière: *le matin à Capbarnaïm* (Lc 4,42), *le soir sur la montagne de la multiplication des pains* (Mt 14,23),
- la prédication («*Aux autres villes il me faut annoncer la bonne nouvelle*» Lc 4,43),
- la compassion : («*Il eut pitié d'eux*» Mt 14,14),
- les guérisons (Mt 9,35)
- le partage de la pauvreté («*Le Fils de l'Homme n'a pas où reposer la tête*» Lc 9,58)
- et le partage de la richesse («*Gardez-vous de pratiquer justice devant les hommes pour vous faire remarquer*»

Mt 6,1. «*Comme Judas tenait la bourse, certains pensaient que Jésus voulait lui dire de donner quelque chose aux pauvres* » Jn 13,29. «*Vendez vos biens et donnez-les en aumône*», Lc 12,33).

Jésus pauvre

Il tient à cœur les opprimés, *il vit de façon cohérente une vie qui n'est pas une insulte à leur pauvreté*; avant les apôtres, il vit comme Pierre le décrit par la suite (Ac 3,6) : “De l'argent et de l'or, je n'en ai pas, mais ce que j'ai, je te le donne” - lui peut ajouter – ma vie”.

Le don total de soi, et non seulement de ses biens, est l'élément qui caractérise l'amour chrétien. Écoutons ce que le pape Benoît XVI nous dit dans son encyclique *Deus Caritas est*: “*Dans sa mort sur la croix s'accomplit le retournement de Dieu contre lui-même, dans lequel il se donne pour relever l'homme et le sauver – tel est l'amour dans sa forme la plus radicale* (DCE n.12).

“*La participation profonde et personnelle aux besoins et aux souffrances d'autrui devient ainsi une façon de m'associer à lui: pour que le don n'humilie pas l'autre, je dois lui donner non seulement quelque chose de moi, mais moi-même, je dois être présent dans le don en tant que personne*” (DCE n. 34).

Le choix d'une vie “pauvre et austère” de la part de Jésus est la conséquence même de la mission qu'il a acceptée des mains du Père. Il ne parvient pas, comme nous le faisons spontanément, à la conclusion que pour aider les pauvres, il faut avoir beaucoup d'argent à distribuer! Pour Jésus, il n'en est pas ainsi.

En choisissant la pauvreté, Jésus accuse le système: les pauvres sont aimés par Dieu et rejetés par la société! L'injustice, l'égoïsme et l'avidité sont à la base de la souffrance du monde. Il faut tout d'abord un “homme nouveau”, pur de tous ces défauts et de ces péchés.

Jésus ne s'approprie pas des biens matériels ni pour lui, ni pour les autres. Ce qu'il a, il le partage et accepte de vivre de ce partage.

“*Quiconque parmi vous renonce pas à tous ses biens ne peut être mon disciple*” (Lc 14,33). Jésus les appelle à lui non pas pour accumuler ce que les disciples laissent, mais pour qu'ils suivent son chemin. “*Tout ce que tu as, vends-le et distribue-le aux pauvres, et tu auras un trésor dans les cieux; puis viens, suis-moi.*” (Lc 18,22) Il envoie les siens sans compter sur les structures matérielles, pour qu'ils suivent son mode de vie: “*N'emportez pas de bourse, pas de besace, pas de sandales*” (Lc 10,4). Les enseignements sur la liberté intérieure et une vie cohérente avec celle-ci figurent à maintes reprises dans les Évangiles, surtout dans celui de Luc. “*Les renards ont des tanières et les oiseaux du ciel ont des nids; le Fils de l'homme, lui, n'a pas où reposer la tête*” (Lc 9,58).

Ce Jésus pauvre, nous l'avons rencontré et nous le rencontrons encore de nos jours.

Benoît XVI nous invite à nous rappeler que: “*Dieu s'est rendu visible: en Jésus nous pouvons voir le Père* (cf. Jn 14, 9). *En fait, Dieu se rend visible de multiples manières. Dans l'histoire d'amour que la Bible nous raconte, Il vient à notre rencontre, Il cherche à nous conquérir – jusqu'à la dernière Cène, jusqu'au Cœur transpercé sur la croix, jusqu'aux apparitions du Ressuscité et aux grandes œuvres par lesquelles, à travers l'action des Apôtres, Il a guidé le chemin de l'Église naissante*” (DCE n.17).

Jésus a choisi d'être pauvre au cours de sa vie terrestre et historique, et il est encore présent dans

le monde, pauvre en la personne des pauvres, de ceux qui ont faim, qui ont soif, qui sont nus (Mt 25,31-46).

Le Concile Vatican II souligne une dimension spécifique de la charité qui nous pousse, en suivant l'exemple de Jésus, à nous tourner en particulier vers les pauvres : *“Le Christ a été envoyé par le Père «pour porter la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres, guérir les cœurs meurtris» (Lc 4,18), «chercher et sauver ce qui était perdu» (Lc 19,10): de même l'Eglise enveloppe de son amour tous ceux que la faiblesse humaine afflige, bien plus, dans les pauvres et les souffrants elle reconnaît l'image de son fondateur pauvre et souffrant, elle s'efforce de soulager leur misère, et en eux c'est le Christ qu'elle veut servir”* (LG, n. 8).

L'option préférentielle pour les pauvres

L'Ancien Testament présente Dieu comme l'ami et le protecteur des pauvres, le défenseur des orphelins, des étrangers et des veuves. Lorsque le Royaume sera établi sur la Terre, les pauvres ne pourront être que les bien-aimés.

“Humbles” ou “pauvres”, en hébreu *anavim*, les pauvres occupent une place importante dans la Bible. Si les Livres sapientaux considèrent volontiers la pauvreté (*rèsh*) comme une conséquence de la paresse, les prophètes, eux, savent que les pauvres sont tout d'abord les opprimés (*aniyyim*), ils réclament la justice pour les faibles et les petits (*dallim*), pour les misérables (*ebionim*). Avec Sophonie, le vocabulaire de la pauvreté assume des tons moraux et eschatologiques. En somme, les pauvres sont les Israélites soumis à la volonté de Dieu. C'est aux pauvres que le Messie est envoyé, il sera lui-même humble et doux (Za 9,9; Mt 21,5), et même opprimé. Une citation qui vaut pour toutes: *“Cherchez Yahvé, vous tous, les humbles de la terre, qui accomplissez ses ordonnances. Cherchez la justice, cherchez l'humilité; peut-être serez-vous à l'abri le jour de la colère de Yahvé”* (So 2,3).

Jésus va dans ce même sens. L'annonce kérygmatique dans la synagogue de Nazareth est fondée sur le texte connu d'Isaïe qui préfigure le Messie annonçant la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres. Les béatitudes de Luc doivent être interprétées elles aussi dans ce contexte: Heureux vous les pauvres, non pas parce que vous êtes pauvres, mais parce que le Royaume étant venu, votre pauvreté est à son terme.

Les nouvelles formes de pauvreté, dites post-industrielles ou post-matérielles (les personnes âgées, les handicapés, les toxicomanes, les personnes sortant de prison ou de l'hôpital psychiatrique), n'ont pas éliminé les formes traditionnelles. Il existe encore des gens qui manquent de biens fondamentaux, c'est-à-dire les soins de santé, un logement, un travail, un revenu familial, l'accès à la culture, la possibilité de participer à la vie sociale.

Dans son action en faveur des pauvres, l'Eglise trouve, à l'image du Christ, sa dimension essentielle. Le pape Benoît XVI voit la charité comme un élément constitutif de l'Eglise apostolique: *“... l'exercice de la charité s'est affirmé comme l'un de ses secteurs essentiels, avec l'administration des Sacrements et l'annonce de la Parole: pratiquer l'amour envers les veuves et les orphelins, envers les prisonniers, les malades et toutes les personnes qui, de quelque manière, sont dans le besoin, cela appartient à son essence au même titre que le service des Sacrements et l'annonce de l'Évangile. L'Église ne peut pas négliger le service de la charité, de même qu'elle ne peut négliger les Sacrements ni la Parole”* (DCE n. 22).

L'option pour les pauvres se situe dans la logique de l'amour vécu selon le Christ. Tous les chrétiens doivent donc la faire, mais ceux qui veulent suivre le Seigneur de plus près, en imitant son comportement (*les religieux*) ne peuvent que se sentir concernés par elle de manière toute particulière. La sincérité de leur réponse à l'amour du Christ les conduit à vivre en pauvres et à embrasser la cause des pauvres. Cela comprend pour chaque Institut, selon son charisme spécifique, l'adoption d'un style de vie, tant personnel que communautaire, humble et austère (*cf.* VC, 82).

- La fraternité dans un monde de divisions et d'injustice

(Audience générale du pape Jean Paul II le 27/10/99). Le pauvre devient l'objet d'une attention particulière en tant que victime d'une injustice perverse. Les invectives des prophètes contre

l'exploitation des pauvres sont bien connues. Défendre le pauvre, c'est honorer Dieu, le père des pauvres. (*Ils vendent le juste à prix d'argent et le pauvre pour une paire de sandales ... ils écrasent la tête des faibles sur la poussière de la terre – Am 2,6*). C'est pour cette raison que la générosité à leur égard est justifiée et recommandée.

Fortes de ce témoignage vécu, les personnes consacrées pourront dénoncer les injustices perpétrées contre bien des fils et des filles de Dieu et s'engager pour la promotion de la justice dans le champ social où elles travaillent (VC, n. 82).

- **Témoins du Christ dans le monde**

Le sens missionnaire trouve dans la vie consacrée une réalisation spécifique. Le sens missionnaire se situe au cœur même de toutes les formes de vie consacrée. La personne consacrée coopère efficacement à la mission du Seigneur (*Comme le Père m'a envoyé, moi aussi je vous envoie – Jn 20,21*) en contribuant de manière particulière au renouveau du monde. Le choix de vie du religieux est en soi une annonce des valeurs de l'Évangile (VC, n. 25).

L'Église confie aux communautés de vie consacrée le devoir particulier de développer la spiritualité de la communion, d'abord à l'intérieur d'elles-mêmes, par une communion fraternelle dans les communautés et dans l'Institut, puis dans la communauté ecclésiale et au-delà de ses limites, en poursuivant constamment le dialogue de la charité (VC, n. 51).

Un autre défi nous est lancé aujourd'hui par le matérialisme avide de possession, indifférent aux besoins et aux souffrances des plus faibles, insoucieux de l'équilibre des ressources naturelles. La réponse de la vie consacrée se trouve dans la pauvreté évangélique, vécue sous différentes formes et souvent accompagnée d'un engagement actif dans la promotion de la solidarité e de la charité.

- **La vie consacrée au service des pauvres**

Suivant l'exemple de Jésus, ce témoignage sera axé principalement sur l'affirmation du primat de Dieu et des biens futurs, telle qu'il se révèle dans la sequela Christi et dans l'imitation du Christ chaste, pauvre et obéissant, totalement consacré à la gloire de son Père et à l'amour de ses frères et de ses sœurs.

Le service à la personne du Christ dans les pauvres. La fonction de signe, que Vatican II reconnaît à la vie consacrée, s'exprime par le témoignage prophétique du primat de Dieu et des valeurs de l'Évangile dans la vie chrétienne. En vertu de ce primat, rien ne peut être préféré à l'amour personnel pour le Christ et pour les pauvres en qui il vit (VC, n. 84).



Photo: Alessandro Guarda, MCCJ, during a lunch time

- Mission of the Church-

Poverty and Mission

Fr Fernando Domingues, MCCJ
Pontifical Urbanian College, Rome

Introduction

I intend to share some reflections on evangelical poverty as an essential characteristic of the life and work of consecrated persons in the missionary context today.

I will first mention some concrete signs of uneasiness in this area, then I will propose some specific areas of reflection that could help us to discover anew the importance of evangelical poverty in our missionary identity and service.

I will conclude by suggesting some concrete challenges to our life of evangelical poverty in mission today.

1. Is mission in poverty still relevant today?

My aim here is not to reach a clear 'yes' or 'no' as an answer, but rather to open an area of reflection where we can express clearly what is behind the present situation in which we often continue to repeat the official statements on choosing to live and serve in evangelical poverty, whereas many of our choices seem to contradict what we declare officially. We speak in terms of poverty, but we often live and act as rich people.

I shall not dwell on the causes of poverty in the world and on how they can be tackled.

My aim is to reflect on evangelical poverty as an essential characteristic of our life and on the real reasons why we choose it or we do not in fact choose it.

Let us for now look at some concrete signs of uneasiness.

a) Great generosity, little evaluation

This would seem to be a concrete area of concern in our missionary service: We see so many missionaries working in contexts of dire poverty, making use of substantial financial resources, with great personal commitment and generosity, but continuing to employ methods and strategies that our recent history has already revealed as unhelpful help to the target populations in the long run. Instead of helping them to overcome poverty, they put in place mechanisms that lead to dependence and perpetuate the poverty they were supposed to eradicate.

The missionaries do it out of a great love for God, no doubt, but one wonders why so often the amount of generosity and spiritual motivation of the missionary involved seems to be inversely proportional to his readiness to evaluate what is being done from the point of view of the long term results for the people. A lot of work is done, significant financial resources are used, but little real evaluation is ever done. Why?

b) The contradiction between rhetorics and concrete choices

A second area of concern in our living out the 'poverty for the Kingdom' is that it is clearly dissonant with our religious rhetoric with regard to poverty, and the concrete choices we make in our daily life.

On the one side we hear the speeches that are given at the official celebrations. There, we speak of our total dedication to the service of the poorest and most abandoned, we tell of our radical decision to leave everything and all, to live in poverty and with the poor, we speak of our definitive and irreversible decision to die completely to ourselves so as to belong absolutely and exclusively to Christ, and to put ourselves unconditionally, and for ever, at the service of the last and the least.

We hear a contradiction, as I was saying, between words such as these, which we so often repeat

at our celebrations of the religious vows or solemn promises, jubilees and commemorations of various kinds ... and, on the other, what the actual concrete choices are with regard to our life-style, real priorities that we follow every day, what we choose to buy, the travelling we do and the way we choose to do it, the tools we prefer to work with, the friendships we prefer to cultivate ... we have all professed to live in poverty, but we all know how difficult it is to convince ordinary people that we are actually living it.

This contradiction is, probably, more noticeable among the young members who are joining our institutes.

We must at once acknowledge that some of them do make a clear option to live poverty and actually mean it. We must thank God for them, they are a precious gift which will keep alive the freshness of the evangelical choices made by our founding mothers and fathers in our consecrated families.

But we must also state quite clearly that such is not the case for many other members, young and old. We often hear the members who come from socio-economic contexts of affluence the correct words of consecrated life, but then we see a practical, unconditional and a-critical acceptance of the logics and the dynamism of consumerism. It is difficult to say that they live the evangelical (or any!) poverty, even if they continue to make the same vows and to use the same terminology of the official documents. The superiors see it, but seem to close an eye, thinking that it is a very good thing that these people wish to join us; so few of them are coming now that we cannot afford to be strict in the selection, lest we remain without vocations!

Among the members from the developing countries, we must, again recognize those among them who choose and assume the evangelical poverty concretely with admirable generosity. But there are also very many who live in a kind of 'working misunderstanding': The formators and religious superiors must clearly present to them the official choices and guidelines of the institute, in fidelity to the specific charism and to discernment done within the human contexts where the charism is being lived. These new members declare allegiance to all that the authorities require. They are quite proficient in the use of the language sanctioned by the official documents whenever there are moments of evaluation, ceremonies of religious profession, etc., but then their daily life is an ongoing process of negotiation trying to reduce to a bare minimum the burden of poverty imposed on them by those in authority. Once, an embittered formator confided to me: I have the clear impression that what I present to them as the life of our institute, and what these young religious actually desire, are two very different realities. Yet, when it comes to it, they will declare again with the utmost solemnity that they want with all their heart to become members for life in our institute. He was talking specifically of the commitment to live evangelical poverty, but we all know that there are also reasons for serious concern in what regards the areas of consecrated chastity and obedience.

c) The real issue at stake is not finance

What I have hinted at, so far, already allows us to see that the major issue we need to face as far as the life of poverty in our mission is concerned, it certainly not the question of financial administration.

If consecrated persons choose a life-style that we cannot financially afford, this is not a problem to be solved primarily at the administrative and financial level. And similarly, if we are committing ourselves to development projects that are too big for our financial resources, that, may I repeat, is not in the first place to solve a financial issue at the level of the management of our resources.

The real problem, it seems to me, is to be found in what I will call the 'crisis of the mystics of poverty': Many of us do not really believe that our 'poverty for the Kingdom' can bring real benefit to the human groups that live in various kinds of poverty that we all know.

Some consecrated persons are real giants at the managerial level, experts in computer technology, but Gospel dwarfs. They identify a lot more with informatics than with the Gospel of Jesus. It is not a bad thing, of course, to have consecrated people who are very competent in informatics, the problem arises when they are utterly incompetent as far as living and offering the Gospel to others is concerned. Many of us believe more in the transforming power of money, than in the transforming power of evangelical poverty.

The Gospel is meditated on less and less, while what was supposed to be an instrument at the service of the Gospel, seems to have become its master.

To my initial question at the beginning of this presentation, that is, whether mission in poverty is still relevant today, I think we must answer candidly: 'officially yes', but I suspect that the truth is that few among us accept evangelical poverty, and even fewer of us choose it.

What has happened to make evangelical poverty so unpopular among those who profess it officially?

This is certainly an important question. It might be worth deepening it, provided we are not afraid of 'offending' untouchable ecclesiastical structures, and we would need to feel confident enough to be able to question formation structures and missionary strategies which make us feel safe, but which are seriously questioned by the 'results' they are producing.

If we fear facing these questions, there is an easy way out: 'These are important issues, a lot more study needs to be done before we can openly discuss them'...

One step I think we need to take is to discover and to experience anew that 'poverty for the Kingdom' that Jesus chose for himself and which he presented to his disciples as the road along which the Gospel needs to travel so as to reach people of all social conditions in every nation.

2. Discovering anew the mystics of poverty

The values inherent in Evangelical poverty cannot be cultivated with regulations or prohibitions, and even less with studies in economy and finance, or with new theories of development.

We need to look at Jesus' own poverty, and at the kind of poverty that he invited his disciples to live when he called them to become 'fishers of men'.

a) the good news of his poverty

We need to look at the poverty of Jesus not as any other marginal element in his life, which might not have been there, but as the very core of the Good News that He is for the world. With his *kenosis*, he made himself poor for us, with us and like us, so that he could enrich us with his poverty (*cf.* II Cor 8:9).

Through his choice of poverty, Jesus brought into the very heart of every human poverty the all-powerful presence of God. Had he not assumed our poverty, as the Fathers of old would say, he would have given us less.

After Easter, as Risen Lord, present in the whole of humanity and even in the whole universe, he renders the transforming power of God's own Spirit present and active in every human context, in every event, in every aspect of life. The few signs of this active presence of his Kingdom, which we manage to perceive here and there, are only the minute tip of the huge iceberg of what he is doing in our world. A bit like the signs of healing, forgiveness, fraternity, restored justice ... that he performed during the very brief time of his public ministry were a very small visible expression pointing to the already active presence of the much greater reality which he loved to call 'the Kingdom' (*cf.* Lk 11:20).

With his poverty, Jesus inaugurated the active presence of God's Kingdom in our world, in an entirely new way. All the power, the strength and the wisdom of God was fully present and active in our world in the concrete humble person of Jesus from Nazareth. This presence, which before Easter was still confined to the parameters of his concrete historical existence, was set free in the event of his death and Resurrection, released from every human limitation. We know that in his Paschal Mystery, the presence of the Kingdom became irreversible and universal. The kind of transformation that the Kingdom can produce in our world depends not only on the mysterious design of God's providence, but also on the instruments and signs that we can make available to him. The truth is that the Risen Christ is now the Lord of the whole universe and of our human history, and all power has been entrusted to him (*cf.* Mt 28:18).

The more women and men like us accept to live his poverty and put our lives at his service to render him visible, the more the forces of the Kingdom will be activated and become efficacious in the concrete human contexts where we serve as missionaries. Obviously, if we want to be effective, we shall need to live in concrete ways that recall those of Jesus, and we shall have to promote concrete manifestations of the Kingdom in line with the choices Jesus himself made.

b) Poverty and close collaborators

The four Gospels are unanimous in presenting Jesus who calls his Disciples to follow him right from the beginning of his public ministry. You will never see Jesus preaching or working alone. An interesting part of the kind of poverty he chose for himself is the need for close collaborators right from the outset.

We could say that, before Easter, this need for collaborators was, so to speak, pedagogic, to help the Disciples to see that his mission, then, like today, could be expanded and reach many more people through the action of those who followed him; to them he would entrust his very same task, and would place in their hands the same power that he himself was using to offer the signs that manifested the presence of the Kingdom (*cf.* Lk 10:9). Jesus himself declared: "whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (*cf.* Mt 10:40).

After Easter, though, this need for collaborators whom he sends on mission to all nations (Mt 28:19-20) is no longer pedagogic, but rather essential, indispensable. It is true that the Risen One is present, omnipresent, but he now needs his disciples to render him visible. He can be recognized, accepted, believed in and celebrated only if his messengers proclaim him by their words and render him visible with the concrete gestures of their own lives.

c) The 'fishers of men' and poverty

The Church has always given strong relevance to the fact that when Jesus called them, he promised he would transform them into 'fishers of men'.

This metaphor can help us deepen some aspects of the evangelical poverty as it is manifested in this choice of his close collaborators.

In an article recently published in the magazine *Interpretation*,¹ Professor Scott Spencer notes how this New Testament metaphor — his Disciples called to become 'fishers of men' — is easily interpreted in partial or even misleading ways. According to him, rediscovering some of the real meaning of this metaphor will unveil some important elements of how original this calling was, and the kind of mission that Jesus intended for the disciples (*cf.* Mt 4:18-22).

The first element that becomes immediately apparent is the absolute authority with which he calls them. Jesus' call is clear, direct, it leaves no room for bargaining. And the answer required does not tolerate compromise or delay. He does not call them to become the protagonists of some exciting adventure, to get involved in the generic struggle for a more just society, or to enjoy life to the full... The call is crystal clear, he calls them to follow him because he wants to transform them into 'fishers of men'.

Notice that he does not say, 'you will become', but 'I will make you'... 'into fishers of men' (v. 19). Jesus will be the one building up in each one of them what he calls a 'fisher of men'. This is certainly far from: 'just follow your own heart'...

Their future mission is not presented in some vague terms, something generic where all the options remain open, when you need not renounce anything... No: their calling is quite clear, and put in very few words.

That this metaphor points to the very core of the future mission of the disciples is confirmed by the fact that, many years later, when that mission had been in full swing for a number of years, the communities that elaborate the Gospels keep this expression as the best description of the mission to which Jesus had called them.

What are some of the important elements to be read into this metaphor?

What those four disciples must have understood immediately was that he was inviting them to a life of arduous, heavy work, where you'd have to sweat during long hours, day and night, with no guarantee of satisfying results. Besides, their fishing was done in a context of social and economic poverty, under a political regime which exploited them and heavily taxed their few baskets of fish. Fishing was work done by the poor, despised by the higher classes.

Such a calling could not possibly suggest a mission to be carried out prevalently with the means that only the rich can afford, enjoying the privileges and the protection of those who are powerful in society, a mission that would lead them to the living rooms of influential people, regularly sitting at banquets....

Fishing in their Galilean sea was a daily struggle in very harsh conditions, taxes, permits to be sought and paid for, the usual unending bureaucracy of a colonial administration... It all reminds us of certain countries where some of us missionaries work today, with long journeys to renew the work permit, residence documents, finger printing, bureaucracy, permits required even to visit one's own parish communities ... road blocks, insecurity...

Going back to the metaphor of fishing...

Of course, the fish that are caught must die! When God intervenes decisively, the change he brings about is as radical as the passage between life and death. The fishermen of the Kingdom will bring such a radical change into the lives of all those collected in their nets.²

It will be the task of those fishermen of Galilee to 'fish' men and woman and peoples into the Kingdom. Jesus calls them to a mission that has the real capacity to radically change the life of those whom they will address. It will not be a matter of just bringing some small improvement, here and there, in the lives of those who receive the Gospel message. Those who welcome the mission of the fishermen of the Kingdom receive a new life, full of new possibilities of liberation from the sea of evil in all its manifestations, such as: poverty, injustice, underdevelopment, lack of human dignity...

All that will be possible, provided that they allow the Master to shape in each one of them a real 'fisherman of the Kingdom'.

Lastly, Jesus says very clearly: they are not sent to catch fish, but to gather human persons with their own value and dignity. They are not fish that you can handle in any way you please, throw them here or there, use them as merchandise to achieve one own aims. They are daughters and sons of God. Those gathered through the 'Kingdom fishing' have the same dignity as those sent out by Jesus, and not second rate people. They will need to be respected as persons, human groups with their cultural, and religious identity, they are not groups that we can freely use for our own missionary experimentation.

This certainly points to another aspect of the *kenosis* of Gospel poverty, the need to relativize one's own values, tradition ... so as to be able to dialogue on an equal footing with those who receive us. John Paul II probably meant something along these lines when he reminded us that dialogue is the new way of mission.

d) From brother to brother

This last point suggested to me by the metaphor of the 'fishers of men', the great respect for those whom we serve as missionaries, brings to mind yet another aspect of Gospel poverty as required by Jesus: mission passes from brother to brother, sister to sister. That is, not from the rich to the poor, from the powerful to the weak, not from people who see themselves as superior to those they regard as inferior. Jesus' invitation to enter the Kingdom passes through a fraternal relationship. We can see a clear example of this in the way the Gospel of John presents the calling of the first disciples: The Baptist is the first one to recognize Jesus, and at once presents him to his own companions inviting them to follow him. These two follow him and remain with him. The following day, one of them, Andrew, meets his brother Simon and passes the calling on to him (*cf.* 1:29 ff).

The tradition of the Church indicates this as the most efficacious method to invite persons and groups into the Kingdom, and specifically to invite others to become 'Kingdom fishermen'.

Inviting, calling, mainly not from above or from far away, through sophisticated means of communication, but rather through a life that is shared while walking together.

e) Passing through the Cross

There must have been a really special catch of fish that day when Simon Peter, very evangelically agreed to go back to sea and to throw the nets again 'on the Word of Jesus' (Lk 5:5 ff). But they will only reach their maturity as 'fishers of the Kingdom' after participating in the Passion and Cross and Resurrection of Christ (*cf.* Jn 21). After Easter they will still be very slow in discovering the presence of the living Lord among them, slow in following his instructions for fishing, but Jesus feels that he can now put the mission in their hands. First, it was necessary for them to pass through the passion with him, as Jesus reminds Peter with his triple question. Of course you cannot say that their participation in the passion of Jesus was very good, fully accepted ... we know well of Peter's betrayal, the others running away, but the fact is that they were still there. And on the day of the Resurrection they were around in Jerusalem.

Our participation in the cross of Christ will always remain very partial, often in the middle of confusion, running away, betrayal... But it nonetheless remains fundamental in the preparation of the 'Kingdom fishermen'. The profound experience of dying and building up a new life with the Lord seems one of those foundational elements that is indispensable to bring a person to consecrate his/ her whole life to God in mission. In the end, it is the only reason why we choose to do mission in evangelical poverty.

The fact that Jesus called his disciples so that he could make them into 'fishers of men' can help us to reflect on the ways we promote vocations and on the image of the missionary vocation that we present to our future members, with specific reference to Gospel poverty.

3. Poverty and prophetic evangelization

We now look at the prophetic dimension of the mystery of Christ. It may help us to reflect further on poverty as it can be lived in actual missionary service.

Poverty as Jesus chose it, allowed him to become our neighbour, so much so that he could offer us, in a fraternal way, the treasure that the Father had entrusted to him. In this sense, his prophetic message as one sent by God, can be seen in his words, but most of all in his own style of life.

In the tradition of the Church consecrated people always felt a special calling to follow Christ's own prophetic style.

a) The consecrated missionary: a point of encounter

In the Old Testament, the prophets appear first of all as the point of encounter between God's design and the concrete history of the people.³ Thus, in the life of Moses we see how the suffering of the oppressed people in Egypt encounters the liberating power of Yahweh; and in the dramatic life story of Jeremiah and his family we see the encounter and the conflict between God's stubborn fidelity and the adulterous infidelity of his people. The prophet is always at the point where God interacts with his people.

The concrete life of the prophets resembles a weaver's loom where the thread of God's action continuously passes in the middle of the many threads of the history of his people⁴, to weave them together into the one cloth of salvation history whose beauty will be revealed later on in Christ.

The person of the prophet is then the human place for the continuous encounter or conflict between God and humanity, which makes history advance.⁵

This image of the prophet as the place of encounter between God and the concrete history of his people, can help us look at another aspect of the Gospel poverty of the consecrated persons in missionary service, particularly those who live among the poor, and sometimes like the poor.

It is certainly difficult to establish clear parameters that will allow us to say how far we can, or must go, in living with the poor and like them.⁶

We cannot blame the young people who ask to join our institutes for desiring to get away from poverty, but we must check if that is their main motivation when they join.⁷

We really need to make sure that whoever wants to join is really prepared to put his or her life at the total disposition of God, to be that place of encounter between God and the concrete dramas of his people; knowing that such an option will lead one into very real situations of the cross. It means agreeing to become a 'fisher of men' in the sense we mentioned above.

Consecrated persons are called to be present in concrete contexts of poverty and suffering, and there, to become that point of encounter between the living presence of the Risen Lord and the concrete, often dramatic, situations of those people. We know today, that may well include martyrdom. It is there that we must give visibility to Christ, give him voice, hands, feet, and above all our own human heart ... so that people may come to know and accept his presence and the new possibilities of liberation that Christ opens up for them.

I dare to think that the Lord's presence in these ways is not less real than that of the Eucharist: 'Go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee, they will see me there' (Mt 28:10); 'All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth ... Go ... I am with you till the end of time' (Mt 28:18-20); and 'who welcomes you welcomes me' (Jn 13:20).

Such is the calling that we need to discern: The Lord, present in every situation and place wants to be rendered visible, audible, active in a particularly clear way in the person of the consecrated missionaries.

With the presence and the activity of these people with a life-style so similar to Jesus' own lifestyle, the people will recognize his presence in their midst, as the Lord.

Whoever accepts to offer his or her life to be there where Christ encounters concrete situations of poverty, and takes it as a choice for life, also often becomes a facilitator of many other transforming encounters. Think of the many part-time missionaries who thus have a possibility of contributing significantly to mission both at the level of explicit evangelization, and at the level of human development. This is another aspect of evangelical poverty worth considering. The consecrated missionary, *ad vitam*, in fact will appear less as a protagonist that does things, and becomes more and more a facilitator who renders possible the contribution of so many other missionary forces. Through his/ her continuous presence on the ground, many other missionary agents can enter the struggle and join forces with the poor.

Thus, the consecrated missionary becomes like the prophets of old, and most of all, like Christ himself, the existential place where God encounters the forces that make human history progress.

The choice of evangelical poverty brings the missionaries into situations of harshness, of heavy work, social unrest ... just like those 'fishers of men' who accepted to share the lifestyle and the choices of Jesus, so that through them the Risen Lord with all his transforming power may encounter the people who do not yet know him, particularly in those situations still oppressed by so many forces of the anti-Kingdom.

b) Prophets at the service of prophetic communities

Looking at some of us, one sometimes has the impression of still being with Peter and Paul at the beginning: members of God's people who have encountered the Risen Christ and are sent out to preach him to the Gentiles. Both our methods of formation and our missionary strategies still ignore that in most cases we are no longer missionaries sent out to convert foreign pagan peoples.

The 'missionary fields' we are sent to evangelize can no longer be called 'mission territories' or even less 'pagan countries'. What we find today are Local Churches with their own short or long history, who need the help of missionaries to continue the work of evangelization and human promotion for which those very Local Churches are responsible.

The task of the missionaries is no longer to 'evangelize them' but to help them to evangelize their own people. And the same applies to any work of development or human promotion, or any struggle against poverty.

We must take notice of the fact that many of those communities in what we call 'mission territories' often have some very solidly established Christian communities and have, in turn, been sending out missionaries for a long time. Mission today is done by a plurality of churches, all of them sisters made up of Gentile populations who have come to the faith, and now help other Gentile Churches to continue to evangelize and promote the Kingdom.

Today, every missionary is at the service of the Local Church who welcomes him/her.

This brings us to yet another aspect of evangelical poverty in mission: we must give up being in command, and let the Local Churches we serve to tell us what to do, how, and when.

From this perspective, we discover another aspect of our prophetic vocation: we are at the service of a believing community who is, herself a prophetic community. The missionary becomes the animator of the prophetic vocation of the local community which he serves. Our presence must stimulate and animate them in their missionary commitment at all levels.⁸ We are not sent to defeat their poverty, but to empower them to surmount it themselves.

Experience has taught us, often in painful and traumatic ways, that the new communities which walk with the legs of the missionary in reality are not walking at all, they will soon die out. Instead, those that grow are the ones that slowly take one small step at a time, but with their own legs.

The challenge today is no longer that of doing great works in favour of the poor, but the more demanding one of helping the poor to fight their own poverty doing the works they can do with their own hands, in their own time, with their own priorities ... and to the extent that is possible, also with the financial resources they can gather. This certainly brings a new dimension to our Gospel poverty in mission.

Questions:

1. With our concrete style of life, which image of 'fishers of men' do we give to our future members?
2. In our formation strategies, which elements do we need to include, so as to prepare the new members to become animators of the poor who promote their own growth?
3. In our management of financial resources, what would be the implications of being missionaries 'at the service of the mission of the Local Church'?

Footnotes

¹ F. Scott Spencer, "'Follow Me' . The imperious call of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels", *Interpretation* 59 (2005) 2, pp. 142-152.

² Already in the Old Testament we find Jeremiah using the imagery of fishing to speak of God's decisive intervention when he decides to collect all the members of his people whom the Exile had scattered throughout the seas of this world (*cf.* Jer 16:14).

³ In some way, the same could be said also of each of the great prophetic figures of the various religious traditions of humanity.

⁴ This process also often integrates important elements from the history, the culture and the religious traditions of the neighbouring peoples.

⁵ Cf. Sandra Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure*, New York 2000, p. 322.

⁶ On the question of the standard of living adopted by missionaries, it is true that our standard of living is often above that of the people we serve. But the people understand and accept that; they know that many of us have left much so as to be with them. Still, this cannot justify the superfluous that can sometimes be seen in our own means of transport or in some of our residences. Sometimes we should honestly ask ourselves if the criticism that Aloysius de Pieris addresses to a certain kind of Asian theology should not apply also to us: It speaks of the poor always in the third person, showing that it always places itself in the world of the rich and sees everything from that perspective: "The Asian dilemma, then, can be summed up as follows: the theologians are not (yet) poor; and the poor are not (yet) theologians" [A. de Pieris, "Asias 's Non-Semitic Religions and the Mission of the Local Churches", *The Month* (1982) 15].

⁷ When a young man or woman in the last year of secondary school sends application forms to four or five different institutes asking to be accepted, one wonders what the real motivations might be.

⁸ In the parish where I worked in Kenya, of all the official Sunday collections of the year, the one where the people were most generous was the collection for World Mission Sunday.



Photo: Fr Fernando Domingues speaking during a session of the Seminar

-Synthesis of the Work-

Economy for Mission: Religious Life's Prospects

Fr Alessandro Guarda, MCCJ

16/5 – Tuesday

— 17:15 p.m. Presentation

The theme: Economy and Mission is the object of much reflection and comparison, felicitous and less so, in the form of criticism or of reflections to deepen the comparisons in both directions — to approach the two realities or to distance oneself from them.

The witty remark that the first nickname of any Treasurer is: Guide of the Company, or Dictator (whoever has money gets his way) aroused a cheer, also said in a benevolent way of Father Christmas or Dollar Duck (Donald Duck's uncle). The Code of Canon Law suggests that a Treasurer take St Joseph as his model: “the good Father of a Family”.

The holy Founders and Foundresses have often been excellent “Family Figures”, raising the necessary funds for mission, trusting in Divine Providence, leading a poor life-style, administrating of huge sums ... if they lived in the right (rich) hemisphere, in a wealthy, post-industrial, epoch. As children of our own times, we no longer know whether we should be grateful for our charisma to the very society that is the cause of poverty in the world, or whether we can actually be ourselves in a poor society.

The Gospel continues to challenge us, but at times we do not know whether it has become anachronistic, or whether we only have a right to a personal call, because it is hard to find travelling companions who are as radical as the Gospel.

The Church itself invites us as Religious to be its interpreters and heralds in our simple, even radical way of life, even radically, but it hardly ever lets expressions slip that could compromise its goods, or commit it to self-denial.

What can we do?

How can we face the future so fraught with social change, both in the world and within our Institutes? How should we train the generations who will follow us, certain er are indicating a way that is not more imbued with culture than with the Gospel?

This is the challenge facing us over the next days: a perspective of religious life in the context of an Economy for Mission. I wish you success in your work.

17/5 – Wednesday

— 9:15 a.m. - *Introduction: Mission and Money*

Two Important Moments

- 9.30 a.m. - Fr Helmut's intervention, with an historical, sociological analysis of Mission.
- 15.30 p.m. - Introduction to a practical aspect: *Are the large Institutions a help to the poor or a burden for the Church?*

These are the themes to be discussed by the Speaker and then by the Groups. In fact after the morning talk the groups will gathered for prayer and meet again to share their own opinions on the theme. They will choose a good moderator and a secretary.

After lunch, at 13.45 p.m., the secretaries will meet the Speaker in the Auditorium to highlight the main points which came up in the respective groups.

At 15.00 p.m. they will give a brief summary to the participants – brief means “two minutes”.

Then Fr Helmut will introduce a practical reflection and we will return to our groups to work on this second aspect of the day. The results will be communicated to the facilitator (myself) after supper (20.15 p.m.) and put up on the Office notice board.

From time to time we shall remind you of the programme.

Let us think over yesterday evening.

Yesterday, Fr John introduced this Seminar's work by leading us to reflect on the figure of Jesus, in order to point out that the *sequela Christi* is the fundamental element of our religious life, that a return to Jesus is our point of departure.

In this way he reversed the questions that spontaneously spring to mind: our heart which expects to see Divine Providence in action received the answer that we are the “long arm of Providence”; we seek security and Jesus says: “Do not be afraid” (Mt 10:28), “I am with you always!” (Mt 28:20); we make a distinction between the poor in spirit and the starving poor and Jesus says: “The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head ... Follow me !” (Mt 8:20-22).

This *sequela Christi* takes place in a precise historical and social context that is different from Jesus', a context that is continually evolving, which means that we cannot simply copy the model wereceived. To know the reality of the Gospel message, and of the charisma received, we must also reflect on the context and take into account the intervening evolution.

Fr Helmut introduces us into this historical-sociological analysis. I shall also ask him to tell us who he is and what he does.



Photo: a view nearby 'Casa Dinin Maestro'

— 9:15 a.m. **Introduction: Mission and Gospel**

Today we can really spend the day together, you and I. First, I shall act as the facilitator, then I shall change rolls and be the Speaker. However, I shall try to be brief, so as to leave you more time to speak.

Yesterday, Fr Helmut gave us an example of an historical analysis concerning mission and the use of funds. Through the recorded historical events of the Franciscan Family we also came to understand their charisma. It is a model of analysis that we can adapt to every religious family and the Church. The different social situations demand a different reading and daily application of the charisma. One goes from the Franciscan preoccupation of not having money to the preoccupation of not abusing money. The sociological analysis, historical and present, permits the formulation of guidelines for a new economic system that goes against the tide, valid inside the convent walls, but above all as a prophetic social proposal, to be applied at least in the achievement of mission. Participation, equity, transparency, solidarity and austerity are the key words of the new cultural revolution. One wishes to give money a mission based on these principles.

In analysing its own reality the Assembly has shared what it has lived, that it is still living and that calls it into question.

- We notice that our Congregations, or Institutes as the Code of Canon Law calls them (because it reserves the title of Congregation to the Pontifical ones), were often born in poverty. A sound realistic administration was essential. The models of mission, and consequently of administration, have been transplanted from the West into mission.

Today, one wishes to pass from a Western model of self-sufficiency to a new epoch of local autonomy and to a new interpretation of international interdependence. However, we have fewer people in the West, more wealth and more needs, due to the ageing of personnel, for example; in the missions there are more people and more poverty. We have to discover the new, future model together through collaboration and co-responsibility.

- Money has been “providential” in our history and has permitted us to run communities in formation with creativity and in the work of human advancement. The realisation of certain works, the presence of certain buildings with a wealthy appearance, even though everyday life does not correspond to such a level. Occasions and achievements have not been lacking to render life easier.

- It is increasingly necessary, and at the same time we choose, to collaborate with different institutes and organisms, to ensure the good functioning of the work and the mission that was until now considered to be ours, as well as to counter the untoward influence of a certain part of the Western world, neo-liberal, invasive, with threats of imperialism.

- The need is felt for a prophetic way to use resources; in economy too relations should be guided by love. The world of money needs to be evangelised. The five principles of fraternal economy proposed by the Franciscan-Capuchins can be shared. The very way money is used can become a proclamation of the Gospel.

- At times it is necessary to have funds in reserve to meet the urgent needs of survival: how to invest them in an ethical way? We need new models to ensure the economic future. Greater co-operation in administration, more transparency, needs to be created. One urgent need is technical, cultural and responsible formation of the future generations in the administrative field. The re-evaluation of the treasurer’s role.

- At times the human and economic energy diminishes: how can the work continue? We must have a clear historical overview of our (transitory) role in the hands of Providence: we began, others will continue.

- In what has been said up to now we also come up against the problem posed by the *large structures*: they represent problems of self-sufficiency, the continuation of the work. However

there are different styles according to the historical times and of the countries in which we live; all too often we have transplanted into the poor countries structures that can function only in a technically organised society: it is useless to have a farm tractor in a region where there are no supplies of petrol and where spare parts can only be found in Europe or America. But we often make the same choices, because so long as there are Western brothers or sisters they can always be ordered.

- Another problem concerns the message to be passed on: which salvation is proposed? Does Jesus Christ who operates in charity make it visible?, or is it simply the power, the grandeur, the efficiency of the work, therefore of money? In God we trust! Is it written on our hearts, or on the 'green notes' needed to make the work function?

FROM THE GROUPS

- Difficulties
- Projects that are too large, and have not brought the hoped-for results.
- A more radical life-style is difficult for a large institute.
- There are still material resources that are not being shared, but left to private initiative.
- Difficulty of working in community, with a common mission project.

CHALLENGES

- How far must we accompany the future of our people?
- The young generations need an appropriate formation to meet future needs.
- More information is needed for adequate financial knowledge.
- A simple style of life.
- People do not understand why the local religious do not have the same means as Westerners.
- In administration trust and trustworthiness are required.
- There is enough personnel, but not enough means.
- How can we close a school, that does not bring results, but that is the only support for the poor students of the area? The same can be said of hospitals, etc.

PROPOSALS

- Believe in Providence.
- When the financial means are lacking one shares in the life of the people.
- Co-ordination of funds and people between institutes: it is necessary to change one's attitude in the community. Competent lobbying action. In some countries there are already solidarity funds for development with an inter-congregational character.
- Co-operation with the laity, evaluating their competence.
- Favours local vocations, bridges between the people and the foreign institutes. The works *must be passed on* to the local Institutes, therefore the need to assume this outlook in advance: simple structures, relations with organisations, formation of local personnel, etc.
- Give up the works? The African Religious have a negative reaction. Without the institutions they run the risk of losing their very identity. One must make the population understand that the work is not linked to a person but to the whole institute. The projects must be supported by long term financing and bring in income for the local institutes.
- The period of the large projects is over; small projects people can manage should be set up, that allow for a presence at the side of the people. Exceptions are made in the case of widespread natural disasters and emergencies.
- Among the small projects, micro-credit deserves a special mention.
- The new way of mission is through pastoral work and production.

— **9.30 a.m. – The Mission in the Gospel**

— **15.00 p.m. – Poverty:** “leaving everything” (Lk 5:11), and follow Christ or share one’s bread with the poor?

I do not know how to introduce this reflection in an abstract way. I prefer to speak to you directly about my personal experience, seeking to bring out the general aspects common to other situations and times.

During my theological studies in Italy (the first year) I had a chance to devote myself to the Gypsies: people who live on the margins of organized society, who are avoided, feared and despised.

I began to teach the Catechism to the children. It was an opportunity to meet this particular group of people and to experience their benevolence.

I continued my studies in Paris where I went in search of the shanty town, having heard that every large city has a shanty town. I searched in vain but I providentially came across the community of African Workers in Paris. They worked in Cappallania, led by a French priest. I joined them and taught the Catechism to a young catechumen. I attended their liturgy and monthly festivities, where later I was ordained a priest. I also met some foreign immigrants there with their difficulties. I felt they represented the promise of the African mission.

My first, temporary, mission was in Egypt, with the help of French, but no knowledge of Arabic, I was to fill a gap while my *confrères* studied Arabic for a couple of years. All the same I looked around and I discovered the Zaballin, the urban dustmen, who lived on the refuse dump and lived from the refuse. (At that time Sr Emmanuelle was starting her work). I began to study the Arabic alphabet and I taught the boys, with the help of a pencil and scraps of paper, what I had learned five lessons earlier. I did not do this for long because I left for the Congo.

Here again I tried to find out who was the poorest, to my surprise: no one was really poorer than the other, but everyone was poor. How could one set about helping a whole country? One must give to the needy, this however creates a begging mentality, one of dependence, of laziness. Get people to do some work in return for some exercise books or other necessities! It was ridiculous, but I could not find a better alternative. When I drove to the chapel, I picked up the Mothers who were burdened with wood or other people who were going in the same direction. A lot had to be turned away. Next, I thought of driving a 12-seater mini-bus; it burned about the same amount of petrol but it offered a better service. Nevertheless I still lost my temper every time because more people wanted to board than it could safely carry. In order to help the people I had to get cross with them! The more one gave, the more they wanted. The situation worried me. I was unable to find a correct balance between my mission of helping the poor and the means at my disposal.

- One day the Lord suggested a solution and my heart was at rest: “They expect a lot of you because they see you have a lot. Why don’t you live as they do? Why don’t you live like they do?”. I took this suggestion seriously even though I never really lived like them. The new perspective led me to find the poorest and most neglected people in the Congo. I went to live with the Pigmies, I in a mud hut, they in their leaf huts, helping them with medicines and first aid and admittance to hospital 40 km.s away in the most serious cases. Bunks built by the parents for a pre-school formation, etc.

At the end I found the balance by sharing my life with them, meaning their poverty, even though we have always refused to consider them to be poor and not that they considered themselves to be such. I shared my goods, that were limited – just as happens in a family – an open house, helping those in need, assisting those who could be persuaded to go to hospital, promoting forms of responsibility with regard to the children, to their own life.

A journey taken together.

I shall leave off the story telling, to repeat the question: leave everything or share with the poor people?

It is now your turn to speak.

19/5 – Friday

— 9:15 a.m. – *Introduction: Mission and Church*

The presentation of yesterday morning's theme: "The Mission and the Gospel" introduced us to the missionary ideal and can be focused on the two following questions: What is Jesus' Mission? and, What is his methodology as regards money (attitude to money)?

1. The mission can be summarised in the Prophet Isaiah's words that Luke reports in 4:16-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed ...".

To realise this mission Jesus goes to the root of the problem, not to the consequences of sin (egoism, violence, injustice) that cause suffering in the world. A renewed heart can bring salvation and joy.

2. His choice of methodology places him on the side of the poor "physically", he made a definite choice, without equivocation: nothing must compromise the message: "The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt 8:20).

GROUP REPORTS

- It is a pity that the last part of Luke's verse was not quoted: "and announce the year of the Lord's mercy"(4:16-19). The missing sentence opens interesting perspectives towards reconciliation and the remission of debts.

- The mission is not directed only to the poor, but is a proclamation of the Kingdom open to all.
- Our choice of religious life, our own style of life is mission.

Jesus' methodology helps us to focus our missionary life by highlighting the priority of the proclamation, even before the works that run the risk of being transformed into administration. Jesus seeks to meet people, like the Good Shepherd, and this teaches us, with or without works, to "to be with" instead of "to be for". People are at the centre not the structures. In fact these are under revision to achieve this, as we wish to recover the values of the Gospel at the service of people.

Who are our works for? For the privileged or for the poor?

The problem is the same: so who are the works to be left to, as we are unable to continue to run them? We do not think that we can say that the period of the large works has come to an end. It is as though we ourselves had come to an end. What distinction should be made between large, medium and small works? It is important that mission continue to move life.

We could conduct them with other bodies, set up common projects, create new modes of co-operation. In some countries the Government has substituted the Church in certain social services.

Looking at the future, we must seek to have a charismatic and prophetic vision of our religious life. Sharing and solidarity are necessary. We want to hear the voice of authentic Africans, Asians or Latin Americans clearly explaining how they perceive the relationship between mission and money.

We feel invited to examine what our presence in the area involves: too many internal divisions, scandalise and compromise our presence as witnesses; simplicity in the structures, even though they are not necessarily negative, demands consistence.

In Jesus we learn to denounce injustice as a primary cause of poverty in the world, and we learn to place ourselves at the centre of poverty. Religious life is a sign, against the world's oppressive economic structures, oriented towards the Kingdom of God.

The present global and so-called consumeristic society has values, such as a longer human life span. But the complexity of the economy provokes perplexity.

The vow of poverty brings wealth by the pooling of resources, with the risk of bringing privileges others are not permitted. What meaning does austerity have for oneself?

The training for religious life is actually too Westernised; we must have other formation patterns with insertion in the original culture of the candidates. The young generations dream of a renewed and deepened formation, also in management matters.

The pattern of Religious Life today is not uniform from North to South. The poor are everywhere. They are vulnerable everywhere. The true model reflects the values of the Gospel. Bringing out some intercultural values, such as dialogue between cultures, reciprocal respect, awareness of one's own prejudices, interdependence, life is like a network, any action has repercussions elsewhere, knowledge of the local context, but always with an overall view, globalisation of charity.

The task of formation is also addressed to the laity.

The treasurer must provide clear information that the members of the Institute can grasp.

CHALLENGES

Trust in Providence must continue in the future, but investment in formation should be taken into account.

Planning for the future invites us to evaluate our mission and to move towards solidarity and to practical co-operation between Institutes.

Obviously, the standard of living differs from one country to another and in the different institutes, but what matters is to earn a living with one's own work without privileges, in the framework of the Gospel.

The international congregations are a resource and a challenge with their multicultural testimony of common life. We must learn to give up privileges and reduce our wants.

Renewal is necessary at all levels in keeping with Jesus' message: our institutes must act as bridges between the different cultural realities.

Reflect and analyse our structures in view of a life in solidarity.

POVERTY and LEAVE EVERYTHING OR SHARE?

“Leaving everything ...” (Lk 5:11).

- What is poverty?
- Leave everything to follow Christ. This can have many interpretations.
- The concept of poverty is relative: what appears to be poor in a rich society, is not so within a poor society. The foreigner who thinks he is poor in a poor society finds out that he is rich compared with the local people.
- The same concept is relative and applicable to initial formation: without an original cultural context, teaching lacks roots and is extraneous.
- We believe we should lead a simple life.
- Give up what is useless.
- In the countries of the South the family background is poor: to enter an institute means to rise to a middle-class level.
- Jesus did not curse wealth but greed. How can we make our possessions work correctly to fulfil their purpose?

CHALLENGE OF POVERTY

Today this is the most pressing challenge. The fragility of the young people calls us into question. Everything is a gift we do not own but which is entrusted to us.

The needs of modern society are multiplying: mobile telephones for example, especially for the young generation.

Relations with the poor are important, but we do not always succeed in living like them. Hospitality and keeping an open house is demanding and not always easy.

SHARING

Which bread do we wish to share?

The vow of poverty is very difficult and goes in the direction of charity: what do we want to put in common? Neither the intellectual benefits nor our work are our property.

In the West we are very individualistic. We have lots of things and we are overcome by poverty.

Co-operation is a form of sharing: it is exercised in the field of formation, between Superiors; in the U.S.A., 15 Institutes have set up an ONG - Unanimously.

Problems attached to sharing:

For example, how can one help someone in the field of education, without running the risk of uprooting him/her from his/her own cultural background?

How can we make the economy circulate according to needs, not only our own? Sharing peoples' poverty is one's own wealth.

In a common reflection with discernment of the possibilities.

Are our goods available to, and at the service of, the people?

There Is No Dilemma:

The concept of poverty focuses on the lack of money and one forgets the other dimensions: difficulty in learning another language, entering a new style of life, missing the equipment one is used to.

In poverty there are other riches: the trust of the people where one lives. For strength and security one places one's faith in God and in the communion of life with the people.

The important thing is to incarnate the Gospel of Christ today.

The mission of sharing touches all aspects of life, not only that of money: relations, reciprocity.

One shares what one is, one's experiences, one's culture as well as one's wherewithall. In the Church and with everyone.

Sharing demands interior detachment, receptive listening and openness towards the other person. Humility requires a re-evaluation of individuality, of the origins, and the uniqueness of one and all.

Sharing also means human promotion, the quest for justice, understood as a common process of sharing.

OTHER THEMES

In the plurality of cultures the sharing of goods touches each person's being. The way in which one recognises the other, addressing him/her respectfully, is important. Even entering an Institute is to enter another culture. To take refuge behind one's own culture can mean breaking off dialogue.

Integration however must allow for plenty of time, it can never be hurried. Allowing oneself to be guided by the poor environment. Inter-culturality is a challenge.

What does proclaiming the Kingdom mean?

The wish to love the language, the culture, the country, establishing respectful relations, co-operation, consulting others' opinions.

The present time is the time of transition. A group of elders will remain attached to their structures and concepts of the past; a group of younger people will wish to renew religious life.

OBSERVATIONS

1. In the final syntheses, the group's particular patrimony will be lost.
2. We are not always sure where the Seminar process is leading us.
3. There should be some guidelines for the work groups to follow.

On the first day we did an exercise with the Capuchins, of historical analysis of religious life and of the possibilities to interpret one's own charisma in the light of one's own social situation, past and present, to verify our relationship with money in order to carry out the mission. In this context we were introduced to the problem the Major Works we conduct may pose in the future. Your reaction confirmed that you were unable to shift your attention from that reality, not even on the second day, every now and again the problem came up again. This point not only aimed to tackle the problem of unwieldy works but to evaluate the mission-money situation. The interventions emphasised:

- that the South needs funds,
- that the North has hardly any solutions
- the necessity for the careful formation of the future generations.

On the second day (yesterday) we focused our attention on the ideal that inspires us; unanimously identifying it in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even though some disagreement on the importance of the poor in our mission surfaced.

The evaluation of our work has rarely been negative.

+ Some forms of individualism in the management of the works and more frequently in the community dynamics, particularly in the culture of the West;

+ The differences, whether they concern the community, or the relations with other Institutes, can be a scandal in the context of mission:

+ Have we counted more on the efficiency of our actual works and foundations, than on the proclamation and bearing witness to the Gospel? A timid voice makes itself heard but it is immediately silenced by a wave of reaction that wants to continue the work as an anchor of salvation.

+ Our aim was to help the poor, but we no longer know what we have done, because, on the one hand it is said that poverty is everywhere and that those to whom we went in the conviction that they were the poor, turned out to be only technologically and materially poor in comparison with an excessively rich and may be (the criticism levelled at it) oppressive society. The help we have given may turn out to be temporary and to disappear when we leave. All this is a bit confusing for us, to the point that we have asked our Brothers and Sisters to tell us their honest opinion of mission.

We have already glimpsed what must be done, but this is the purpose of this third day.

In any case we have already expressed a wide variety of opinions regarding the methodology:

- From interior poverty, to fraternal poverty, from investing in specific aims, to the upkeep of the works as indicative of our own particular charisma.
- In relation to these views different proposals emerged:

Free ourselves from any buildings and property that do not serve our missionary aim, if they do not actually damage it.

- discontinue the works to the local people in the missions in the South (lay, religious, dioceses),
- start co-operation between institutes and different bodies

- local self-sufficiency and international aid
- but also focus on the proclamation and witness to the Gospel in life
- new commitment for justice in the world
- sound formation for the young generations

Today we must draw our conclusions: what does the Church say about these issues? ... and further planning. This is not the area of achievement, but perhaps we can make some valid suggestions. Will we succeed in obtaining some new proposals?

Work hard!

20/5 – Saturday

— 9.00 a.m. – **SYNTHESIS: Formation for Mission**

Proposals: SEDOS: enquire, analyse and check-up on the following:

Origin of the general directions (opp. ? Those attending the Seminar)

Origin of the Institutes represented

List the continents where the Institutes are working



Photo: During the daily celebration

Final Summary

Fr Alessandro Guarda, MCCJ

How should we prepare to face the future when there is so much social change, in the world and in our Institutes? How can we train the generation that is to follow, without pointing out a way that may prove to be more imbued with culture than with the Gospel?

Here then is the challenge of these days: A perspective of religious life in the context of an economy for the Mission.

THE SPEAKERS

Fr John introduced the work of this Seminar by leading us to reflect on the figure of Jesus. He underlined that the *sequela Christi* is a fundamental element in our religious life: that a return to Jesus is our way forward.

From this point of view he asked us the questions we have been asking ourselves: our hearts which long to see divine Providence in action received the answer that we ourselves are the “long arm of Providence”; we seek security and Jesus says: “Do not be afraid”. “I am with you!”. We draw a distinction between the poor in spirit and the starving poor and Jesus says: “The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head” ... “Come and Follow me”.

Fr Helmut gave us an example of historical analysis with reference to mission and the use of money. By means of historical events in the Franciscan Family we also followed the development of the Franciscan charisma. It was a type of analysis that can be adapted to every religious family and to the Church. The different social situations justify a different reading and application of the charisma in daily life. One goes from the Franciscan preoccupation of not having enough money to go round to the abuse of money. The sociological, historical and present-day analysis permit the formulation of guidelines for a new counter-current economic system, that is valid inside the convent walls, but above all as a prophetic proposal to society to be applied at least to the realisation of the mission. Participation, equality, sharing, and austerity are the key words of the new cultural revolution. One seeks to give money a mission based on these principles.

The presentation of Alessandro’s theme: “The Mission and the Gospel” introduced us to the missionary ideal and can be summed up by the following questions: What is Jesus’ mission? and, What is his methodology (attitude) with respect to money?

1) The mission can be summed up in the Prophet Isaiah’s words that Luke refers to: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed...” (*cf.* 4:16-19).

To realise this mission Jesus goes to the root of the problem, not to its consequences: sin (egoism, violence, injustice) that are the cause of all the suffering in the world. A renewed heart can bring salvation and joy.

2. His consistent choice is to take the side of the poor “physically”, he makes a radical, uncompromising choice: nothing must compromise the message: “the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head”.

Fr Fernando introduced evangelical poverty as the key element to save and help the poor. The true problem is not an economical one, but to rediscover the mysticality of poverty. The mission is passed from brother to brother, sister to sister, not from the strong to the weak, not from the rich to the poor. The poverty Jesus chose enabled him to become our neighbour so much so as to succeed in communicating to us, as from one brother to another, the treasure the Father has entrusted to him for humanity. The consecrated person becomes the existential place for the encounter between God and the elements that empower the journey of human reality. The option for poverty that leads them to live in difficult situations, hard work, social, economic, political discomfort enables consecrated men and women to make possible this meeting where the Lord Jesus is not yet known. Today's challenge is not so much to do great works for the poor, but what is more difficult to help the poor to do the works with their own hands, in their own time, with their own methods ... and for the most part with the means they can succeed in collecting.

THE SITUATION

We know that our congregations, or institutes mostly started in situations of poverty.

Western mission strategies, and consequently administration, were transplanted to the missions.

Money was "providential" in our past and permitted the support of communities in formation with imagination as well as works for human advancement.

The realisation of some of the works, the presence of certain properties with a wealthy appearance, even though the life-style does not correspond to this level, are proof that occasions and situations were not lacking to make life easier.

Today the aim is to go from a self-sufficient Western model to a new epoch of local self-sufficiency and to a new proposal of international interdependence.

In the West there are few personnel, more wealth and more needs due to the aging of the people, for example, whereas in mission there are more personnel and more poverty.

The *large structures* present a problem of self-sufficiency and the continuation of the work.

Some projects are too large and have not brought the hoped-for results.

There are still material resources in private hands that are not shared.

It is difficult to work in community with a common mission project.

In the West there is much individualism. People have a lot of possessions and are challenged by poverty.

Initiatives in operation

Cooperation between Institutes and different organisation is both obligatory and an option for the best conduction of the work and the mission which up till now we considered ours, both to counter the negative influence of a certain part of the Western neo-liberal, invasive world with overtones of imperialism.

At times it is necessary to have funds in reserve for emergency needs for survival: how can they be invested in an ethical way?

The international congregations are a source of wealth and a challenge for their multicultural aspect and their example of life in common. One must learn to curtail one's privileges.

OUR IDEAL

A Question arises about the message to be transmitted: *What salvation is proposed?* Is Jesus Christ who works in charity made visible by the work?, or does the power, size, efficiency of the work just become apparent: therefore the money?

Jesus' method helps us to make the *proclamation* the basis of our missionary life, rather than the works which tend to transform us into administrators. We must try to have a *charismatic and prophetic vision* of our religious life.

Through Jesus we learn to point out *injustice* as the primary cause of poverty in the world, and we

learn to stand by the poor. Religious life is a sign against the oppressive economic structures of the world compared to the Kingdom of God.

The *model of religious life* is not acceptable from North to South. The poor are everywhere. People are vulnerable every where. How to express the Gospel values constitutes the basis of the true model.

The *vow of poverty* is very difficult and is expressed in charity: What do we want to share?

Neither the intellectual goods nor our work are our own property.

The concept of poverty is linked to the aspect of money, leaving aside the other dimensions: the difficulty of learning a language, entering an unfamiliar life-style, noticing the lack of the tools we are used to.

Mission is *shared* and touches all aspects of life, not only money: relations, reciprocity. We share what we are, our experiences, culture as well as money, in the Church and with everyone.

In *cultural multiplicity* the sharing of possessions touches each person's being. One's manner of addressing and recognising the other person is important.

PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

A prophetic method of using resources has emerged; in economic relations too love should prevail. The world of money needs to be evangelised. The five *fraternal financial principles* proposed by the Franciscan-Capuchins may be adopted.

Greater sharing in administration with more *transparency* should be created.

An urgent need for *technical*, cultural and responsible *formation* of the young generation in administration. The *training for religious life* is at present too Westernised. We must have other places for formation with insertion in the culture of origin of the candidates. Co-ordination of funds and personnel between Institutes, and a change of mentality in the communities. *Lobbying* with organisations. Promote local vocations as a bridge between the people and the foreign institutes. The works must be *passed on to the local institutes*, therefore we must work towards this objective in good time: simple structures, contact with organisations, training of local personnel, etc.

FINAL GUIDELINES

1. *With our actual life-style, what image of "fishers of men" (Mt 4:19) do we give to our future members?*

It is impossible to deny that there is a real difference between what we say and how we live. At times members give a counter-witness to the novices who in turn disappoint the expectations of those who are already professed. Formation should aim to train average candidates and not aspire to ideal heights.

Activism can make reception difficult. Often efficacy counts more than a journey taken with the people.

Poverty is always a personal decision, over and above some examples.

Our attitude is positive, with courageous examples and our presence in poor countries.

The more we live our charisma the more credible we will be: this calls for on-going conversion and insertion in the Local Church.

Our style of life in harmony with the local environment enables us to share the peoples' life, simply, with transparency and responsibility, attentive to the needs of others.

2. *In our formation policy what elements should we include, so as to prepare the new members to become animators of the poor to promote their own advancement.*

Require them to have worked before entering the Institute.

Expose them to a deep experience of Jesus so that he inspires all aspects of life, not merely theoretically. Show them the crucial aspect of the mission.

Balance between contemplation and action. Provide formation in mission centres, locally near the poor to share in their way of life.

Require *a priori* the option for the poor. Foster dialogue, technical knowledge, social analysis.

Today we have the challenge of technically advanced means of communication, which can become an excellent means for mission. Give the entire Institute a formative purpose: each one is a formator by his/her example.

3. *In our financial administration what are the consequences of being missionaries at the service of the Local Church?*

Consult the Bishops on what conventions should be respected.

A negative aspect arises when missionaries leave a post and the funds for that work stop.

To work in a team with an itinerary that puts the foreign religious at the service of many, without wielding the power.

Do not substitute the Local Church, but leave them the responsibility.

Share certain funds, projects. Encourage the Local Church to be self-sufficient.

Have and demand honest management.

Act as a bridge for communication between Churches.

Cooperate for integral development.

Draw up agreements with local bodies.

Find a good balanced form of co-operation. Learn to say 'no' when requests are unfounded or exaggerated.

To the question asked in the afternoon:

"*What is the basic or fundamental condition for managing money at the service of the mission?*", the following answers were given:

1. *Dialogue* in community that fosters sharing and life in common,
Keep everyone informed. Reciprocal integrity, honesty, co-responsibility.
A clear decisional process, at the end of which the Superior will make the decision. Inform the community about the criteria for the collection of funds.
2. Have a sense of service, detachment, trust in *Providence*. Have a clear vision of one's own charisma. Detachment from money is not personal but communital.
3. Formation of the young generation in the value of money and its administration. Have a professional standard in investments and the central administration. Invest capital with ethical criteria, social responsibility so as to promote life, justice, human rights. Seek financial advice; professional outside help in auditing.
4. Projects:
 - a) Everyone's participation in the common fund. Respect the donor's intentions.
 - b) The local personnel should consider the projects to be their own, support the peoples' own projects, not our's, not the Bishop's. Help cooperatives, micro-credit, equal and supportive trade. Evaluate the projects on the basis of solidarity and equity.
5. Use the natural *local resources*.
Promote indigenous products.
6. *Invest* our assets to benefit the mission: to help resolve the causes of poverty; in means of communications and lobbying action in the defence of women's dignity, human rights, etc.
7. *Foresee* situations of poverty within the institute. Where there cannot be self-sufficiency create channels of solidarity within the Institute,
8. Co-operation with the *Local Church* not from partisanship but with a critical sense
9. Apply the criteria of *fraternal poverty*. Sharing, equity, transparency, solidarity and austerity
10. *Retain manageable* works in the future.
Avoid megalomania.

-Working Groups-



- English Groups -

Group A

RESPONSE TO PRESENTATION BY FERNANDO DOMINGUES, MCCJ

Friday, May 19

1. *With our concrete style of life, which image of 'fishers of men' do we give to our future members?*

- clarification of word "our"—can be personal, congregational;
- communal approach: where Christians were minority, all (people, missionaries, priests) prayed together;
- lifestyle seems more comfortable for some from poorer situations;
- provide healthcare for confrères but not for their families: rich *vs* poor;
- option for the poor: sold the generalate in order to live more simply;
- mission:
 - live on what people give (sometimes need subsidy);
 - point of reference is the people with whom we live;
 - move on, i.e. give ministry to local clergy or another Congregation;
 - try to develop awareness of dependence on the people;
 - in some places missionaries are seen as wealthy, so the people don't take the initiative;
 - in India, living in fishermen's village, Church seen as doing social work; sisters live as people do, but also have access to finances so they helped to rebuild or buy new boats after the *tsunami*: there was a question as to whether this had been a good thing to do – what image was projected?
 - emergency situations bring about change, but afterwards, do changes remain or does life return to what it was before the emergency?
 - rhetoric and living: what do we really need for ministry? We've become institutionalized through organization; fear to challenge each other.

2. *In our formation strategies, which elements do we need to include, so as to prepare the new members to become animators of the poor who promote their own growth?*

- in formation we pass through the cross: during time of studies, "I took back what I had given away"; live the signs of the times, i.e. we are drawn to new things *vs* doing without.
- elements needed:
 - example of person(s) who struggle to live evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and generosity;
 - method of studies includes the reality of people where they are;
 - healthy acceptance of oneself affects how one deals with others;
 - being grounded in commitment, in God's unconditional love;
 - psychological formation;
 - clarity of motivation on part of new member — understanding of Mission;
 - support from local church in understanding approach to Mission;
 - on-going formation: consistency on all levels;

3. *In our management of financial resources, what would be the implications of being missionaries 'at the service of the mission of the Local Church'?*

- subsidy of service — e.g., not all from the congregation, from Local Church as well;
- projects sponsored through funding agencies;

- % of finances from Generalate goes to needed work;
- have criteria for subsidizing request;
- collaborate with diocese(s), organizations in responding to requests;
- not to be seen as “money lenders”: initiative comes from local Churches;
- justice issue: implications: understanding of Local Church’s mentality re: – Mission of Local Church – it may be different from that of missionaries, eg, role of women in Local Church;
- approach to being at service of mission of Local Church needs lots of dialogue, criteria, education;
- understanding of the complexity of the Local Church.

Group B

Wednesday Morning

Questions 1 and 2 taken together

How was the use of money managed for our mission work in the past.

1. Mission was always the focus, but money was and is needed;
2. Funds came from: The North, the West or the States;
3. Some congregations soon moved into funding there missions locally;
4. Congregation Headquarters provided funds, but now this is not always possible;
5. Most congregations were centralized for finances in the beginning;
6. Our group was composed of 7 Sisters:
 - a. *Five Congregations are now working towards autonomous and self-sustainability of the provinces and regions;*
 - b. *Two are more centralized in interdependent ways for sustaining the mission.*
2. Over the years we have moved with the signs of the times and have had to change our ways of functioning according to needs, possibilities and the concrete realities.

Questions 3 and 4 taken together

In which sense can we say that money is not the only means for our activities but an integral part?

1. Money and Mission are not opposed but integral;
2. It is our attitudes/relationships that are important. Whatever way we use money we will be giving a witness ... is it the one we want to give?
3. We need missionaries who are filled with passion for the mission, who live in compassion and justice with all who are around them. This will be reflected in the way they live ... in solidarity ... the values of the Kingdom;
4. Therefore, there has to be a change of attitudes ... moving towards right relationships. This includes, as well, attitudes of mutual “take and receive”. We need to leave behind the old idea that the recipients of various services are not able to pay anything for them.

Question 5

What will the Gospel Message contribute to the World in the future?

1. The challenge to “LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL” of John 10:10

a. *Compassion, justice and right relationships.*

2. The MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES of John 6:1-13

a. *All will share from what they have no matter how little it is and all will have what they need.*

What will be the challenge for us as missionaries?

1. To reclaim our Prophetic Role:

a. *by living as Jesus did, thus giving life witness;*

b. *live the love of God joyfully, passionately so that She/He becomes visible.*

2. To reclaim the sense of wonder before beauty, love, life....

a. *Being able to love in suffering and suffer in love.*

Question 6

How can we resolve some of our financial problems by rethinking our mission and reorganizing our structures?

1. Serious study of the present situation and structures according to our call-charism;
2. Question ourselves ... how are we functioning in relation to the present needs;
3. Reorganize so as to make the necessary changes to be more effective and sustainable: personnel, leadership/government, finances, mission priorities, formation, etc....

Wednesday Afternoon

What are the key points that we discussed?

1. We feel that there is Mission in our Large Institutions but we cannot manage them as before due to a complexity of matters:
 - a. lack of our own qualified personnel for running and managing;
 - b. the financial implications;
 - c. modern equipment, and machines needed;
 - d. etc..

Therefore, we need to give over, change and redirect in PARTNERSHIP with others so that the institutions may remain viable. We need to be creative and manage according to the signs of the times.

2. In some places there is the needed personnel but no money:
 - a. When the foreign missionaries leave and the indigenous religious take over, the local people do not understand why the financial resources diminish;
 - b. One method of trying to overcome this problem is to partnership with the Government ... we provide the personnel and the Government the funds for running the institution.
3. In other areas schools are being run in such a way that they are self-reliant, using local fees;
 - a. The sisters resist pressures to extend the facilities of the institutions if they do not have the funds or the qualified personnel to do it properly;

- b.* There is built into the system a method to procure enough finances so that the poorer, marginalized children can also study without paying school fees.
4. One congregation may have given over too many institutions and now lacks insertions where the young members in formation can be sent for a short stage of apostolic experience.
5. In giving over institutions, certain points need to be considered:
- a.* Take into consideration the needs of the locality;
- b.* Trust that the local people are actually capable of taking over;
- c.* Projects with and among the people.
6. Why can't the donations continue after the foreign missionaries leave? Why are the local sisters not trusted?
- a.* Situation: funds for hospital beds are requested but when the money arrives there is another need that is pressing and funds are allocated for that but the donor agencies are not pleased with this;
- b.* There is a difference in mentality about how money is to be used, about the administration and communications that need to be made concerning donated funds;
- c.* Due to abuses funding agencies have tightened their screws and become much more demanding on all recipients of funds. Thus, those who have always been honest and transparent "suffer" because others have diverted funds.
7. North and South face different realities;
- a.* North: increasing age, health problems, maintaining large houses, finding residences for senior sisters in care homes ...;
- b.* South: increasing number of young members who need formation, education and who need to be fed for many years before they begin to "produce" for the congregation.
8. Networking, partnership, sharing personnel, recourses and formation programmes:
- a.* This will give a counter-cultural witness and sustain our ministries.

Thursday Discussion

11:00 a.m. Small Group Sharing and discussion based on the talk of Fr. Alessandro Guarda, MCCJ, on "The Mission in the Gospel"

Instruction: Choose the topic(s) most important for your group discussion.

o ***Surfacing of topics:***

- Understanding of mission today —> future model of mission;
- Objective of Jesus' mission / presence — that all may have fullness of life ;
- Objective of the missionary — grow in inner freedom and have fullness of life;
Situation: how to eradicate evil connected to justice;
- Intercultural and its implications; is it the same as internationality?
- Interdependence understanding how do we live out interdependence in the use of money, how is it reflected in the way we live the Gospel use of money as a way of announcing the Gospel;
- Challenge of solidarity, love and sensitivity —> how can we collaborate with each other?
- Who are the poor?

o ***From the above topics, the discussions and reflections centred on:***

- 1) Understanding of mission — future model of mission;
- 2) Elements of mission: Intercultural and
- 3) Interdependence.

o ***Discussions and Reflections on:***

A. Understanding of Mission

- Present reality:
 - West is still the source of funds for mission, but less personnel and vocations;
 - East has less funds and continues to request funds from the West, and is now the source of vocations;
- Mission is everywhere;
- Poor (economically, those at the periphery, those most in need, etc) are everywhere;
- Phenomenon of migration and its implications;
- What it is not – we do not see it in terms of North to South, East to West, my call, my mission.

B. Future model of mission – *what are some of the elements or principles that will guide us in living our charism and in being missionaries to the poor in the Gospel today and the future?*

INTERCULTURALITY

- Ø Understanding — dialogue of cultures; people of different cultures and faith being shaped by one another;
- Ø The dialogue of cultures brings us to a new space, a new understanding of realities of peoples; new mind-set;
- Ø There is growth in mutual respect and appreciation of the other; we become aware of our prejudices and tendencies that dominate or hinder fullness of life;
- Ø It is an on-going process of becoming which is not easy; can be a painful process of letting go; calls for change in our attitudes;
- Ø Relationship of mutuality;
- Ø In terms of mission: we become more aware that the focus is not my mission or our mission. The focus is now on the needs of the people and together with others/ Church we seek how best to respond to the needs. As a group we move towards a decision that will bring about fullness of life;
- Ø Way of understanding — mutual dialogue.

INTERDEPENDENCE

- Ø We are part of the total web of life; we are interconnected;
- Ø Our actions or inactions, our choices and decisions has an effect on others and entire community of life;
- Ø Challenge: how do we move and act together in response to the local or bigger needs;
- Ø Needs but always in relation to the whole;
- Ø Fundraising can happen in all areas not just in the West;
- Ø In sustaining local projects we are contributing to the sustainability of the whole finance: e.g. funds are transferred from the West to Africa/South;
 - sometimes we asked ourselves — is it a help or a burden?

- are we making them more dependent?
- sometimes we are expected to transfer the funds; it seems the money has become their right;
- difficulty in written;
- how much of the ground is prepared for this?
- There are certain aspects in one's culture that is very much in our psyche,

DISCERNMENT as an integral part of our process of decision-making; a way of life.

Challenge of the vow of poverty: there are concerns on the way we live it now.

- 1) What we have is gift; by our vow of poverty we do not own anything
accountability and transparency; it is a choice to enable us to live our call;
- 2) Live an authentic life style – congruence in what we say and how we live;
- 3) Expression of hospitality: how open are we to others? The way we open our house to others;
- 4) Understand the essence of the vows;
- 5) Effects of consumerism: basic need or desire? What do we buy? Whom do we support? Do we keep accumulating things?
- 6) Tension in international living and in mixed groups – much of a Western way of life
Tension in making comparisons – there are different realities; younger generation's way of living is different; it seems that the older we become the more insecure we become;
- 7) Feeling that at times we define the vow of poverty in a way that suits us
- 8) Option for the poor; experience life together with people; understand their values and see realities from their own perspective;
- 9) Congregations have different ways of providing for the needs of their members; there are efforts to live simply and sustainably; earning salaries, making budgets, funds for health, medical insurance.

Members:

Carmelita Perez, MMS
 Monica Lita Hasañah, OSU
 Florence Ifeoma Onwudinjo, MSHR
 Francine Maas, MSOLA
 Pobha Mary Karmokar, RN UM
 Helena Amwaandangi, MSC
 Valsa Joseph, FMM
 Judith Moore, SMSM

Group C

Wednesday Morning

Responses to Question One

In the past money was used for:

- Building schools, hospitals and other large institutions;
- Expansion and development;
- Training members of the Congregation;
- Training lay people.

Some Congregations had a 'common purse' to fund mission others did not.

The Congregations depended on the people;

When the large institutions were removed from the people;

With the closing of the institutions there is again more dependence on the people as we work closer to the people.

However the missionaries still are seen to have money. Hence many robberies.

Responses to Question Two

In what ways were past methods **efficient**:

- Things happened rapidly;
- Infrastructure was built up;
- In many instances the missionaries went to a country at the same time as colonialism went.

The results were:

- Efficiency;
- Comfortable with the system;
- Raised the standard of the people;
- Gave the people the ability to work with Government;
- Brought dignity to the people;
- The missionaries were the hope of the people;
- Because of the quality of the work of the mission and their resources, and well trained personnel the service was very good. This gave them leverage with the Government and the Government cooperated with them.

In what ways were past methods **inefficient**:

- The Religious ran mission schools, for example, and the students attended without payment. This formed bad habits and today when the people can afford to pay for something they do not want to because they are used to getting things for nothing;
- Assumed what the people needed and did not ask or involve them in the decisions made. All was provided!
- The Religious had no sense of the value of money. No budgets were expected;
- Too removed from the people once the institutions were built.

Responses to Question Three

Skills in budgeting, planning have to be an integral part of mission. To carry out mission resources are needed. Two points of view were expressed:

1. If no money then dreams and plans remain just that;
2. Founders/Foundresses had dreams and made plans and set out believing that the money would come.

Whatever resources we have should be at the service of the mission of the congregation.

Several interpretations were given of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. One comment was made that the 'real miracle' would be if there was a willingness throughout the congregation to share resources across the areas.

Responses to Question Four

- In the beginning congregations often arrived at the mission with the money and started building. They didn't need the support of the people. The local people were not asked to contribute. All was provided and the decision was made about what was needed. If opening a new mission the people need to be involved and asked what the needs are. Sometimes it is impossible to get the people to respond because of their loss of dignity and confidence because of years of civil war.
- Solidarity, intercongregational sharing, working together, collaboration with lay organisations were all mentioned.
- Reference was made to the UISG/USG sending representatives to the Sudan with the view of finding out what the needs are and getting support, either with personnel or financial assistance from the congregations and sending in an inter-congregational group of religious.
- We can make a contribution.
- We can give short term service in crisis situations.
- We can train personnel and encourage people to use their own resources.
- In assisting lay organisations we can help them not to make the same mistakes we made while preaching the 'Good News' is our primary task.

Responses to Question Five

- The Gospel must be our solid point of reference and realised through compassion and justice. It influences us to put our security in the right place. It should become part of us and be evident in the way we live.
- It is all about developing relationships and must be motivated by love, especially love of the poor. We must use our money to promote life-giving relationships.
- Motivation is always a challenge. Why do we open new missions? Do we want to be in as many places as possible or do we go 'for the glory of God'?
- We give what we have as a witness to the Gospel in the world community. We must therefore be seen to be in solidarity with the poor.

Responses to Question Six

Comments made:

- Collaboration;
 - Rather than big institutions have small local groups;
 - Be creative in our approach;
 - We have many resources. Is this a problem or a blessing? We should have simple dwellings;
 - Funding agencies often seek a partnership with us. We must be accountable and transparent when dealing with these agencies;
 - In future we should go to the organisations that have the money so that we can do our work;
 - Train people to budget well and go to the people for help;
 - A lack of funds has shaken us up. We have come face to face with where our security must lie.
-

The following points were the result of the discussions:

1. In the future the group thought that the funding of small projects would be undertaken rather than supporting **large institutions**.

- Handing over large institutions is often traumatic and there have been good and bad experiences. One community in the developing world is no longer receiving funds from overseas and they do not have religious sisters with the qualifications to be principals in the schools. This creates stress for the communities when some sisters do not want to 'let go'. Much work needs to be done during the transition period and assistance given to those who find it hard to hand over these large institutions.
- One large project can consume a great deal of money and be a drain on personnel. This means that other projects cannot be undertaken.
- Large institutions, especially hospitals, often do not have sufficient funds. This is so even in Europe. Without support it is close to impossible for them to be economically viable in the developing world.
- Because money is always needed to run and maintain large institutions it often happens that they cater only for the rich who can afford to pay.
- Even in the developing world there are many wealthy people. These, and also those who have a little more, need to be challenged to give to the poor.

2. One community has set up an endowment fund which generates income for the brothers in the developing world when money is no longer available from overseas.

3. Many sisters are not economically conscious. This is the way they were trained. When changes are made they need to be given good financial information so that the decisions that need to be made are accepted.

4. Religious working in particular projects often don't want to take a salary from the funding thus the community is not supported. Being paid to do a project is perfectly acceptable by the funding agencies.

5. Many younger sisters want to work at 'grass roots' level.

6. An example of a religious group in Chile who felt called to witness a simpler lifestyle moved their living quarters from the university where they taught and lived in the *barrios*. This move transformed the province. The questions of privacy and space in the barrios was mentioned and it was said that this need was cultural.

7. In looking at the future of religious life it was thought that perhaps there is a call to be more radical. A comment was made that this may be more possible in some situations when the large institutions have been handed over to others.

8. A general comment was made that there are different challenges in different situations and there cannot be a common policy for all situations.

9. As well as comparing the developing and developed world as the 'haves' and the 'have nots' what do we have in common?

*Thursday***Poverty**

- Selling what we have and giving the money to the poor.
- Our mission works have always been directed towards helping the poor.
- We need to talk about Institutional poverty.
- To generate funds for helping to serve the poor we could look into possibilities of having collaboration between provinces and intercongregationally.

What is the mission of Jesus?

- We need to constantly review our motives.
- Our mission is to preach the Gospel message.
- To be radical is to immerse ourselves into the daily lives and activities of the poor.
- There is conflict in some communities because some are able to get money for their ministries. They feel they have power to give direction on how the money is used and to whom it is given.
- We must never be patronising when we give to the poor.

Simple Life Style

- What do we mean by a simple lifestyle?
 - How do we arrive at a common understanding of a simple lifestyle where there is a great diversity in standards?
 - We must have respect and a right attitude towards the local situation and values.
 - There must be clarity between what is necessity, what is need and what we simply want.
 - There is a need for reconciliation.
 - There is a need to be careful while trying to live a simple lifestyle that we do not perpetuate the situation of the poor but rather alleviate poverty.
 - In what way do our charisms lead us in today's world.
-

Friday Morning

1. 'We' fishers of men in today's world can give an image of a secure life. For example we will never be alone.

We must concentrate on spiritual and Gospel values. We are there to serve all.

Relationships between the local Ordinary and religious are not always harmonious.

Our formation programmes are often still in the mode of the affluent society.

Multicultural living is a reality in communities in mission.

There is a spirit of availability and readiness to go to other areas of need.

We are women and men with heart. Anybody can do the work. It is who we are not what we do.

We give the impression that we are rich.

Some of the new generation do not want to put the effort into self-sustaining projects (income generating). They would prefer to be with the people.

There is a need to incorporate practical work into our formation programmes.

Some sisters find it difficult to let go of the 'old culture' and wish to hold money received as donations for their particular ministry. They find it difficult to pool donations for the common good and used for the poor.

Some sisters opted to change their life style and lower their standards of living in an effort to be on an equal footing with the local sisters. E.g. using local foods rather than imported.

In the formation programme the question often posed is 'is this a cultural value or a religious life value?'

2. We go to the people and work with them and encourage self-reliance rather than receiving 'hand outs'.

Candidates are trained to live a simple life-style, to be hospitable and to form good relationships.

Appreciation of their own gifts is encouraged. This helps in sharing life together.

Reflective questions posed: Who are my friends? Are they indigenous or from other countries? Are they rich or poor?

There is a generosity in giving of self in the service of others but a reluctance to evaluate the service.

3. It is important to build relationships and to dialogue.

Friday Afternoon

- Openness and willingness to dialogue in the process of building of life-giving relationships.
- The necessity of teamwork – inclusiveness.
- Clear Vision – Live it! Charism (Congregational and Local).
- Have good planning – Aims and Objectives.
- Emphasis on transparency, accountability and sustainability with an inbuilt evaluation in the process.
- Emphasis on training.

Group D

Thursday

1. Our call is a call to the poor. In order to be good we have to be good with the poor. Who are the poor? Today the poor are everywhere. They are not confined to any country or any place.

2. What do we mean by institution? Congregations without institutions what is their experience of mission? If the centre is Western how do we change the model.

3. Globalisation. We live in a globalised world with its positive points and its difficulties. This allows for a globalisation of solidarity creates also great fear. Movements of population create insecurity and defensive attitudes. Example: Muslims in Holland. Hindus/Muslims/ Christians in India, in Philippines, in Indonesia.

4. We also need to reach the rich ... the Gospel message is for all. Rich can help the poor. Example work of Bill Gates in Africa.

5. We are ruled by economic values in this globalised world. Can we not also globalise the values of the Kingdom of God?

6. What is the real challenge for religious life in this new globalised world?

7. We are not called to convert people but to be with them ... to be a presence and to live in dialogue ... the dialogue of life ... to be mutually enriched by our cultures ... not to forget the inter-faith aspect.

8. In our projects favourise justice, reconciliation, pacification and atonement ... to bring people together..Do not forget LOBBYING.

9. Importance of formation ... formation that really serves the needs of the mission ... that does not alienate people from their roots.

10. Image given of Russian dolls that fit into one another. So too the various levels: international, national, regional, local, groups, personal must fit together. We work with different people, different levels at different times.

2nd sharing

Even though the question suggested was to reflect on poverty ... leave everything and follow me or share your bread with the poor the discussion in fact centered on collaboration, and collaborative ventures. Various examples of congregations already working together were shared.

Those which originate from conferences of Major Superiors in a country or on an international level.

Coming together as Congregation when a disaster strikes ... earthquake, *tsunami*, volcano and then continuing afterwards.

Formation projects.

For LOBBYING.

A group of 15 congregations together have NGO status at the UN and provide grass-roots information to the worker who is mandated to intervene on their behalf on diverse issues ... water, trafficking, violence, etc. ... UNANIMA.

Another group at the UN is called RUN.

Sisters helping out Congregations in Africa for a limited time

The Franciscan family has a great deal of collaboration at international level and very often has projects together at national and local levels.

Collaboration in nursing home ventures to provide for the needs of our elderly sisters.

Collaboration in projects like the governance of schools.

Points to be underlined in starting a project ... collaboration or otherwise.

Need for a catalyst who does not get discouraged easily.

Have to be careful how we look at situations and how we define poverty. What we label as poor may not in effect be poverty or poor from the point of view of the context or culture.

In our globalised world there are few places outside the systems of communication/ TV ... Multi media, etc., and therefore immune to influence from the outside.

Need to avoid taking people completely out of their culture to form them ... or to educate them ... if the differences are too great alienation may occur and they find it very difficult to re-enter their situation.

The integrity of culture is a myth ... but we need to look back, be grounded in our cultural roots if we are to really move forward.

Particular problems mentioned were ... caste system in India. How are "the other" seen. As Church we need to be vigilant in order to avoid siding with "the other".

We do mission in a cultural context. What about advocacy?

Friday Morning**Question 1****a. Comfortable lifestyle**

- Those who come to us now have experiences of a hard/difficult life and what we have are more than what they have in their villages and we expect certain standards from them. Missionaries come with their own standards.
- We have a lot of comfort that we feel uneasy;
- I thought that I had given up comfort but I think that I am more comfortable now;
- Young members see us as rich because of our big institutions but they are challenged by the life of the missionaries that even if everything is provided, they look to the witnessing life of the sisters in the community.

b. Shared/ communal life, prayer life, responsibilities extended to the larger city

- We build on relationships rather than on what we have or we don't have;
- Connection with people.

c. *We may have big houses and all the facilities and we are called to live the same kind of poverty. A deeper call underlines that poverty is not all about money, there are other expressions of radical living out our vow of poverty which are more attached to prayer ... like elderly religious in nursing) homes, adapting a life-style that is not the norm...*

d. *The challenges of living out the vow of poverty may not be the same to each one. There are those who could live in poor areas, others could go around the world, live in first world countries, stay in big houses, use all the modern facilities, go for higher studies, etc. and yet be simple and poor in their choices and lifestyle.*

Question 2**a. Experience/ exposure, study, reflection, sharing, dialogue, evaluation**

- Experience of building the church brick by brick, experience with local community, language, culture;
- "Giving people their own legs" accompanying them rather than doing for them;
- Give opportunity to young members to work with the poor, possibility to be in the situation of the poor even in the situation of powerlessness;
- Experiences shaped their thinking, their relationships, attitudes, choices and ways of doing things;
- To be aware that exposure in poor areas is tricky and could be misunderstood as a means to lead them to a more comfortable life.

b. *Right motivation: accompany them when they come to us. If they find out that they do not fit into our life, they could become good teachers and in their family lives. If they remain with the right motivation, they serve the people and become good missionaries.*

c. *Develop one's own identity and develop confidence, to go beyond material possessions.*

d. *Sense of pastoral attitude, to become real fishers of men rather than taskmasters.*

e. *Develop international novitiates: formation where there is interaction and sharing different cultures.*

Criteria/ Guiding principles to manage funds for mission

1. Dialogue:

- within the community;
- promotes communion, life which is eucharistic/wholistic;
- creates redeeming relationships;
- helps our needs and demands become realistic because they are based on experience;
- creates trust, integrity with one another.

2. Information, training people about the value of money

- that money is a means for mission;
- to have a right relationship with money.

3. Transparency, openness in the management of our funds

- openly and responsibly share and discuss finance, that it is not a secret- what we have, how we use it;
- creates co-responsibility.

4. Screening of projects (how to do it ... what is needed, manageable or not)

- participation of religious and people. Initiative must come from the people not imposed from outside.

5. Training of younger generations to handle funds for the congregation. To let them be responsible from the start. To make it a proper ministry for those who have the potentials. To organize in-service training and to develop one's capabilities.

6. Clear process of decision-making: consultation, consensus and trust in the final decision of the proper authorities.

7. Evaluation: to be able to question and to discuss.

8. Detachment from money. To really believe that it is our money (not mine alone) which is just entrusted to us (stewardship).

9. Balance between the respect of the past and provide for the future in making our decisions (for our elderly sisters and for the generations to come).

Combined Responses from Groups

Groups 1, 2 and 3

Friday

1. "FISHERS OF MEN"

- we have a whole range of life styles: it is difficult to have common criteria:
- big institutions, small institutions, no institutions;
- open house within the setting of big institutions; closed doors in non-institutional pastoral setting;
- for some the concrete reality seems a comfortable, wealthy way of life;
- being available to people;
- dedication and commitment to our service to people;
- communal approach to "fishing", e.g. in local church all gathered to pray together;
- live as the people do; prepare people to carry on the 'mission';
- "living simply so that others may simply live", i.e. realizing that what I use over and above what I need is not going to be available for the other;
- life style that mirrors our context/reality;
- being initiators, i.e. having a pioneering spirit;
- risking into the future;
- being open and reasonable with one's budget and accounts, ie encouraging our young members to make a responsible budget; having a ceiling for our budget;
 - transparency;
 - attentive to the needs of others rather than expecting to be given a place of honour;
 - developing a work culture instead of spending on domestic wages.

2. ELEMENTS IN FORMATION STRATEGIES

- formation of young women and men amidst the reality of consumerist values to the transformation process of radicality of Gospel values is a big challenge.
- some strategies:
 - formation in the context of community actively involved in mission with people with regular action – reflection – action;
 - exposure and insertion into the life/reality of the poor;
 - being open and transparent about the financial situation;
 - creating an atmosphere of mutual dialogue, discussion and sharing;
 - clarity of motivation in the selection of candidates;
 - grounded in commitment;
 - on-going formation: consistent with initial formation;
 - have models or trying to live evangelical poverty, celibacy, obedience and generosity;
 - method of studies that supports vision of mission;
 - positive attitude towards work; taking on a job and seeing to its completion;
 - accountability, transparency, consistency and creativity according to the charism of the congregation and the need of the people;
 - a balance between contemplation and action.

- proper values and convictions;
- ability to relate with people of other cultures.

3. FINANCIAL RESOURCES/SERVICE TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

- consultation and dialogue with local Ordinary in terms of services to the people and Church;
- being inserted into the Local Church;
- empowering the Local Church and being in the supportive role;
- ensuring sustainability;
- drawing contract(s) with local Ordinary;
- regular evaluations and critical assessment be an integral part of our mission in an on-going way in light of the charism of the congregation within the context of the radicality of Gospel values;
- tension between the demands and expectations of Local Church and the vision and orientation of the congregation.

Groups 3, 4 and 5

Thursday

Challenge to get the balance between trust in God's providence and responsible management of our investments. Investments are needed for formation and education.

Recovering the Gospel values in living mission. This involves leaving the large institutions where our services were worked.

FOR people where we work.

WITH PEOPLE (people centred activities)

NGO's and Government are now working in places that were once missions of the congregations. Missionaries are thus freed for new needs, new frontiers for empowering poor people.

On-going evaluation of our present missions and moving to where there is no support for existing needs. This may call for more intercongregational collaboration. Moving towards solidarity with other congregations who do similar work or are working in the same area. Maybe it is time to ask the question 'is there a need to move beyond our own congregation's boundaries for mission?'

Simple Lifestyle. We must respect the local standards and values. It is impossible to find a universal standard. We must make sure we earn our living by our own means. When we have personnel and funds available we must always remember to go to the poor. Health care is an example. We ought not to look for privileges.

Groups 4, 5 and 6

Friday

1. Aware of the high standard of life in the affluent societies.

Motivation: the young people regarding discernment to avoid the extreme ways of living without values.

In our missions we are not owners we are facilitators – links, we enable. We respect the Local Church.

Simple lifestyle: Option for a simple lifestyle applying the principle of having just enough.

Building positive attitudes – heart centred. Good relationships and welcoming – openness to other cultures.

2. Formation Strategies: Need to provide exposure and experience with the poor at initial formation. Sharing these experiences in the community.

Enable the poor to find their own way of living.

Form candidates for a simple lifestyle.

The leadership to set the model of living according to Gospel values.

Appreciation of our gifts, sharing of life and encouraging growth towards self-sacrifice, dignity and dialogue of life.

3. Mutual support between Local Church, missionaries and religious.

Missionaries encourage Local Church to be self-reliant.

Difficulties

1. At times the missionaries are faced with the problems of the local Ordinary not using the funds for the purpose for which they are given. Negotiations and dialogue are often difficult.
 2. The local priest encounters difficulties when he takes over from a religious group as the funds often stop when the religious group goes.
 3. The question arose regarding projects. Was the project a need of the religious or was it the need of the Local Church?
-

Summary of Groups

- Wednesday Morning Work -

1. We have been living the Western value of self-sufficiency and this no longer works. So, we need to create a model of reciprocity, of interdependence ... using the gifts of all, the goods of all.
 2. Collaboration with all other types of agencies of good will: religious, lay, NGO, Governments...
 - a. Personnel, finances, knowledge, equipment, skills, etc;
 - b. Lobbying ... this is something that our elderly missionaries can do when they return home ... they could even through their effort effect changes that are at the grass-roots of many of the problems of the developing countries.
 3. Prophetic way of living and using our resources, both human and financial:
 - a. Use finances to build loving, life-giving relationships;
 - b. What is new is that we need to begin to think about money in theological ways.
 4. As personnel and finances decrease we need and want to assure that the mission, our charisms will continue even without our presence as congregations or our wealth. Thus, we need to remind ourselves to be initiators and to prepare others to take over, we are called to enable others to carry on so that the mission can continue and be sustained.
 5. Where do we invest our funds ... are we following socially responsible investing methods?
-



- French Groups -

Le jeudi 18 mai 2006

1. La complexité des affaires économiques nous laisse perplexes. D'où la question de cohésion entre pauvreté et modernité.

2. S'engager pour les pauvres, c'est impératif, mais que faire aussi avec les riches, le salut étant annoncé à tous ?

3. Dans l'évocation de Lc 4, 18 ; le groupe a exprimé le regret d'avoir laissé la dernière phrase, le verset 19 : «annoncer une année de grâce ...» avec tout ce que cela recouvre au niveau social.

4. Il n'y a pas de façon standard d'être religieux, la pointe est de savoir comment être témoin, annoncer l'Évangile là où je suis, comment contextualiser ?

5. Nos congrégations internationales sont une richesse, mais aussi un défi, dans la multiculturalité. Le vivre constitue déjà un défi, mais il y a un besoin de changement de mentalité : savoir laisser et recommencer ailleurs, savoir passer ... vivre l'accueil, être proche des gens, renoncer à nos privilèges....

6. Le vœu de pauvreté est générateur de richesses, notamment par la mise en commun des biens. Par conséquent, le religieux(se) peut se permettre de courir des risques que les autres ne peuvent pas se permettre ; la question à poser étant quel talent ai-je qui pourrait servir à la transformation de la société (cf la parabole des talents : Mt 25,14-30). Par exemple Radio Vatican donne les nouvelles dont les autres radio ne parlent. Comment être créatif comme le furent nos Fondateurs ?

7. Important de favoriser un travail en réseau : Justice et Paix travaille en réseau avec des ONG.... Nos congrégations peuvent en plus jouer un rôle de lien, de pont à tout niveau (mettre les gens en liens).

8. Un renouvellement nous concernent tous, pays pauvres et pays riches : mon engagement va-t-il dans le même sens que Lc 4,18-19, telle est l'interpellation qui doit nous habiter.

9. L'austérité pour l'austérité a-t-elle un sens ? Ne vaut-il pas mieux réfléchir et analyser ce que nous vivons de sorte que nos structures nous aident en solidarité ?

10. L'information constitue un des rôles de l'économiste pour une conscientisation des membres de la Congrégation. La gestion est un travail difficile, il faut préparer, former la relève, la gestion ne s'improvise pas. Et la gestion doit aller dans le même sens que le charisme d'une congrégation.

Le jeudi 18 mai à 15 h

Tout quitter pour Le suivre ou partager avec les pauvres ?

Quel est au fond le dilemme dans la question à traiter ?

Dans notre groupe nous ne trouvons pas nécessairement de dilemme. En effet, dans la pauvreté, on a l'habitude de ne voir que l'argent (les biens comptables), et on oublie d'autres dimensions :

- apprendre une langue : réalité qui nous met dans un état d'enfant, un état précaire ;
- Vivre des conditions différentes que les nôtres ;
- Le manque de moyens techniques : Internet, téléphone....

Tout quitter et le partage avec les pauvres ne s'excluent pas nécessairement.

Dans la pauvreté, l'obligation est la mise en commun des biens, et celle-ci peut être une force révolutionnaire dans un monde qui valorise le revenu personnel.

Le plus important devient l'incarnation aujourd'hui du message évangélique, du règne de Dieu qui se réalise en solidarité avec les pauvres.

Dans l'interculturalité, la mise en commun concerne également l'être. Il est essentiel de donner un espace d'expression dans le respect. C'est une expérience de vie.

L'interculturalité est un défi, d'où la nécessité de se former ensemble, en vue de témoigner ensemble, entrer en dialogue pour l'efficacité.

La notion du temps et de durée est un élément à considérer.

Sintesis

- Jour 1 -

A – mission et denier

Notre usage de l'argent est une mission en soi.

Nous passons d'une époque où nous dépendions des bienfaiteurs financiers à une recherche pour produire de façon nouvelle un financement au plan local. Prendre des risques : se battre pour que notre travail soit rémunéré, avoir des plantations, des locations de nos bâtiments ... essayer et faire le point.

La façon d'utiliser l'argent est un moyen d'annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle. Renouveler notre rapport à l'économie.

L'argent est fait pour circuler et pour produire, y compris notre capital qui en fonction des besoins peut bouger d'une province à l'autre.

Revaloriser le ministère de l'économiste :

- l'associer assez tôt à une recherche de projet mission ;
- apprendre à gérer correctement dans le lieu où je suis, qu'il soit riche ou pauvre ;

Responsabilité personnelle, elle nous amène à déterminer ce dont j'ai besoin dans une perspective plus large.

Interdépendance et ses multiples facettes...

B – Institutions

Devons-nous céder nos œuvres ? et pour faire quoi ?

Mais alors, en Afrique :

- Elles répondent à un besoin, il n'y a rien d'autres, les quitter serait une démission;
- Que les sœurs de la région s'approprient l'œuvre, elle n'est pas l'affaire de Sœur x .

- Responsabiliser les populations , travailler avec , les former pour collaborer et au besoins, leur passer l'animation ;
- L'œuvre nous donne une identité et un lieu de travail pour les jeunes qui nous approchent, partager une façon de faire ;
- Chercher un financement extérieur long terme , et aussi rentabiliser l'institution par des petites activités annexes, mini industries ;

Dilemme : Nous faisons un travail de suppléance et avec une perte quant aux usagers, ex certains quittent les écoles presbytérales . Mais si l'on ferme , les populations plus pauvres ne seront pas scolarisées du tout.

Dans nos congrégations , il reste des ressources non partagées (ex comptes en banques où les réserves dorment).

Aux Pays-Bas, le groupe des supérieures majeures a formé une caisse d'entraide collective très active.

En Belgique, les congrégations ont une mise en commun pour les investissements.

- Jour 3 -

Mission de l'Eglise : option pour les Pauvres

Importance de l'évaluation pour renouveler.

Dans la formation , on vit un écart : difficulté pour les novices en stage de toucher les problèmes d'une communauté. Les aider à intégrer . La formation est l'affaire de toutes.

Le monde change, les moyens techniques influencent les mentalités, ; à quoi voulons –nous former les jeunes ? Gérer l'écart entre les capacités techniques des pays riches et celles des pays pauvres. Cela touche les rythmes, les informations, les frustrations....

Moyens techniques et pauvreté, se demander toujours, quel usage j'en fais. On vit un tiraillement quand on est en milieu développé technologiquement.

Le dénuement est une forme , avoir de l'équipement, une logistique , des bâtiments, est aussi lieu de mission. Ouvrir nos grandes maisons aux femmes qui n'ont pas de lieu de rencontre ou de lieu pour souffler.

Tous les lieux sont lieux de mission où l'on cherche à ne pas exclure. Le monde de l'argent est dur. Il nous faut construire un système financier qui dise autre chose que la rentabilité, l'exclusion.

Nous former à gérer progressivement pour repenser la place de l'économique.

Ne pas être naïves, ex exiger des contrats, y compris des évêques.

Quelle image nous présentons à celui qui vient à nous ?

Le lieu où je suis et travaille est le lieu où je dois construire un monde qui n'exclut pas, en contexte pauvre et en cotexte plus riche. Le monde de l'argent est dur, j'ai à dire la complexité du monde d'aujourd'hui, ou alors, je n'ai pas de pertinence.



- Spanish Groups -

Group A

Aportes del día 17

La reflexión del grupo se hizo a partir de la siguiente consideración:

- a) Para las congregaciones en sus inicios o nacimiento el dinero no fue lo más importante, el lugar central lo ocupaba la misión, es decir hacer el anuncio de Buena Nueva.
- b) En un segundo momento se produce la Institucionalización gestándose y desarrollándose grandes obras, estructuras etc....
- c) Hoy nos preguntamos ¿Cómo volver a los orígenes? ¿Cómo recuperar la identidad? ¿Qué camino hacer?

Continuando en la lectura del proceso, vemos indicadores de la eficiencia del dinero:

- Proporcionó medios para la sobrevivencia y sostenibilidad.
- Generó creatividad en la manera de buscarlo, trabajo remunerado con el estado etc.
- Facilitó procesos de formación muy ricos y completos.
- Favoreció la ayuda a quienes no tenían medios para crear obras propias de promoción humana, un elemento importante en la misión.
- Buena administración, generación de grandes capitales.

Ineficiencia

- Crea dependencia
- Generó obras propias que hoy son un peso.
- Hoy día los jóvenes lo tienen todo y lo quieren todo fácilmente.
- La gente ve la vida religiosa con dinero, rica.

EL DINERO ES UN MEDIO O ES PARTE INTEGRAL DE LA MISIÓN?

Después de bastante diálogo, hubo dos pensamientos en el grupo:

1. Es parte integrante de la misión, se necesita de él.
2. Teóricamente es parte integrante de la misión. En la realidad es un medio para mantener las tareas de la misión.

Nos falta hacernos la pregunta ¿qué es la misión?

Se constata que falta profundizar bastante el tema.

¿CÓMO ASEGURAR EL FUTURO?

Partimos desde el previo de tener en cuenta los 5 criterios ofrecidos en la reflexión de la mañana: Participación, transparencia, austeridad, equidad, y solidaridad. Sin olvidar la confianza y el sentido de la providencia.

- ¿Qué pasos dar para superar la dependencia teniendo como criterios los anteriores?
- El dinero no es para acumular sino para el servicio de la misión y de las HH, planificando y previsión de futuro.
- Nada es nuestro, lo tuyo es mío y viceversa. Por qué preocuparse para asegurar el futuro, si partimos del valor de la solidaridad? Preocupémonos por gastar pensamiento y concreción para la misión.
- Ser autosuficientes a nivel local, pensar en el futuro teniendo en cuenta todos los elementos: edad, necesidades, posibilidades, enfermedades...
- Compartir, hasta llegar a la solidaridad.

APORTES DEL EVANGELIO

- Ante la globalización, la SOLIDARIDAD.
- Un llamado a la Inculturación, Inserción.
- Asumir un estilo de vida sencillo, teniendo como criterio el nivel o estilo de vida de la gente.
- Recuperar la identidad, volver al espíritu fundacional, no ahogar el Espíritu con la Institucionalización.
- Ante un mundo corrupto la transparencia. Invertir en fondos éticos.
- Ser signo profético con nuestra manera de ser y estar.

¿CÓMO REPENSAR ESTRUCTURAS?

No podemos caminar en solitario, ni hacer acciones aisladas/os, es urgente realizar proyectos en redes. Con otras congregaciones hacer reflexiones y trabajos conjuntos.
Urgencia de la intercongregacionalidad para ayudarnos a todos los niveles.

Group B

Viernes 19 de mayo

1. Qué imagen de pescadores de hombres damos, con nuestro estilo de vida, a los futuros miembros de nuestras congregaciones?

Hay una diversidad de imágenes según el lugar. Enumeramos elementos positivos y negativos.

Positivos:

- imagen de personas con el coraje de dejar todo;
- capaces de compasión y compromiso;
- presentes entre los más pobres del mundo;
- con un compromiso por toda la vida (muy claro en los más ancianos);
- que caminan con la gente (inserción);
- capaces de compartir lo que se tiene.

Negativos:

- tendencia de algunos a sostener a cualquier precio obras del pasado;
- gran activismo que dificulta la acogida (por falta de tiempo) y que desanima a algunos por la intensidad de la vida que se lleva adelante;
- tendencia en algunos a considerar esta opción como algo temporario y no por toda la vida;
- dificultad que se experimenta en algunas culturas cuando el sacerdocio es considerado como una promoción social y no como ser pastor que da la vida;
- eficiencia como punto de referencia y no el caminar con la gente;
- que no hay escasez de medios.

2. Qué elementos debemos incluir en nuestros programas de formación para que podamos preparar a los futuros miembros de la congregación a ser animadores junto a los pobres de tal modo que ellos sean promotores de su proyecto?

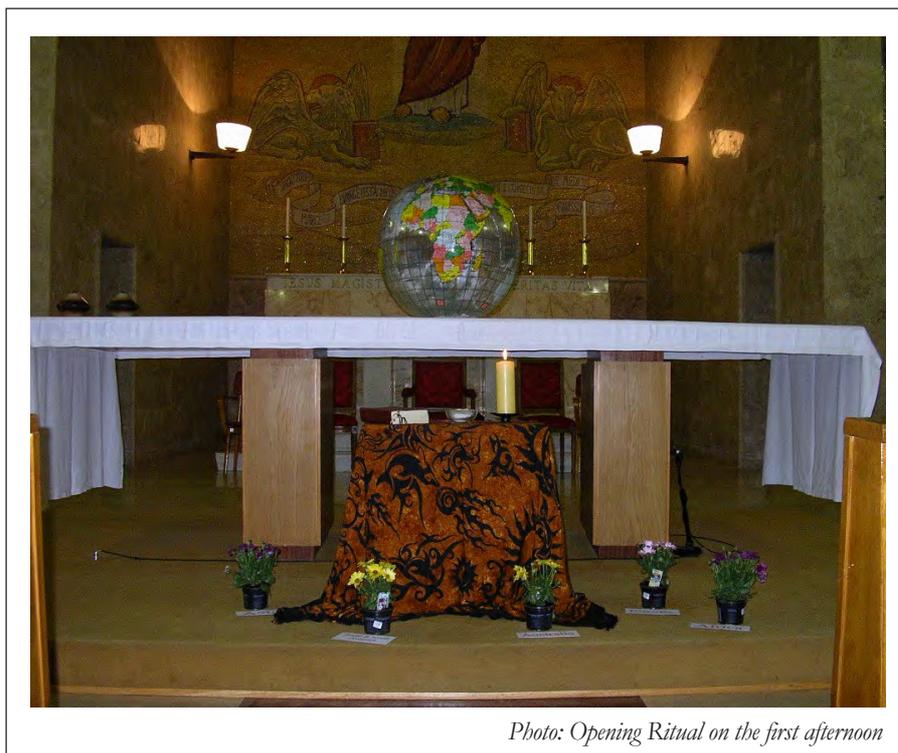
- Una profunda experiencia de Jesús que sea motivo de toda opción ya que la pobreza de por sí no motiva a nadie y el compromiso por el pobre motiva inicialmente pero luego puede cansar.
- Formar a la capacidad de dialogar, evaluar, caminar juntos.
- Formar en un lugar concreto donde se haga experiencia de pobreza de tal modo que el pobre que entra en la congregación no se sienta “desclasado” y el que viene de una situación económica mejor pueda descubrir el sentido de su compromiso.
- Poner atención a los medios que se ofrecen en la formación, de modo que no haya un salto demasiado grande con la vida normal de la gente.
- Enseñar a hacer un análisis social de las causas de la pobreza y de los instrumentos que pueden ayudar a salir de ella.
- Ayudar a reflexionar sobre el “para qué” de todo lo que se recibe (es para la misión y no para una promoción personal).
- Preparar para acercarse a comunidades que muchas veces experimentan el cotidiano rechazo y la marginación.
- Un servicio concreto donde se pueda ver, dialogar, discernir, evaluar....

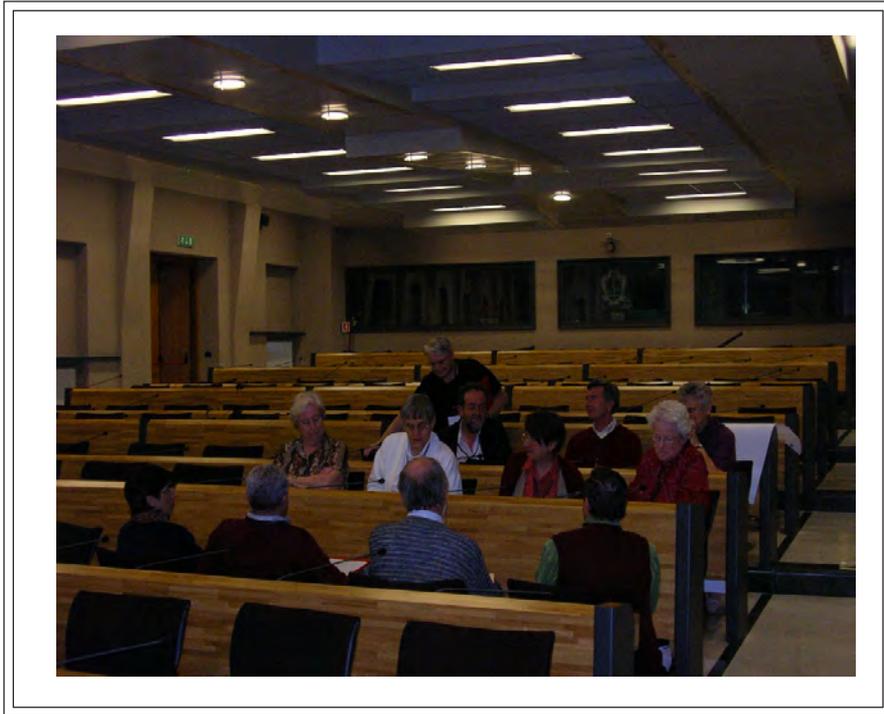
3. En la gestión financiera de los recursos, cuáles serían las implicaciones de ser misioneros “al servicio de la misión en la Iglesia local”?

- Equilibrio entre la colaboración, el respeto a la iglesia local y la dimensión profética de nuestro carisma según la especificidad de cada congregación. Esto se manifieste en un contrato que especifique el “que”, “quién”, “hasta cuándo”....
- Relacionarse con sentido crítico con la iglesia local. No todo lo que se nos pide es lo que tenemos que hacer. A veces nos piden a causa de nuestra “eficiencia” para organizar proyectos (somos poderosos).
- Saber indicar criterios (dar prioridad a la formación de las personas).

Cuál es la condición fundamental para que el dinero esté al servicio de la Misión?

1. Educar a los miembros de la familia religiosa a tener noción del valor del dinero
2. Respeto a los proyectos:
 1. En lo posible se puedan automantener
 2. Involucrar el personal local de manera que lo sienta propio
 3. Tener presente cómo irá adelante en el futuro
 4. Tener el carisma de la congregación como criterio de prioridad
 5. Sea discernido en comunidad
3. Prever el futuro de situaciones donde debido a la situación de pobreza no sea posible autosostenerse (y no será posible tampoco en el futuro)
4. Generar canales de solidaridad – compartir al interno de la congregación.





- Italian Groups -

Group A

Riassunto dei lavori di gruppo

17 maggio

PASSATO:

- Abbiamo creato delle strutture che ora sono da mantenere (situazioni di dipendenza).
- Concetto del denaro “demonizzato”.

PRESENTE - FUTURO:

- Sono da tenere presenti tre ambiti:
 - * le strutture;
 - * la vita dei missionari;
 - * le opere.
 E' importante verificare le nostre inserzioni a partire da questi tre ambiti e tenendoli ben distinti.
- Necessità di educare, sensibilizzare le persone sia all'interno che all'esterno dei nostri Istituti.
- Collaborazione fra Istituti e con la Chiesa locale.
- **IMPORTANTE:** è, a partire dalla chiarezza del concetto di Missione (motivazioni e stile), che si fa chiara anche la destinazione del denaro. Necessità di recuperare certi valori (equità, giustizia...) e di ricostituire la gerarchia di questi valori.

18 maggio

Idee fondamentali:

- La Missione non si identifica solo con l'opzione per i poveri ma piuttosto con l'annuncio del Regno (del quale l'opzione per i poveri è parte...).
- Il nostro stile di vita è MISSIONE. Esso è caratterizzato da:
 - * semplicità ... anche nelle strutture che potrebbero essere più incarnate;
 - * condivisione, solidarietà (all'interno dell'Istituto e fuori);
 - * Uno stile di vita che ponga al centro la persona e non le strutture.
- Il ruolo importante della formazione, sia nostra che dei laici con i quali collaboriamo, e ai quali siamo inviati (da Formati diventiamo Formatori). Formare anche in economia.
- Un'economia a servizio della Missione.

Richiesta: ascoltare la voce dei missionari/e originari dell'Africa – Asia – Oceania – America Latina.

Pomeriggio

Domanda: lasciare tutto o condividere?

Concetto di MISSIONE concepita come CONDIVISIONE di tutti gli aspetti della mia vita.

- Condivisione come atteggiamento interiore di ciò che siamo:

- * scambio di vita, di esperienze;
- * scambio culturale;
- * interdipendenza e interculturalità;
- E di ciò che abbiamo:
 - *scambio a livello economico;
 - *scambio di decisioni, scelte, mezzi.
- Ambiti: tutti, compresa la promozione umana e la ricerca della giustizia.
- Esigenze della condivisione:
 - * distacco, uscire da sé;
 - * ascolto e apertura;
 - * libertà interiore;
 - * umiltà;
 - * individualità nella stessa comunità.

19 maggio

1. Quanto più incarniamo il carisma che è proprio del nostro Istituto tanto più siamo credibili. Questo implica una continua conversione nell'...
 - * inculturazione del carisma;
 - * stile di vita semplice, sobrio, trasparente;
 - * inserimento e collaborazione attiva con la Chiesa Locale.
2. Durante la formazione non si offra solo teoria ma:
 - * si aiuti il candidato a fare Esperienza di Cristo;
 - * si chieda l'inserimento nella realtà locale (con i poveri);
 - * abituare il candidato al lavoro manuale anche per mantenersi;
 - * si chieda ai futuri candidati un'esperienza di lavoro prima di iniziare il cammino formativo.
3. Con la Chiesa locale:
 - * Condivisione nei progetti (fina dalla fase iniziale);
 - * Gestione trasparente nelle Diocesi (a partire dall'interno dei nostri Istituti);
 - * Essere Ponti:
 - comunicazione esperienziale fra Chiese;
 - collaborazione a livello pratico per uno sviluppo integrale delle persone.

Group B

17 maggio – mattina

1. Modelli del passato (per es. *plantatio ecclesiae* o *salus animarum*) hanno condizionato l'aspetto economico:
 - a. progetti occidentali, basati su una sola persona, che creavano dipendenza.
 - b. l'amministrazione e il finanziamento dal centro verso la periferia.
 - c. tensioni fra centro e periferia.

2. Fase di transizione:
 - a. meno personale attivo in occidente, un numero più elevato in pensione, e quindi con necessità di sostegno.
 - b. più personale disponibile in paesi 'missionari', ma poche risorse.
 - c. lo sviluppo di un nuovo concetto di missione, con nuova motivazione e stile che prevede collaborazione, corresponsabilità e codecisionalità.
3. Sfide per il futuro:
 - a. creare una *comunio* di amministrazione.
 - b. creare fondi per assicurare futuri bisogni.
 - c. creare canali di informazioni aperti, trasparenti per dimistificare le fonti e l'impiego del denaro.

17 maggio – pomeriggio

1. Progetti a misura d'uomo che mirino alla creazione e alla guarigione dei rapporti umani.
2. Concetto di 'micro credito' per incoraggiare le piccole iniziative.
3. Vocazioni locali come ponte fra la realtà del posto e le opere dell'istituto.
4. Superare il dualismo 'pastorale' / 'lavorativo' come mezzo di una nuova partecipazione nella vita del popolo.

MA, ci sono diverse aree devastate, che richiedono grandi opere ed investimenti massicci. Applicare sin dall'inizio, anche dei grandi progetti, i principi di corresponsabilità.

18 maggio

1. Le strutture non sono necessariamente negative, ma fanno parte di uno sviluppo naturale, umano.
 2. Il messaggio di liberazione al centro dell'annuncio del Regno di Dio, deve essere lo spirito vissuto e comunicato nella missione.
 3. Le strutture legate alla cultura del posto e adattate alle necessità del popolo.
 4. Anche in Occidente le strutture devono essere ripensate per trasmettere un messaggio di liberazione.
 5. Bisogna essere formati per lavorare nel mondo e formare altri, per poter prestare il proprio servizio con lo stesso spirito di libertà.
 6. Il compito principale dei religiosi è di essere un segno contro le strutture del mondo per dare testimonianza del Regno che verrà.
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- Appendix -

Efficiency and Effectiveness in Mission

Joseph Mattam, S.J.

Introduction

Older Christians in Gujarat (India) even today would talk with great appreciation about the past generation of missionaries who used to walk to the villages, stay with the people for a few days at a time, share their meagre meal, teach them the Gospel and celebrate the sacraments. Most of these older Christians have little respect for the missionaries of today as they have become “jeep missionaries” who visit the people, perhaps more often, but for a short while and return home in the evening. Today they have certainly become faster, more efficient, and even use some of the latest means of communication. The question however is: are they apostolically more effective than the older generation who were less efficient, slower, with hardly any innovative ways in communication? The older missionaries were also not as fluent in the local language (Gujarati) as the present day priests and sisters, but they touched the hearts of the people, even with their defective Gujarati.

1. Money: power and mission

Do Jesus’ instructions to his disciples when he sent them out two by two hold good for today, or were they merely for his time? When He sent them out to preach and heal they were not to rely on any material power, but only on the power of God within them. “He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts ... not to put on two tunics” (Mk 6:8ff). It is remarkable that in the same chapter Mark gives the account of the multiplication of loaves where Jesus tells the Disciples: “You give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37) – as if Jesus were foreseeing the future of the Church in Asia and Africa where foreign help would become the mainstay of the Church. Jesus was perhaps already telling the Church to be self-sufficient and not to depend on foreign powers and multinationals for their work with the people. Similarly, Paul argues that he did not go to his people on the basis of eloquence and worldly wisdom, or any other power, but with the power of the folly of the cross alone (I Cor 2:1f; see also I Cor 1:18ff). We shall see below that when mission is understood no more in terms of conquering, etc., then the words of Jesus may be found to be valid even today.

Narayan Vaman Tilak, a Hindu convert to Christianity, wrote over a hundred years ago, “missionaries and mission agents can never do more than what money can do” (Richard: 61). Those whose aim was primarily to “plant the Church”, and build institutions certainly depended on the power of money, even when they talked about trusting God. The temptation “to give”, “to help” is great, especially when people are poor and in need. In many recent mission stations in Gujarat what is often said by the people is: “I have been coming for Mass during the whole year. When will I get the funds for my house? or similar things. The giving-mentality has led people to passivity and dependence. Their own little resources are not tapped, they remain constant beggars. It also happens in some places, especially among new groups who are being evangelized, that financial help is a powerful motive for many people to come to the Church and be baptised. There are many factors that lead to this type of situation: the need of the missionaries to have visible, tangible results; their eagerness to “save souls”; the poverty of the people, etc. These lead them to a “donor-model” of mission. Younger priests visiting villages where foreign missionaries had been at work are experiencing great difficulty. People keep asking them for “help” and often the younger men/women do not have the money to dole out, whereas some of the foreigners seemed to have had plenty, especially after the 1960’s. The inflows of money stop with the transfer/going away/going back of the missionary and the young Indian priests and sisters who take the place of the foreign missionaries find themselves helpless, unwanted by the people. Without denying the value of money in mission work, a question has to be raised about the reliance on money for mission effectiveness.

This approach based on money-power, individualism and a rather negative attitude towards the laity were normal; this approach supported paternalism and treated the people as not response-able. At that

time because of a feudal mentality a hierarchical world view was prevalent, which encouraged a paternalistic attitude. In this system there is total absence of the concept of sharing power, empowering the people and making them partners in their own progress.

2. The use of modern means of communication and transport

We cannot deny the value of material elements, scientific developments in the area of communication and means of transportation for the work of the missionary. These are welcome and one needs to use them. These are to be at the service of the Word and of proclamation. There is no doubt that the advancement that communications media have made in the last few decades can greatly enhance efficiency. Earlier, when there were no roads, no easy access to vehicles, the missionaries simply walked to the villages; the spoken word was almost the only means of communication most had. Today one cannot avoid the use of more modern means of transport and communication in mission work. The use of various audio-visuals is certainly a better way of communicating than mere verbal proclamation. Even some of the recent Church documents recommend the use of such means. However one, has to be aware that efficiency in itself does not guarantee apostolic effectiveness and one cannot escape some questions.

3. Apostolic effectiveness and the use of material goods

In the world things have changed radically over the past few decades (See: Mattam, 2004). Today people clamour for equal rights and opportunities and they want to be agents of their own future. They want to be informed, consulted and taken seriously. If mission is understood in terms of Church expansion, building churches and other institutions, then one needs to depend heavily on money, often foreign money. While even today some people would hold on to this idea of mission, most have abandoned it. Mission is not primarily about the change of religions, nor about conversion from one religion to another; it is not about cultural transposition, but the communication of love. If mission is about enabling people to discover a new identity based on God's self-gift to them, his revelation of themselves as loved, love-able persons, and in terms of being at the service of the Kingdom of God and its values, then other considerations need to enter into the picture. Mission is about the revelation of God's love manifested in the person, life and death of Jesus, now communicated by and through other humans, and made present in the love of the missionary, messenger.

If we take our mission to be at the service of God's Kingdom, then it implies a number of necessary elements which do not depend on the power of money but on the quality of commitment and involvement with the people, and you emphasize the process more than the outcome. You look for peoples' participation, their responsibility being exercised. Here importance is given to people, their sharing in Jesus' priesthood and mission. Jesus' mission concerns every Christian, not merely of the hierarchy. When people are invited and helped to cooperate in the Church's mission, mission will no longer be a matter of power (of money, or any other) but of love. That is, God's love becoming incarnate in the community of believers, reaching out to a wider community, to form communities of love, sharing, and caring for the common good, meeting the needs of the people, irrespective of religion, gender, caste, etc. The priests/missionaries as heads of the community have the responsibility to see that this process goes on. The laity, thanks to their being with the people at the grassroots level, will help search out areas that need attention. Then inspired and empowered by the power of love in their hearts, they find ways of meeting these needs and of being with the people.

Mission is also prophetic in nature in the multireligious and multicultural contexts of poverty, illiteracy, communalism, etc. Here the Church does not try to conquer other religionists, destroy their religions, but looks for the collaboration of all to form in their midst communities of love, freedom, sharing and genuine concern for one another. The Church's mission may be seen in terms of what Jesus himself suggested. He envisaged his community to be "a little flock", so that they would be the salt, leaven and the light; they would "do likewise" (Mt 5:13f; Lk 10:37). To be such and to do such works one does not need money as much as dedication, and the willingness to plod on without looking for immediate results. The Church has to wean herself of her over-dependence on money, foreign help, etc. Besides, mission today needs to go back to the simple message of Jesus, leaving aside many of the developments of the centuries, especially when proclaiming the Good News to new listeners. The message that Jesus brought was simple and clear: God is love, God loves us all unconditionally, we need to believe in that Good News and respond to it by loving one another, by meeting the needs of the needy, by creating communities of love, sharing, fellowship and justice. Developments over the centuries need not be carried around all the time.

I may refer here, among many others, to an experience of Philip Manthara, SJ of *Manthan* Centre at Khagol, Bihar. When he wanted to start work for the liberation of bonded labourers in Bihar, in the early 1970's, the first question the authorities asked him was about the availability of funds. Philip decided that money was not required, but only commitment and trust in the people's power to achieve what they needed to achieve. He obtained the participation of the people, making them agents of their own liberation. Initially he got 145 labourers released in Munger District which had officially denied having any bonded labourers. Then he went on to other areas, freeing more and more people, without relying on money. He discovered too that if he had had money, he would have done everything on his own; but not having any money he approached the people with: "how shall we do it" and they found ways which were very effective. Philip also discovered that if you appear to the people as a "saviour", with a lot of money-power, you prolong their dependence, but if you are merely a facilitator, then you empower, enable them to be agents of their own liberation and growth. Philip conducted various camps there, without any money coming from any funding agencies or from the Society of Jesus. This pattern which he has continued to follow has much to teach us about mission and mission methods. Similarly, at some of the more recent centres, younger missionaries in South Gujarat too have attempted with great apostolic effectiveness, such "presence" among people, without dependence on vehicles, "projects", and institutions.

Effectiveness in mission cannot be measured in terms of the number of converts, the number or frequency of the visits of the priests/sisters to the people, the number of church buildings, institutions and other structures one has set up, but in terms of the conversion of hearts, change of attitudes, Jesus' ways becoming the pattern of peoples' lives. To what extent has a that particular community become "leaven", "salt", and "light" in the area where they live? This is less tangible, less measurable than the figures and other elements mentioned above. Hence there is a great danger in going for the more measurable, tangible criteria.

4. Apostolic Effectiveness and a Question of Image

What do Christians think of themselves?

In spite of Christianity being in India for the last two millennia, the percentage of Christians has remained very low. Is it only because of the Church's history being linked with colonialism or has the image of the Church something to do with this fact? Many would agree that, as Indians do not see the Church to be a spiritual power, but more an institution of power and wealth, they are not attracted to Christ and his Church. Also the divisions in the Churches prevent people from wanting to follow Christ. The fundamentalist attitude of some of the Christian churches is also a fact and this is a hindrance.

The image that Christians have of themselves is a matter of great importance. Do they see themselves as the visible presence of Christ, his Body where the Spirit of God indwells, a community of fellowship and love, or do they see themselves as a hierarchical society, of the high and low? It is obvious that the latter self understanding does not lead to the image of the Church that Jesus wanted. Even today the Roman Church authorities keep insisting on the hierarchical nature of the Church forgetting Jesus' explicit instruction: "you are all brothers/sisters", you are to be servants of one another as equals (*cf.* Mt 23:8, Jn 13). Again, if the Church sees itself as an institution of salvation where all truths reside, then they are going to follow a giving-pattern which would depend on money and power, and the people will become passive recipients.

5. What do others think of the Church?

Most people in India think of the Church as foreign, not spiritual, and not religious but a power structure running educational and health institutions. This image will never change until the Church sheds herself of her hierarchical image, first of all, and then divests herself of her institutions, and becomes a contemplative, servant Church, a fellow traveller with others, giving up her triumphal self image of having all truths which the hierarchy defends. She can become a spiritual force only if she gives up her dependence on money and hierarchism.

One needs to look into what happened to the Church in Europe to understand its missionary methods and approaches. We have enough evidence in history that power and wealth have not contributed to the spread of the Good News, to the preaching of the true Gospel — they may have helped in the numerical growth of the Church. As someone said: "The Western world became Christian not necessarily by conviction but largely by political default" (Gomes, J. 2003: 20). Did Europe ever become truly Christian? If it had,

it would not have practiced slavery, colonialism and racism; it would not have committed genocide of peoples, or conducted many wars even to the present day; it would not have defended and continue to defend the economic policies which enslave and impoverish the major part of humanity, in none of which Jesus' outlook is lived. Jesus had brought a completely new way of looking at people, as can be gathered from his table fellowship and the image of God that he gave — people were not equated with their possessions, positions, actions, groups they belong to, or their appearance. They were all equal as brothers/sisters, with no superior or inferior beings. Europeans are not superior to Africans and Asians. The Church all over the world follows the pattern of the world where a person is equated with his/her possessions, position in society, action, group one belongs to, appearance, etc., a system which necessarily leads to competition with its accompanying evils of greed, hatred, fear, opposition to one another, lust, discrimination, poor self image — in one word, a world of no-love. The emphasis on the hierarchy follows this system of the world. Due to their position in the community, they are considered and addressed as “Rev.,” “Lord”, etc.

The European Churches have sent out many missionaries to many parts of the world. In this mission expansion, the Church went along with colonization in Asia and Africa, or conquest and extermination in America and Australia. They believed they were proclaiming the Good News, forgetting that slavery, colonialism and the Good News of God's love cannot go together. This fact does not help to give a good image of the Church to the people of these places. Even today the way the Western Churches are linked with the Western powers prevents people from recognizing and responding to Jesus. Hence the history of the Church shows clearly that money-power and other forms of power have not helped to spread the Good News of God's love, but merely to increase membership in the Church. People are yet to be evangelized, for, only genuine love, involvement with people, respect for people's rights, etc., will help, and nothing else. After all, Jesus' instruction to his disciples when he sent them out, may be valid for all people, at all times and places, for the nature and goal of mission are the same – to enable people to experience and respond to God's love by loving one another, and by becoming a community of love and service.

6. Conclusion

Due to this historical record which still has an impact on people, the call today then is for the Church to recognize that true conversion and the spread of the Good News cannot be equated with efficiency, pragmatism and running successful institutions, but with the truth of the Gospel lived out in simplicity, in solidarity with the poor and the needy, etc. The Church has first of all to become a community of equals, of brothers/sisters, with no discrimination on the basis of gender, race, position in the community, etc., and has to give up all the pagan, discriminatory titles it has adopted for its Church leaders. The missionaries have to learn to lead simple lives, sharing the condition of the people as much as possible, and constantly being the leaven within society to enable people to become a community of love and sharing — a contrast community, based on the values of the Kingdom: freedom, love and justice.

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‘Opus solidaritatis pax’, Peace is the Fruit of Solidarity

The Spirituality of International Economic Solidarity in the Capuchin Order

- Bro. Helmut Rakowski, OFM Cap.* -

1. At home in a divided world

The Gospels not only present us with a vision of the Kingdom of God. They develop the vision, mostly against the background of real life. And so, we hear about political power systems (Mt 20:25; Mt 2:16) and about making a business out of religion (Mt 21:12f) but also about unemployment (Mt 20:3) and refugees (Mt 2:14), about corruption and exploitation (Lk 18:1ff; and 19:8). The Gospel also says much about incurable sickness (Lk 8:43) and the lack of social solidarity (Jn 5:7; Lk 10:31f). The beatitudes of Jesus are every bit as concrete in their language as his “woe to you” sayings (Lk 6:20-26).

In every encounter with this Jesus, however, salvation and healing occur again and again. Not only does He use the image of the wedding feast: he joins the guests, invites people to the supper and is still our host today in the Eucharist – images and reality of a communion which, in God’s name, overcomes the divisions that exist among people.

We still await the final coming of God’s Kingdom. By the same token we know that our life and our world are permeated with sin and the structures of sin. The Seventh Plenary Council of the Order (PCO) talks simplistically about “an unfair concentration of wealth, which causes a large number of migrants; arrogance; narcissistic preoccupation with self-fulfilment; self-serving powers that marginalize the poor and destroy the environment; relationships marked by domination and social stratification; ethnocentrism and religious intolerance ...”.¹

2. Challenged to build bridges

This Seventh Plenary Council of Assisi in 2004 had minority and itinerancy as its theme. It developed an eminently active concept of these basic Franciscan attitudes.² It never allows one to think for a moment that Franciscan *minoritas* can be described exclusively in terms of humility and submissiveness, or even as a kind of collective inferiority complex. Starting on the basis of the Trinity, minority unfolds as an active virtue, meant to build up relationships. And so, Proposal 6 goes on to say:

“Franciscan minority today demands courageous choices for a more fraternal world:

- *The choice of a fraternal economy everywhere we live and serve (cf. PCO VI).*
- *Other-centred relationships.*
- *A culture of peace based on the confident choice of vulnerability.*
- *Leadership and pastoral action based on service and participation.*
- *An ethic of justice based on the fact that we are all brothers and sisters.*
- *A new commitment to dialogue in the spirit of Francis (cf. RnB XVI, 5-6)”.*³

“Building Communion in a world of Asymmetrical Relationships”⁴ was the title of the first Circular Letter of Bro. John Corriveau, in which he commented on the event of PCO VII. If we consider the work of solidarity in the Capuchin Order in this context, its significance deepens as an instrument for the growth of the Order, not just materially but also, and especially, in a spiritual perspective.

3. Solidarity – out of the past, for the future

The work of Solidarity in its present form arose out of the Sixth Plenary Council, also held in Assisi

in 1998 on the theme: “Living Poverty in Brotherhood”. At first one might be tempted to consider all the developments in this area since 1999 as an expansion of the “Mission assistance” system that had been in existence for many years. Ever since Bernhard Christen of Andermatt, General Minister of the Capuchins from 1884 to 1908, under whom the friars’ missionary commitment once again took root in the Order, there was, in addition to the main pillar of missionary responsibility of the Provinces, a constant concern for the Missions on the part of the Order as a whole, in other words, through the General Curia. The General Mission Secretary represented the Order at *Propaganda Fide* and represented Missionaries in the general administration of the Order. He was able to be financially active, because 25% of the income from the “Seraphic Mass Association”, founded in 1899 by the Swiss Tertiary Frieda Folger for the support of the Capuchin foreign missions, was sent to Rome. The remaining 75% financed the work of the local mission offices or secretariats. In the second half of the 20th century, more active fund-raising methods began to be adopted. In this way the Order’s financial means grew, at the same time as its needs.⁵

A “Mission Commission” was already meeting regularly in Rome in the 1980’s. In addition to allocating the comparatively modest sums available, this commission was more and more involved in discussions about the shape of Franciscan missionary activity.⁶ At that time, Bro. John Corriveau was a member of this commission, which pressed for a further development of the central mission support system. At Pentecost 1991, General Minister Flavio Roberto Carraro, after consulting all the Major Superiors, announced the establishment of a “Central Mission Fund”.⁷

4. Globalisation on many fronts

In addition to the growth of the Order in the South and the Far East, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 changed the Capuchin landscape. Freed from communism, brothers who had survived persecution and oppression “behind the iron curtain”, in faithfulness to their religious vocation, were back on the scene. Brothers who had had to live as employed members of the “working class” returned to completely ruined friaries to resume community life. Formerly autonomous provinces came back to life, though without the survival structures they once had. Large numbers of vocations required adequate accommodation and formation. New ventures in new places lacked the necessary infrastructure. Without help from outside nothing was possible here, and the joy at having “found our brothers once again” was shown in the generous financial help which flowed, first from the General Curia itself and predominantly from the then KDP and PNVB Conferences. In 1994, additional funds began to be collected for Eastern Europe in the Order as a whole. In 1995, a special Commission for Economic Solidarity in Central and Eastern Europe was set up, and a Project Manager appointed to distribute the funds.

After the Second Vatican Council, the former “mission territories” in the South and the Far East increasingly became independent Local Churches. In the Order, too, autonomous jurisdictions arose in the former “missions”, and their number grew very rapidly (e.g. in India) through territorial divisions and the sending of brothers into other places. These “third generation” jurisdictions lacked a “Mother Province” able to provide for them financially, as did the newly liberated provinces of the Order in the East, which very soon began to undertake their own missionary commitments. Many therefore appealed to the General Administration of the Order, which attempted to organise a fair distribution of available resources, and these efforts at first led to the establishment of the “Central Mission Fund”. Then, in 1999, assistance for Eastern Europe and assistance from the “Central Mission Fund” were merged into the International Economic Solidarity Commission.

In 1995 some 2.65 million dollars were distributed for Projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as approximately 1.3 million dollars for Eastern Europe, while in 2002 the central funding of all the Order’s projects reached a total of US\$ 5.5 M. Further resources were constantly added and distributed in the form of study bursaries for students of the International College of San Lorenzo of Brindisi in Rome.

By the year 2005 the Order had distributed a total of approximately US\$ 6,1 M.⁸ In addition to helping 58 projects, this money financed the living costs of 184 missionaries in 15 countries, the initial formation of over 2,000 young brothers in four continents and the post-graduate, formation of nearly 80 students at the International College of San Lorenzo in Rome.

Unfortunately, the fascination of figures can distract attention from another development that often goes unnoticed by both the givers and the receivers in the Capuchin Order, but which I, as “Promoter of Solidarity”, see as the most significant change.

5. Evangelisation in Solidarity and evangelising Solidarity

In 1999, the Statutes for “International Economic Solidarity”⁹ brought in a fundamentally new structure for the Order’s work of Solidarity. An “Office of International Economic Solidarity” was set up, with the administration in the hands of the Secretary. In practice he is helped by an assistant. They administer the incoming projects and the process of assessing them and also prepare the session where the funds are distributed. They also administer payment of the allocated funds. The Project Managers (currently 3 in number) examine the requests, assess whether they fall under one of our priorities and check that the documentation is complete. They present the projects to the allocating commission, and on the basis of their own knowledge are usually able to answer any questions relating to the projects. If they propose that a project should be supported they suggest an appropriate sum. The brother known as the “Promoter of Solidarity” is also a member of the Office. It is interesting that he is not called the “Promoter of International **economic** Solidarity”, but simply “Promoter of Solidarity”. Though it is part of his duty to ensure that the necessary funding is available, his mandate goes beyond the purely economic aspect.

The fact that he is at the same time Mission Secretary of the Order links “international economic solidarity” with the missionary mandate of the Capuchin Order and the specific “mission” of the Order, as specified in the Constitutions and other documents. It is in this two-fold role that he attends meetings both of the Office and of the Commission. His contribution is determined by his knowledge of the brothers’ situation and also by his involvement with the missionary commitment of the Capuchins to the Church’s mission.

It follows that his success or failure is not to be judged by the amount of money available for distribution. Five or six million dollars are not automatically good for the mission, the Church and the Order. The question: “what shall we do with it?” and “how shall we relate to it?” are questions we can never stop asking. It has to do with the spirit in which money is given and received. This is the only way to avoid the inherent dynamic of money quickly leading to greed and so becoming a false god.

The work of solidarity can be summarised in a short formula as follows: The promotion of solidarity is a service given to foster evangelisation in solidarity, and a form of solidarity that preaches the Gospel. It is therefore not just a question of what is built, organized and in general achieved for evangelisation with all the money received. The work of solidarity is itself a way of spreading the Gospel. Proposal 46 (PCO VII) expressly calls it a model of redeemed relationships for the world. It is a message for people who suffer as a result of asymmetrical relationships. It is an invitation to partake of the meal, hosted by the one Lord and Master who says to the guests: “You are all brothers” (*cf.* Mt 23:8-12). John Paul II stressed the need for evangelisation by positive example: “If the Church is to reveal her true face to today’s world, she urgently needs such fraternal communities, which, by their very existence, contribute to the new evangelization, inasmuch as they disclose in a concrete way the fruitfulness of the “new commandment”¹⁰.

6. The “value added” component of International Economic Solidarity

For the first time in the history of the Order, and as far as I know also of the Church’s helping agencies, it is not only the “donors” who sit as members of the distributing Commission.¹¹ The International Economic Solidarity Commission is composed of 10-12 members. At the present time they are evenly distributed between the donor nations and the receiving nations. If you include in that number the President and the Vice-President, plus two members of the General Definitory, then the proportion is 6 to 8 in favour of those who are normally on the side of the “receivers”.

It is not insignificant that the asymmetrical relationships of our world are influenced by possessions. Money is power, and everybody knows how much power rules the world! To give up this power and discuss the use of available resources together with the needy is a prophetic response that flows from the Franciscan spirit.

Many brothers have reservations about the central distribution of resources. It is certainly not because they have no heart for the poor. It is estimated that the funds distributed through International Solidarity in Rome represent, at most, one quarter of the overall sum made available by or through the Capuchins for evangelisation, the growth of the Order and social commitments.¹² For many, however, this simply raises the question of why one should do centrally what has so far functioned very well in a decentralised fashion. But, as explained above, solidarity in the Capuchin Order is not just a matter of centralising the available funds. It is also not simply the result of a will to power on the part of the central administration, creating the means to implement its “political goals” by demanding contributions. When money is allocated, things

do not happen in Rome in exactly the same way as in the provincial houses and mission secretariats. A million dollars is always a million dollars, whether it comes from Rome or anywhere else. But the way it is distributed is different, and this is what gives International Solidarity a 'value-added' factor.¹³

We are quite certainly entitled to view these arrangements in the Capuchin Order from the perspective of poverty. PCO VI on 'Living Brotherhood in Poverty' rightly took away from us Franciscans all anxiety about money, while awakening in us a 'fear' of its misuse. PCO VII on Minority complements these considerations from the viewpoint of power. It states that we, like all other human beings, exercise power.¹⁴ This recognition encourages us not simply to suppress power as a factor in our lives, but always to analyse our own power critically as true lesser brothers. Power itself is not bad, but rather its misuse. Whoever generously distributes money and supports projects, keeping nothing for himself and passing everything on, precisely that person is a powerful man or woman. We are all susceptible to influence. We follow our preferences, we prefer certain things and people and are in a very individual way at the mercy of our own moods. A Jesuit mission procurator once told me that he was influenced in his readiness to help by the time his visitors arrived in his office. If they turned up during normal office hours, the petitioner would be questioned and treated to a well-motivated refusal of his request. But if a missionary bishop arrived during siesta time, he could be relatively sure of receiving some direct aid. All the Jesuit really wanted was to get back to his well-deserved midday rest as soon as possible. No need for a long conversation there! This is a harmless example, but it shows how susceptible we are. The principle of participation that operates in Capuchin solidarity is one example of how to prevent the misuse of power.

7. Solidarity: a challenge for all

The Promoter fosters solidarity in the Order not just among the brothers who know how to make resources available. Naturally he does turn to these and asks for their generous and trusting support of the needs of the entire Order by way of international economic solidarity.

But he also asks for solidarity from those who hitherto have enjoyed unrestricted support from their partners in the North and the West. Many Provinces in Europe and North America are financially supporting the life and work of up to four other circumscriptions in the Order. If the "mother" (or partner) now gives a share of its financial resources to the needs of the entire Order, there will automatically be less available for the hitherto privileged "sons" (partners). They too will be asked to contribute to solidarity, since they are sharing what was hitherto available to them alone. They do this by making do with a smaller allocation, and even by renouncing some good and valuable projects.¹⁵

Furthermore, the Promoter places great importance on the fact that those who receive benefits are obliged to contribute to solidarity. It cannot simply be a matter of ensuring the biggest possible slice of the cake. Among Capuchins, it must not turn into a "battle of distribution". Solidarity of the receiving parties requires:

- Giving some thought to the effort that goes into collecting the resources.
- Being aware that the money is often the gift of the poor "little ones", who contribute out of the little they have, like the widow in the Gospel.
- Knowing that the money they receive cannot be available to another brother.

Similarly, receivers are also challenged to act in solidarity with the entire Order when they plan their projects and present their requests.

Very concretely this means that the principle given in the Constitutions (67,3) is also applicable in this field, namely, "the minimum necessary, not the maximum allowed". General Minister Bro. John Corriveau in Circular Letter 24 has pointed out that in the past the aspect of austerity was perhaps not sufficiently mentioned because it was already a basic requirement of the Constitutions. But without austerity, the system of solidarity itself is fundamentally at risk.¹⁶ Francis himself said: "I was never a thief. By that I mean that, from the alms which are the inheritance of the poor, I always accepted less than I needed, so as not to defraud the other poor".¹⁷ On the other hand, the brothers "should not be ashamed (to ask for alms), because our Lord made Himself poor for us in this world" (*cf. Later Rule, 6,3*).

In connection with PCO VI and the work of international economic solidarity the phrase "the right of the brother" is often heard. It seems to be a Franciscan characteristic that no-one claims this right for himself, but that one always fights for the right of the other. Only then can justice flow from rights.

Here the function of the Promoter of Solidarity as Mission Secretary once again comes in useful. He is a reminder of the mission of the Order and makes sure that the money that is available does not have a counter-productive effect. He reminds people of the Order's basic principles, in the context of which international economic solidarity has to be seen:

- Solidarity lived with the brothers (Const. 67,6)
- Solidarity of personnel (Const. 131,4; 176,4)
- Inculturation of the Gospel (Const. 177,3)
- Dialogue with Religions (Const.175,4)
- Solidarity lived with the poor (Const. 59,5; 60,4+5)

It is important that we increasingly consider Solidarity in the context of the poor. "International solidarity should neither uproot us from our societies nor compromise our cultural bonds" (PCO VI, 24b).

8. Not a source of money, but of fraternity

From all that we have said I hope it is clear that international economic solidarity in the Capuchin Order is not simply just another helping agency, only this time a Capuchin one. Unfortunately it is still (mis)understood in that way by far too many people. So, for many it seems to make no sense that they are asked to make an obligatory contribution of \$3,000 to solidarity, when they receive \$23,000 as an initial formation subsidy. If you make comparisons with the helping agencies, such a system is bound to seem less than sensible. The point is that solidarity in the Capuchin Order definitely does not wish to be just another agency, an anonymous source of money.

The "fraternal economy", promoted in the Order in the wake of PCO VI, has as one of its pillars a centralised administration. What is sometimes perceived as alienating at the general level, is understandable as a solidarity project on the provincial level. A fraternity with a good income is no better than one in a poor area. All income is available to everyone and is distributed according to real need. A community of solidarity comes about, radiating outwards from the local fraternity and giving everyone the possibility of doing or receiving what is necessary. Similarly, surpluses can then also be passed on beyond the borders of the province.

International economic solidarity represents the centralised economy on a world-wide level. Even though all provinces and vice-provinces in the Order, sometimes in a symbolic way, are first asked to pay into the common fund. All are active members of this communion of solidarity. No-one is simply a receiver. The first step lies in making available, in sharing. A second step is then to decide who needs help. In the process it can happen that only a part of a sum can be authorised, or a project may have to be refused altogether. At this point all abide by the commission's decision, knowing that it always conscientiously tries to approve the most necessary projects.

It is all very fine for the Promoter of Solidarity when he is greeted and treated as an important helper. At best, he is a catalyst, who fosters and strengthens the network of solidarity in the Order. The real helpers are the brothers: those who share, and that is nearly all of them, but also those brothers who forego presenting a project or who only receive part of the financing or who even receive a rejection. Where this is recognised and accepted, international economic solidarity becomes a tool, not just of material but especially spiritual growth in the Capuchin Order. Then it creates bonds that span frontiers and continents. Then, money serves not the concentration of power and the promotion of personal interests, but patently builds a world of brother/sisterhood, and of justice. Whenever this succeeds, solidarity is building communion in a world of asymmetrical, unequal relationships, and becomes a sign of hope for humanity. And then, our greatest achievement is not what we do with the money, but how we relate to money.

9. Dream along with me ...

The dream is one side of the coin, and reality another: we are on the way, we have not yet reached the goal. In reality, solidarity also receives external help through the General Curia. We rely for the support of our projects on agencies, foundations and individual benefactors. We gratefully acknowledge that solidarity is another form of globalisation that is practiced by many. The fact that we specifically remember our benefactors in the Office and at Mass and consciously pray for them must never become a ritual. Gratitude does not dispense us from responsibility as followers of Francis. In fact it spurs us on to live authentic lives.

The sense of wonder at the multiplication of the loaves in St John's Gospel should be infectious (6:1-13). Philip says, "200 denarii would not be enough for each one to get a small piece". The adult's calculations are one side of the coin: the young boy's spontaneous readiness is the other. He offers what little he has: five loaves and two fish. He keeps nothing anxiously back for himself. He stretches out his hand, with its gift, to his brothers and sisters. He builds communion in an unequal world. And with God's blessing, the miracle happens: All have their fill!

All the brothers are called to become young again as they follow Francis, to be generous, to offer what they have, and to let go. Where no-one anxiously hoards, then with the Lord's Blessing all can have their fill. Incidentally, the Gospel says that twelve basketsful of scraps were left over – a prophetic sign of hope for all. Similarly, a million dollars is actually not the same as a million dollars. Given in the spirit of international solidarity, that sum increases. Value is added on, which fills not just people's hands, but their hearts. All can have their fill, in every sense. This is a prophetic sign which our world is hungry for. "Opus solidaritatis pax" — the fruit of solidarity is peace.¹⁸

Notes

* General Secretary for Mission Animation and Promoter of Solidarity, Rome, 23.09.2005 (Feast of St P. Pio of Pietrelcina).

¹ Cf. PCO VII, 6.

² Cf. PCO VII, 2a.

³ Cf. PCO VII, 6.

⁴ John Corriveau, Circular Letter n. 23, 'To his likeness', Building Communion in a world of asymmetrical relationships, AOFM Cap, 2005, p. 11.

⁵ One might perhaps ask whether it was a case of dependency in reverse?

⁶ In 1978, the III Plenary Council in Mattli (Switzerland) on missionary activity had stressed some important principles.

⁷ Prot. No.: 00787/91.

⁸ The weakness of the dollar is a relevant factor here. Compared with the year 2002 it had lost approximately 20% of its value. The sum of 900.000 Euro for the International College is also included in this amount.

⁹ Confirmed in the General Definitory Meeting of 23rd March 1999, and later by the General Chapter in 2000, AOFM Cap 2000, pp. 74-80. Revised and confirmed in the General Definitory Meeting of 13 January 2006.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 45.

¹¹ At *Propaganda Fide* there is also sharing by everyone. The money collected on World Mission Sunday is distributed by the presidents of all the national pontifical agencies throughout the world.

¹² The General Chapter 2000 decided to establish a database of all the money transfers between Capuchin jurisdictions. This possibility to make known the support given to others is not yet used by all circumscriptions of the Order.

¹³ "Our solidarity towards the least ones and the suffering is also well expressed in social and charitable works or structures" (Proposition 25). Reading Proposal 11 parallel to this, we can also add this consideration: "The poor will not be evangelised through power, but through the experience of brotherhood". John Corriveau, Circular n.16, (5.4). Thoughts on the VI Plenary Council, Part Three, 'The Poor are our Teachers'. Italian text in AOFM Cap, 1999, p. 261.

¹⁴ Cf. PCO VII, 18.

¹⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 39: "The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others".

¹⁶ Cf. John Corriveau, Circular Letter n. 24 (6.2): "In a world increasingly controlled by the "proliferation of desire", an economy without austerity leaves nothing for solidarity: 'Marketing and advertising collapse the distinction between necessity and superfluity. The reach of need and want run to infinity. The consumer is trained to exceed his/her satisfaction and to desire an infinite array of goods, products and services' Equity without austerity leaves nothing for solidarity! Austerity is a constitutive element of a truly 'fraternal economy'. [Here the General Minister is quoting from: David B. Couturier, OFM Cap, Formation for the Fraternal Economy in the Capuchin Franciscan Order: A Psychological Analysis. Unpublished doctoral thesis (2005) p. 93]

¹⁷ Francis of Assisi – LP 111.

¹⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 39: "The motto of the pontificate of my esteemed Predecessor Pius XII was *Opus Iustitiae Pax*, peace is the fruit of justice. Today one could say, with the same exactness and the same power of biblical inspiration (cf. Is 32:17; Jas 3:18): *Opus Solidaritatis Pax*, peace is the fruit of solidarity".

Acknowledgement

This year's SEDOS Seminar has been interesting, informative and inspirational. Although the topic was quite specific, the papers and discussions have touched on deep aspects of our religious identity, our following of Christ, our different charisms, our past and our future in mission. We have come away with many challenges to reflect on and to respond to.

On behalf of the SEDOS Executive Committee I thank all our presenters: Frs John Fuellenbach, SVD, Helmut Rakowsky, OFM Cap, Fernando Domingues, MCCJ, and Alessandro Guarda, MCCJ. Their presentations were relevant, challenging and grounded in personal experience. Alessandro has also done us a great service as the facilitator, in framing our process and synthesising the outcomes as we proceeded. Thanks also to the daily secretaries of the groups for their helpful work after the group sessions. Special thanks to Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP, and the SEDOS Seminar preparation team; to Frs Antonio Flores, SX, and Michael McCabe, SMA, for their expertise in directing the sessions; Srs Monika Lita Hasanah, OSU, and Inés Gutiérrez, S USC, for the liturgy; our translators Ms Silvia Guglielmi and Mrs Barbara De Luzenberger and the secretaries: Mrs Ilaria Iadeluca and Mrs Margarita Lofthouse. A very special expression of thanks to Sr Inés for standing in at late notice as our Spanish interpreter.

Once again we thank the Pauline Fathers for their hospitality in this every convenient and comfortable house.

The participants brought with them lived experience of mission in all corners of the globe and represented a variety of different communities and cultures. Many travelled long distances to attend. We thank all the participants for their commitment to the process and their personal contribution to our common tasks and goals. Our sharing has indeed been enriched by the wide range of experience and expertise which the participants have generously contributed. In this SEDOS Seminar we have truly been a microcosm of the international mission of Religious Institutes, searching together in collaboration for the greater good.

Sr Mary Wright, IBVM
SEDOS President

NEXT
SEDOS MAY SEMINAR

“ International Formation for “Missio ad Gentes”

24-28 April 2007

Basic structure proposed for the themes to be treated:

- 1. Multicultural Formation***
- 2. Ad Gentes Today***
- 3. Experiences of Multicultural Spirituality***

- Ariccia (Rm) -
“Casa Divin Maestro”

.... Hoping to see you ...



next year !!!



Photo: Arrival and Registration